

Prosperity Gospel and Adherent Social Mobility in Ghana

By

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Abstract

In Ghana Neo-charismatic Churches are non-denominational mainly indigenously founded churches that propagate the Prosperity Gospel to their followers. Drawing on a symbolic interaction framework this study explores adherent (church member) perspectives on how they construct the link between the Prosperity Gospel and their own prosperity (social mobility). Symbolic interaction concepts of symbols, meanings and reflected appraisals are employed in the analysis. In all six symbolic categories: the mainstream, automatic, transcendent, pragmatic, founding father and member networks plus fifteen symbolic constructions arising from these categories are identified. These symbolic categories and constructions are employed in the meanings that adherents attribute to social mobility, the actions that they engage in and in the formation of their self-concepts through reflected appraisals. The analysis shows that these categories and constructions inform adherent attitudes and actions towards social mobility.

Dedication

1. To Nanky Boo and Jima Jima who at the end of every day “Mummy, have you finished your work?” I can now confidently tell you “Yes. I have finished.”
2. Divine Ndonbi, my biggest fan since 2003. Sweetheart, we have come full circle.

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List of Abbreviations

ACI	Action Chapel International
AICs	African Independent Churches
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
ICGC	International Central Gospel Church
INCs	Indigenous Neo-charismatic Churches
PG	Prosperity Gospel
SI	Symbolic Interaction
SU	Scripture Union

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Generally speaking, the African environment of which Ghana is a part is a religious one with religion standing out as a culture which touches on every aspect of life. This is captured by Opoku in his assertion that “Africans are engaged in religion in whatever they do- whether it be farming, fishing or hunting; or simply eating, drinking or travelling. Religion gives meaning and significance to their lives, both in this world and the next” (Opoku, 1978:1) and “deeply influences people’s construction of meanings about the world” (Denuelin and Rakodi, 2011:46). More recently Atiemo states that “both in the city and in the village, Ghanaians demonstrate a religious consciousness that suffuses their entire life” (Atiemo, 2013:95). Religious faith or belief can therefore be considered a potentially significant factor in examining and understanding the complex individual and social dynamics involved in the process of Ghana’s development.

1.1 Religion in Ghana

Ghana has a religious tradition that precedes Christianity and Islam (Addai 2000; Heaton *et al.*, 2009). Three main belief systems- Christianity, Traditional African Religions and Islam characterize Ghana’s religious landscape. In 2010 the Population and Housing Census conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) documented approximately 71.2 percent of the population to be Christian, 17.6 percent Muslim, 5.2 percent adhering to traditional indigenous religious beliefs and 5.3 percent without affiliation to any religious group. The heterogeneous religions of Ghana are however united by what Atiemo calls a “common underlying worldview” manifesting as “spiritual healing, demon/spirit possession and

exorcism, and communication with the spirit-world... rituals and prayers that are directed against one's enemies whether spiritual or human beings." (Atiemo, 2013:99). He argues that this worldview "transcends not only denominational lines, but wealth, class and intellectual status" (Atiemo, 2013:98).

1.2 Neo-charismatic Churches

Neo-charismatic Churches are non-denominational mainly indigenously founded churches that propagate a message of prosperity to their followers. They thrive in the urban centres of Ghana where they enjoy a massive following. Between 1986 and 1992 Gifford (2004b) writes that the membership of these churches "exploded" at rates up to 100%. Heaton *et al.* (2009) demonstrate that this growth pattern continued between 1993 and 2003. Although there are no disaggregated data on the Neo-charismatic Christian population in Ghana, the GSS indicates that 28.3% of Christians identify as Charismatic (GLSS, 2010)¹.

1.3 Religion and the individual

This thesis is based on the premise that religion has a strong bearing on society and that it shapes individuals' behaviour and thought processes (Huntington 1993; Casanova, 1994; Asad 2003). Research in religion and its influence on the lives of those who practice it generally points to positive outcomes including improved self-image (Bhugra, 2002), increased ability to cope with stress (Heilman & Witzkum, 2000), improved moods (Hicks & King, 2008) and decreased depression (Idler, 1987). But inferring religious causation is complex because how and why religion 'achieves' these is not fully understood. Fletcher (2002) suggests that the consequences of religion may be attributed to religious beliefs which may play a role in the construction of meaning in the life of an individual. Lim and Putnam

¹ The most recent GLSS report was in 2014. But the statistics taken for religious affiliation were for heads of household only. So statistics from the version before it (2010) which captures the religious affiliation of the general population is quoted.

(2010) put forward the explanation that religion's influence lies in its role as a social support system made possible by the networks that can be accessed within the community of believers.

1.4 Research Context: The Background of the Research

1.4.1 The Roots of the Prosperity Gospel

There is a general consensus that the prosperity gospel (PG) is a post-world war II Evangelical religion with origins in the USA (Bowler, 2010; Brouwer et al, 1996; Coleman, 2002; Csordas, 2007; Hunt, 2000; Kramer, 2002). Evangelist E.W. Kenyon who hailed from New York is generally credited as the founder through his literary works in the early 1900's (Garber, 2013; Bowman, 2000; Zavada, 2013). Kenneth Hagin of Texas, arguably the first 'preacher' to openly espouse the principles of worldly success to the masses was inspired by the ideas of Kenyon and based many of his teachings on Kenyon's ideas (Garber, 2013; Bowman, 2000; Zavada, 2013). He (Hagin) subsequently became known as the '...father of the modern PG...' (Garber, 2013).

The PGs message is that it is God's will that believers be rich, healthy and successful and thus promises believers physical health and material wealth on earth (Beckford 2001; Coleman, 2000; 2000b; Phiri & Maxwell 2007, Ukah, 2007). It is a popular religious ideology in America with 17% of Americans surveyed in a 2006 Time Magazine Poll considering themselves to be part of the "prosperity theology" family and 61% professing that it was God's wish that people prosper (Van & Chu, 2006).

The gospel of prosperity has been successful in migrating worldwide, as far afield as Scandinavia, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa (Gifford 2007; Hummel 1991; Hunt, 1998). Some scholars have asserted that this is because it is able to bridge "pockets of

common (religious) culture across political boundaries” (Coleman 1993:355), offering a racially diverse doctrine that mirrors “the contours of contemporary society” and reflects “contemporary cultural values” (Hunt, 2000:74). A counter argument is located in the fact that in many parts of the world, the PG took root during periods of social and economic uncertainty; conditions which some leading scholars have intimated necessarily precipitated its growth (Coleman, 1991; 1993; 1995; Gifford, 1994; Hunt, 2000; Marshall, 1991, 1993; Soares, 2006).

A close examination of the emergence of the PG on the African continent points to factors including those aforementioned with at least two additional elements. First, is contact with American PG televangelists like Kenneth Hagin, Billy Graham and Oral Roberts mostly through the airing of messages and distribution of their marketing material. Billy Graham in particular was very influential as he frequently organised crusades all over the continent from the late 1970’s (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Ojo, 2001). Second is tertiary student uprisings due to divergent views on doctrine within non-denominational evangelical movements like the Scripture Union (SU) which resulted in schisms and culminated in the founding of churches with PG leanings (Ojo, 2001). The peculiarities which account for its spread in Africa in general and Ghana in particular are discussed in detail in Chapter Two where a historical account of its spread is examined.

1.4.2 The Prosperity Gospel of the Faith Movement?

The faith movement (Coleman, 1993, 2002; Hanegraff, 1993; Hunt, 1998) also called the *word of faith movement* is the most widely used phrase when referring to Neo-charismatic churches which propagate the PG or prosperity theology. The PG takes on various names including ‘health and wealth’, ‘faith gospel’ and ‘name it, claim it’ gospel. It is arguably one of the most successful, widespread, influential and controversial expressions of Christianity.

However, Hunt (2000) argues that the designation of PG propagating churches as being part of a movement is a ‘misnomer’ (Hunt, 2000:332). His argument is persuasive because as he aptly explains, as a religious ideology, the PG is propagated by thousands of independent churches all over the world. It is trite knowledge that these churches are not only independent but function independently of one another and often espouse varying opinions and views on practice and core teachings in respect of the PG. This thesis shares Hunt’s view and approaches PG churches as stand-alone entities.

From the foregoing, it is plausible to argue that the spread and popularity of the PG can be attributed to multiple factors. Having briefly discussed the difficulties with framing the PG within a movement, its origins and reasons for its success, we now turn to examine two paradigms which underlie how it is understood globally. Cast in the contrasting models of hegemony and *glocalization* the next section offers an assessment of the two, an exercise which is critical for the framework in which the PG in Ghana will be examined.

1.4.2 Interpretations of the Prosperity Gospel

There are two broad schools of thought on the framework in which the growth and spread of the PG has been debated in scholarly circles. The first model presents the PG as a purely American Evangelical export to the world (Brouwer et al, 1996; Coleman, 1991; Gifford, 1987, 1988, 1993), and is cast as a “globalization of religion” from the centre to the periphery (Csordas, 2007: 260). The second model locates the PG in a *glocalization* paradigm which recognizes the USA as the birthplace of the ideology but contends that the way it is operationalized is context-specific (Hunt, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Csordas, 2007).

1.4.3 The Hegemonic Model

As a North American perspective, the hegemonic model of the PG is hinged on two main points. The first is based on the historical fact that it was initiated in the USA and the second on its propagation of American/Western-style capitalism in the form of consumerism and entrepreneurship to its adherents (Brouwer et al, 1996; Hunt, 2000). Furthermore, the proponents of this model also suggest that PG-type church structures and activities around the world tend to be influenced by the American model, as evidenced in their governance structures, worship patterns and marketing activities which incorporate a range of modern mass media and communication tools (Hunt, 2000). It is also not uncommon for prominent founders and pastors of faith churches to mention names of prominent American pastors as inspiring their ministries, particularly during the formative stages and whom they often refer to in support of the claims they make (Gifford, 1998).

1.4.4 Criticisms of the Hegemonic Model

The arguments advanced by proponents of religious hegemony, though convincing and meritorious, are not without limitations. This approach hinges on a neatly defined linearity of transmission but fails to consider the nuances presented in the practice of transnational religions in different socio-cultural settings. For example, Hunt points to the reductionist nature of the framework which presents the global presence of the PG as unidirectional, portraying the rest of the world as having little or no say in the process of dissemination and without agency (Hunt, 2000). Similarly, Coleman (2002) and Csordas (2007) suggest a wider scope of view and go further to argue in support of a multidirectional perspective where the flows of religious phenomena are unpredictable, chaotic and laden with local interpretations. At the heart of their submissions is the recognition that although the PG originated in the USA, it has developed beyond its initial status as a sole American export to the world. This

perspective thus implies that the gospel of prosperity is a global religious phenomenon which can spring up from any part of the world, be transported anywhere and whose enactment is subject to local interpretations. However, whereas Coleman, (2002:9) claims that the recognition of the local context is a shift from “Americanisation” to “globalization”, Csordas (2007) takes a cautious stand. He argues convincingly that globalization is at risk of being interpreted as a cultural export from “...globalizing centre to passive periphery, with religion as a neo-colonial form of cultural imperialism” (Csordas, 2007: 260), a situation which throws up the same biases presented in the hegemonic paradigm discussed previously. The amenability of religious cultural exports to local interpretations and modifications which Csordas (2007: 261) aptly calls “transposability” is a key reason for the global success of the PG.

1.4.5 The Glocalization Model

The model of *glocalization* (Featherstone, 1990; Hall & Neitz, 1993; Robertson, 1999) recognises that although a cultural export may emanate from a specific region, in this case North America, its expression as a global phenomenon is local-specific and determined by factors including pre-existing religious contexts, needs of socio-economic groups and level of receptivity (Hunt, 2000). A number of empirical works that lend credence to this school of thought will next engage our attention.

1.5 Appropriation of the PG

In line with the *glocalization* perspective Kramer (2002:23) speaks of selective reception and incorporation of the PG to form ‘Brazilian inflected prosperity’. In the same vein Hackett, (1998:258) duly refers to ‘appropriation’ of messages by PG ministries which are distributed in the religious media in Nigeria and Ghana using “...locally recognised styles, performances and accoutrements” (Hackett, 1998: 271-272) and not as mere extensions of foreign practices.

Furthermore, Corten and Marshall-Fratani, (2001) allude to the ideas espoused by Hackett, (1998) but extend these to include submissions about the ‘reverse’ flow of money and influence of Neo-charismatic Christianity, of which the PG is a part, from Africa and Latin America to other continents where again local interpretations are applied. Citing Paul Yonggi Cho (the founder and leader of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea, the most populous PG church in the world with a membership of nearly a million (Hunt, 2000) Poewe, (1994) speaks to what he calls the foundational scripture (3 John 1:2) for Cho’s ‘threefold blessing of salvation’ which says “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (Poewe, 1994: 92). Cho’s interpretation of the above Bible verse is that there is a guarantee of wealth in the spiritual and material realms and physical health for those who believe and are saved. This interpretation, according to Poewe, (1994) can be likened to shamanism an indigenous religion which itself promotes a message of this-worldly success. The allusion to Shamanistic influence based on the above interpretation is problematic because the benefits Cho speaks about are fundamental to PG. Perhaps it may be more appropriate to frame this similarity as a point of convergence which admittedly is likely to be unacceptable in some quarters. Poewe, (1994) in advancing this argument also refers to the ritual of attending trips to prayer mountain centres where various shamanist rituals like exorcisms take place. He makes reference to the Osanri prayer mountain centre of the Yoido full gospel church which seats about twenty thousand people. Indeed, other scholars allude to Shamanism as driving the prayer mountain concept (Lee, 1985; Kwang-il, 1988), thus appropriating the PG to existent local structures. Using Britain as the reference for his analysis of the Western European region Hunt (2000) also alludes to a customization of the PG in middle-class constituted neo-charismatic churches aimed at making it more acceptable to the cultural norms of the group. This appropriation he argues is largely achieved through the emphasis of one component (health over wealth or vice versa)

over another or sole marketing (wealth only or health only) of the gospel of prosperity. It appears that the packaging of the PG to make it more acceptable to persons of middle and upper classes is not limited to Western Europe. Kramer (2008) also observes that in Brazilian middle-class PG churches there is deliberate selectivity, often leading to an attenuation and subtlety in the marketing and practice of some activities which in lower class constituted churches are integral to worship.

1.6 Appropriation of the Prosperity Gospel in Africa

Within the *glocalization* paradigm we are able to examine the unique characteristics of stand-alone PG churches. This is exemplified in Gifford's 1998 publication which focuses on African Christianity. He observes differences in the teachings on the route to health and wealth in arguably, Ghana's most prominent PG churches: International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) and Action Chapel International (ACI). In the former church whose head pastor is Pastor Mensah Otabil the emphasis is on "...self-confidence, pride, determination, motivation..." whilst in the latter whose head pastor is Archbishop Duncan Williams "...the immutable laws of sowing and reaping..." (Gifford, 1998:81) are the panaceas. His observations show that even within a local context, the way in which the PG is espoused may differ from one church to another. Flowing from the above, it is plausible to argue that the presentation of the message is very much dependent on the viewpoint of the heads of the churches who in the instances above are also the founders of the respective churches. They determine the nature of the message and craft it in a way that suits them and which they deem will be of use to their specific audiences.

Building on the observations made by Gifford (1998), and also with the *glocalization* lens Wariboko (2012) offers a highly specialised analysis based on core teachings espoused by stalwarts of the PG on the African continent. Relying on documentary evidence mainly in the

form of sermons and messages from PG churches he proposes five African paradigms of core PG teachings: covenant, spiritualist, leadership, nationalist and development. He further introduces variants of some of the covenant paradigm which he says consists of prosperity and excellence models and the leadership paradigm of which the prophetic and transformational engagement models are constituents. Broadly speaking, the covenant paradigm speaks to adherents investing their monetary resources and time in the Church in return for "...bumper harvests of wealth" (Wariboko, 2012:37). As a subset of the covenant paradigm, the prosperity model is emphatic that the degree of wealth a believer will acquire is proportional to how much they invest in the work of God. In the excellence model, the factors of professionalism and nationalism are added to monetary and time investments as necessary inputs for prosperity. The leadership paradigm characterizes prosperity as a function of individual moral discipline and enabling social structures. Within these paradigms the prophetic model is more akin to dealing with issues of social justice whilst in the transformational engagement model prosperity is touted as a product of both individual and national morality. The Nationalist paradigm conceives of prosperity as possible if Africa emancipates itself from international, particularly Western reliance. The development paradigm sees churches as the providers of development through provision of social services and projects with the trickledown effect of prosperity for believers. Lastly, the spiritualist paradigm locates prosperity as resulting from victory of God over Satan in the spiritual realm.

This research project explores two of Ghana's oldest Neo-charismatic churches, ICGC and ACI. Wariboko's categorisation of both these churches is therefore of interest. Based on teachings found in print and recorded sermons he makes similar observations to those made by Gifford (1998). These form the basis for locating Archbishop Nicholas Duncan William's teachings in the prosperity model of the covenant paradigm and Pastor Mensah Otabil's teachings in the nationalist paradigm. This distinction is useful for the conduct of my research

work because it provides a good starting point for examining the element of contrast between the two churches.

The foregoing serves to show the relevance of *glocalization* to the study especially for understanding the PG on the African continent in general and Ghana in particular, because it recognises the peculiarities and independence of these churches. Through the lens of *glocalization* we are able to locate cases of localised *glocalization* or inter-church differences in places where we hitherto may have presumed to be homogenous in their expression of the PG: in places like Ghana, in the city of Accra, for example where both ICGC and ACI are located. This approach to the PG enables us to do comparative analysis of these churches using their particularities.

1.7 Global Perspectives of the Prosperity Gospel

I begin with deprivation theory which locates the PG as a religion of the poor who, by virtue of their poverty, are more inclined to adhere to a faith which promises success in both spiritual and physical dimensions of life. Deprivation theory has been subject to challenges by various commentators who either view it as resonating with middle and upper classes or with persons of all classes. Both sides of this debate are discussed. In summing up, I demonstrate how different contexts may result in different expressions of the PG although the central doctrine remains the same.

1.7.1 Prosperity Gospel for Whom?

The assurance of divinely acquired success to adherents has inspired many authors to take a critical look at the sections of society which are inclined to subscribe to its teachings. The body of work indicates that there is no clear agreement on this.

Jackson (1987:22) advances the view that 'pure' prosperity theology is located at the fringes of society, but its diluted message is disseminated inconspicuously in the wider neo-charismatic movement where hallmarks of PG type churches including enterprise culture, large church buildings and big fundraisers are evident. By 'pure' he means the propagation of two strands of the PG (health and wealth) in equal measure. Scholars such as Elinson, Kramer Harell and Hunt deem the PG as resonating mainly with lower class groups who are transfixed on the assurance of upward mobility (Elinson, 1965; Harell, 1975; Hunt, 2000; Kramer, 2008). This position has its roots in deprivation theory which advances the view that there is a direct relationship between both relative and absolute economic deprivation and the commitment to and acceptance of certain religious messages (Soares, 2006).

Other commentators argue contrariwise that the PG resonates mainly with persons of the middle and upper classes (Bannon, 1987; Brouwer et al, 1996; Bruce, 1990b; Fee, 1981; Gifford, 1998; Hollinger, 1991; McConnell 1988). These viewpoints (deprivation and non-deprivation) are discussed further below.

1.7.2 Prosperity Gospel for the Deprived

Hunt (2000) is one of the more vociferous exponents of the deprivation ethos. His observations cover many regions of the world including Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. He finds that Central and Eastern Europe which are poorer regions of the continent are more receptive to the PG than their Western European counterparts, a situation he argues is due to the relative deprivation of much of the citizenry (Hunt, 2000). Its growth is said to be prolific particularly in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech and Slovak republics particularly following the collapse of the Eastern European Soviet Union which has given way to free market economies, a policy that has led to widespread poverty which the PG promises to cure (Hunt, 1995; 2000).

Moving from Eastern to Western Europe where most societies are highly secularized, Hunt (2000; 2002) finds that there is little interest in religion and religiosity and a strong resistance to the importation of an American-style PG more so than other forms of American religions. The limited acceptance of the doctrine is evidenced by the limited numbers of churches which profess to be of the PG extraction, usually existing as home-based ministries whose membership is drawn mainly from persons of the working class and marginalised social groups lured by the teachings which promise God-given status and wealth (Hunt, 2000).

1.7.3 Prosperity Gospel for the Non-deprived

Conversely, other contributors argue that the PG appeals mostly to the middle class who are already upwardly mobile by offering not only a means by which they could be more successful than they already are, but also as a means of legitimizing their wealth which is divinely given and therefore deserved (Bannon, 1987; Brouwer *et al*, 1996; Bruce, 1990b; Fee, 1981; Gifford, 1998; Hollinger, 1991; McConnell 1988).

For instance, Soares (2006:392) observes that in the Caribbean the doctrine appeals mostly to the middle and upper classes as a result of what she calls “class-nuanced differences for the concept of survival”. She argues forcefully that the notion of survival which has generally been positioned as a concern for those living in precarious conditions also applies to people of higher social standing especially when confronted with unfavourable economic prospects which may lead to lower living standards. In the Caribbean in general, and Jamaica in particular, she argues that PG churches are a source of understanding, rationalization and hope for a better future for adherents.

In his work on Asian Christianity Prior (2007) reports of a mixture of groups in the PG fraternity: those with little economic clout, professionals and established business persons. The question that follows naturally is whether or not these characterisations of adherents of

the PG are applicable to or are the same in the African context. This question will next engage our attention.

1.8 Prosperity Gospel for whom? The African situation

Hunt (2000) in his analysis of the PG in Africa says it is a message that rarely resonates with upwardly mobile people but rather with those essentially eking out a living. He posits that the general emphasis is on congregational prosperity rather than individual success, an idea which according to him acts as a source of motivation and hope. Akrong (2000:22) also shares in this view and states that they (PG churches and ministries) provide "...the needed source of hope for Africans who otherwise would have been living in despair and hopelessness".

However, other contributors such as Spinks (2003) take the contrary position. In her exposition on African PG she observes that "...it has obvious attraction for those engulfed in poverty and those seeking to legitimize extreme wealth" and that they focus on "...individualism and personal choice..." (Spinks, 2003: 21&23); an ethos which is particularly beneficial to women (Spinks, 2003). She does not elaborate about what these benefits are but from the tone of her article it is plausible to argue that for her women are traditionally passive actors who through the church are enabled or socialised to be more independent minded and self-determined. Additionally, she views PG as a non-discriminatory religion that is accepted and practiced by persons from all walks of life.

Similarly, Ojo (2006) in his ground-breaking work on African initiated churches draws our attention to the varying social groups which can be found in PG churches. His observations lead him to suggest two categories based solely on the social class or social status of members: faith builders and faith transformers (see pages 43-44 of Chapter Two for a detailed discussion). According to his analysis faith builder churches appeal mainly to

educated, middle-class urban dwellers whilst faith transformer churches are popular among rural and deprived populations. These two types are united in the motivation they give to their members to harness their potentials which are divine –given together with instructions to believe and trust in the divine-favour of God for a future in which they will triumph over the hindrances or difficulties of the present. It is therefore not misplaced that Hunt (2002) in his juxtaposition of European-initiated and African-exported PG churches in Europe finds that the latter serve mainly migrant Africans and are largely constituted of educated professionals. These appear to be faith builder types of African-origin which have set up branches in the diaspora and whose constituencies mirror those found on the mother-continent. Similarly, Kramer (2002) also observes that churches of Latin American origin which have set up branches in the United States are popular with immigrant Latinos who share similar characteristics with their counterpart adherents in their home countries.

It is worthy to note that while the authors whose works have been reviewed provide some information on how they arrive at the categorisation of the segments of society the PG mostly appeals to, they do not provide specific details. It is unclear whether the conclusions reached are based on information elicited from adherents themselves or from other sources.

The debates on the framework in which it should be viewed, who it appeals to and why, will arguably, continue to be a contested issue. It is imperative that we neither make sweeping generalisations nor take entrenched positions about the PG because it is apparent that as we travel across continents, countries, cities and churches the gospel of prosperity tends to become so highly nuanced that although the central principles remain the same many differences abound. This is especially because of the independent non-denominational nature of these churches. The PG is therefore better examined from a position which takes into account a multiplicity of factors which include culture, receptivity (Hunt, 2000), geopolitical area and social and economic conditions (Coleman, 1991; 1993; 1995; Gifford, 1994). This

research project approaches the adherents of the churches with an open mind in that it does not set out pre-defined categories of status.

1.9 Researcher Interest in Neo-charismatic Christianity

My interest in Neo-charismatic Christianity developed from my observations during participation in church services, my theoretical orientation as well as gap identification in the extant literature.

I began attending church services and other church-related activities of home-grown Neo-charismatic churches as an undergraduate student. Many of my colleague-students who became my friends were members of these churches and routinely extended invitations for me to attend services with them. Over the years in my observations of everyday conversations with and actions of members who were my friends I began to notice that attaining social mobility was something that they not only aspired to as the rest of us but also linked to their faith. I started to pay attention to what it was that made the association between the sacred (religion) and the secular (social mobility) so pronounced. My observations were that participating in religion brought them into contact with many social mobility ‘connectors’, which are symbols which adherents could refer to as playing on their minds when constructing their paths towards attaining social mobility. As I began to think about a research project that would enable me to explore the religion-social mobility nexus I found that a study focusing on my interest and in the context of Ghana had not been done. This encouraged me to design a study that would explore, document and analyze the symbolic nature of prosperity (operationalized as social mobility because of the nebulous nature of the former) among Neo-charismatic Christian adherents in Ghana.

1.10 Overview of ICGC and ACI Churches

The following is a detailed account of the observations I made as an active participant during the time that I spent at both sites.

Both churches are set in large auditoriums with lights focused on a stage from which a well-dressed, confident and articulate figure usually the founder of the church delivers his address. The congregation is focused solely on this man, the leader of the establishment who engages the attention of the audience with the substance of the message for the day. The leaders of the two churches differ in the way that they present themselves to their followers. Pastor Otabil, the founder and general overseer of ICGC brand of clothing is his trademark 3-piece elaborately designed 'Agbada' ensemble, whilst Archbishop Duncan Williams the founder of ACI presents himself in mostly Western-style clothing which almost always incorporates suspenders, a long gold necklace, a ring with a gemstone in the center and sometimes sunglasses. The next obvious point of difference is in their delivery of the message or the word. Pastor Otabil is a soft-spoken man who appears relaxed, seldom excited and uses the tone of his voice to emphasize important points. The Archbishop on the other hand is loud, visibly excited and always animated. He marches back and forth, jumps up and down and sometimes runs from one end of the stage to the other. Their presentation styles elicit reactions from the congregation similar to the demeanors of the founders. The differences between the leaders also extend to the general conduct of the services.

Both young and old are represented at the church services. Majority appear to be between twenty (20) and fifty (50) years of age. The members are usually smartly dressed and most of them seem to give much attention to their appearance. Strikingly, most of these attendees appear in Western' apparel. The wax print fabric which is traditionally sewn into *kaba*

(peplum) and *slit* (long skirt) for women and shirts for men associated with Church goes on a Sunday is widely replaced by suits for men and dresses for women. Some walk in with Bibles and a notebook whilst a good number of them troop into the church with smartphones and notebook computers. During the sermon which is fondly referred to as ‘the word’ attendees with notebook computers use them to read bible verses and either take notes using same or with their notebooks.

On a Sunday ICGC hosts two services each two hours long. Each service mirrors the other. The first service is from 7am-9am and the second from 10am to 12 noon. There is a midweek service on Tuesday from 6pm to 8pm. An important observation made was that services always started and ended on time; something not commonly associated with events in Ghana.

Service times at ACI are Sunday 7am and 9am services. They are billed to be two hours long but more often than not they travel to two and a half hours. On Wednesday night is the teaching service at 6:30 pm, on Thursday morning is Jericho hour (Dominion Hour) at 9am, Friday midnight cry starts at about 11pm and on Saturday is morning glory at 7am.

We next turn our attention to a description of the elements which make up ‘typical’ services, beginning with ICGC.

1.10.1 A ‘Typical’ ICGC Church Service

The ICGC (International Central Gospel Church) Christ Temple is found in the sprawling business center of Abossey Okai in the city of Accra. There is a security post at the vehicle entrance with uniformed security guards on a daily basis. On Church service days they are complemented by the Ghana Police who help direct traffic into and out of the Church grounds. They also maintain order on the main road which runs outside the Church. The car park holds hundreds of cars and is usually densely populated with vehicles when there is

Church activity. On Sundays or during special occasions there is overflow of vehicles to an adjoining area of land which, unlike the main car park, has not been graveled. On driving into the parking area one is met by the Traffic Team, uniformed officials directing parking. The pedestrian entrance consists of a footbridge across a drain. Drove of people use this entrance on Church service days. Once approaching the Church every Churchgoer is greeted by friendly people in uniform (Ushers) with a handshake and words of welcome to the service. These ushers have a variety of uniforms; I counted no less than (five) 5 different attires during the research period. Each week two (2) different uniforms are worn: one on Sundays and the other on Tuesdays. The choice of uniform is dependent on what the leadership of the group have decided should be worn. The attire for ushers during Communion services is a black lounge suit, white shirt and red tie for men and a skirt suit with white shirt and silk tie for women. The main Church hall (adult Church) is massive. It can seat up to 2000 persons. It has two levels. Once inside another set of ushers direct attendees to their seats. This is done with a lot of care to ensure that there are no empty seats. At the front of the Church is a podium where direction for the service takes place. Behind that is a painting, approximately 30 feet long and 10 feet high. A new painting is mounted each year. Paintings depict the themes chosen for the year. In 2013 the theme for the year was WORSHIP. This theme was represented by a colourful mural with a backdrop of hills, a river and buildings which appear to be from biblical times. Accompanying this were a number of images. A happy (she wears a broad smile) black woman in a peach lace dress and headscarf standing behind a globe with the African continent showing prominently looking up with her arms held up with planets, stars and rays of sunshine in rich hues of colour above her. On the continent were images of people washing one another's feet. A golden crown illuminated by rays of sunshine resting on top-centre of the globe with the words WORSHIP written boldly above it. A black man with a head dress blowing a horn stood in front of the globe. The painting was so colourful

and imposing that it was the first thing that I noticed the first time I stepped into the hall. There are two giant screens, one on either side of the podium. These are used in displaying all the activities taking place during the service including prayer topics, excerpts from the days' sermon and for visual announcements.

Children are not admitted into the main Church building but are directed to the children's service. For nursing mothers and those with toddlers and babies there is a separate Church hall with a large flat screen television from which the service can be followed. Large stand-alone air-condition units ensure a cool atmosphere is maintained.

All the services (Sundays and Tuesdays) follow the same format with Church proceedings on stage beamed onto the screens which are visible at all areas in the hall. A thirty minute session of praise and worship is led by an enthusiastic, well-dressed and well-rehearsed praise team. They also have a collection of different outfits and sometimes 'dress executive' (in suits). They are usually accompanied by a well-equipped band. The songs range from high tempo songs (praise) to slower songs (worship). More than 90% of the songs are sung in English and the lyrics projected on the screens as subtitles to help members sing along. The praise team has two leaders who alternate, usually on a weekly basis. The supporting team is constant. The leader is always enthusiastic, energetic and runs from one end of the stage to the other directing the tempo. He also jumps up and down and rallies the participation of the audience. The audience respond by clapping, singing and dancing. Some enthusiastically wave their handkerchiefs in the air. The atmosphere is electric.

This is followed by ten minutes of prayer usually led by the executive pastor of the Church who doubles as the announcer for the service. The congregation is upstanding saying prayers silently. The voice heard comes from the pastor leading the prayers. He prays into the microphone. Usually three prayer topics are read out. Each topic is shown on the screens and

is accompanied by a scriptural verse and brief exposition. After prayer the congregants are welcomed to the service *“on behalf of Dr and Mrs. Otabil..... Give the lord a shout of praise”*. The hymnal team is then invited to sing accompanied by an organist. The congregation is upstanding and participates. They are dressed in robes sewn from wax print material.

The time for offertory is usually announced with the phrase *“give generously as the Lord has blessed you.”* Longer preludes to the offertory are not uncommon, for example

“The offering you put into the basket today should be a seed which God will refer to one day. It should be significant enough to speak into the next 20 to 30 years.”

and

“We also want to honor God with our giving. Whenever we are in the presence of God like this we give because God first gave to us. We give because God also gives us the assurance that when we give to him He is able to make all grace abound towards us. This year every good work you put your hands to shall be blessed.”

It takes about ten minutes to complete the process. The offertory bowls are cylindrically shaped and covered in wax print fabric. They are passed along the rows from one congregant to the next. Ushers stand in the aisles supervising the process. During offertory time the Church band (Zama) play a medley of instrumentals, the acapella group sing or a soloist accompanied by Zama provide music. The congregation claps. This is followed by a prayer over the offering which is usually delivered by the executive pastor.

The ‘word ministration’ is introduced. The audience always rises to welcome the person with a clap. This lasts approximately 45 minutes.

On Sundays following the ‘word ministration’ is ‘projects offering’ which takes about 10 minutes. The containers are passed around the congregation. The process is the same as during the first offering and is led by the band who usually play ‘*bebree na wa ye ma mi*’ (A Twi song meaning you have done so much for me). Announcements are then beamed on the screen in a fashion similar to public service announcements. Any remaining announcements are conveyed by the officiating pastor.

The Founder and General Overseer directs all to rise as he gives the final blessing. The congregants depart as the band plays instrumental music.

1.10.2 A ‘Typical’ ACI Church Service

Action Chapel International (ACI) Prayer Cathedral is located off the Tetteh-Quarshie interchange on the Spintex Road in Accra. The church premises are bounded by a fence which allows passers-by to see into the compound. Apart from the main church building an impressive sculpture (about 20 feet) of two open hands facing the sky can be seen from the main road. The compound is paved, interspersed with greenery and about a third of it dedicated to parking. Uniformed security guards man the main entrance on a daily basis. On church service days they are assisted by members of the Temple Ministry who wear black suits to direct vehicles on where to park. The paved areas mapped out for parking can hold up to 500 vehicles. A vast undeveloped portion of church land which can hold up to 1000 cars is also available for parking. On service days the paved parking area is always full and so many motorists park on the adjoining undeveloped land. The church also provides buses which transport people from different parts of the city to church and back on Sundays. There are two pedestrian gates. One serves people coming in from further up the Spintex Road and the second serves those coming in from the Tetteh Quarshie interchange. Pedestrians are welcomed by Temple Ministers and directed towards the church. The interior of the church

can be accessed from many doors depending on where an attendee wishes to sit. Attendees are met at the doors by smartly dressed members of the church Protocol Team. Also in black suits they welcome people to the church with a smile, usher each to a seat and hand them a white envelope. They always wear black suits and white shirts but accessorize with different colored scarves for the ladies and ties for the gentlemen.

At the front of the church is a giant painting which appears to have been done on the wall. It depicts a Caucasian man dressed in white with a golden crown on his head and riding a white horse descending through clouds. He is surrounded by a host of people blowing golden trumpets. The painting is bounded on either side by large scrolls. The one on the left is inscribed with the words *“My house shall be called an house of prayer. Isaiah 56:7”*. The second one on the right reads *“Who will separate us from the love of God. Romans 8:39.”*

The walls to the left and right side wings of the church are covered in large paintings which depict Biblical characters from the Old and New Testaments and the events that have come to define them. The altar is enclosed by balustrades in the formation of a semi-circle. Throughout the service two male Temple Ministers stand on either side of a gate that opens to the altar or to the congregation depending on the direction one is going. This gate remains closed except when the founder or officiating minister opens it. Congregants can be seen approaching the altar to place envelopes on it before the service formally commences.

The service begins with a twenty minute period of praise and worship led by the church choir who go by the name ‘Voices of Triumph’. They are usually led by a woman soloist and a male conductor. The choir is dressed in traditional choir robes which come in the colors of red, white and yellow. Every Sunday a different color robe is selected. The congregation participates by singing along, clapping, waving their hands in the air and dancing. Most of the

songs are sung in English and of American origin. The tempo flows from fast (praise) and ends slow (worship).

The officiating minister mounts the altar following the period of praise and worship. He extends a warm welcome to all present on behalf of “*our papa, the Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams and Lady Rosa Whitaker Duncan Williams*”. He then proceeds to speak blessings into the lives of those present often stating “*surely, as the Lord lives you will not leave this service the same way you walked in because God has a special message for you.*” Visiting dignitaries are introduced and welcomed by the congregation with claps.

The Archbishop is then ushered to the altar with the congregation on their feet with a rapturous applause. Before delivering his message he often asks congregants to greet those in their immediate vicinity with phrases such as “*good to see you. You look great, (handsome, beautiful, powerful, favored etcetera).*” This is followed by a time of prayer led by the Archbishop during which time people adopt a variety of postures: standing, kneeling or prostrating. The prayer follows the pattern of inviting the Holy Spirit into the service and then eliminating anything that may be a hindrance. An example of such a prayer “*Holy Spirit we beseech you to come into our midst. Lord meet us at our point of need.... Chains be broken, frustrate the intention of liars, show yourself strong and mighty....*” He then directs that everyone “*be seated in heavenly places.*” He spends some time welcoming and acknowledging dignitaries following which he delivers a sermon averaging forty-five minutes. His preaching is interspersed by the reading of pre-arranged Biblical verses which the officiating minister reads out at the direction of the founder.

An altar call for those who seek to be born again follows the delivery of the sermon. The Archbishop first instructs that everyone bow down in prayer for those who are taking the step to be saved, then directs those who wish to be born again to stand up and make their way to

the altar whilst the soloist softly sings “*My Jesus I love thee*” in the background. The gate guarded by the Temple Ministers is opened and the founder descends from the altar and into the space occupied by those who have come forward. He prays for them and then congratulates them for taking the step. They are ushered away by Temple Ministers to a location within the church premises where counsellors can engage them. They are also given gifts which include books written by the Archbishop. This takes about ten minutes.

The Archbishop then announces the time for tithes and offerings directing that those with tithes, pledges, first fruits and vows which he calls “tokens of love” should come forward with them. That is not before he reminds them of the “rules of engagement: clean heart and pure motive or else keep your money.” Hundreds of congregants troop to the edge of the altar where he reminds them that the money they are giving is not for him but to God. A prayer is said and then one by one they leave the envelopes at the altar and return to their seats after which is a general offering time. Congregants leave their seats and place their money into specially designed offertory bowls. The choir sings a medley of songs that lasts the five minute period of offering time.

Travelers are then called forward for prayers. And when there are congregants who have just graduated from membership classes they are also called forward, introduced individually (if the number is not large. This is seldom the case) and prayed for. He then invites those in the congregation who are first-time worshippers at the Prayer Cathedral. He interacts with them paying special attention to those who are from other countries and then prays for them. Temple Ministers are then directed to usher them to the counsellors.

The final blessing is the last activity. Directing everyone to stand the founder delivers the final blessing and the congregation departs as the band plays music.

1.11 The Research Problem

Reviewing the literature on the PG I found that scholarly works largely overlook the perspectives of members who subscribe to it. Researchers have instead preferred to either explore the types of ideologies that the leaders represent and preach to their followers or the segments of society that the churches cater to. For this reason the emic perspective is predominantly missing from discussions. If as the literature overwhelmingly suggests PG is a doctrine that promotes worldly success of its followers then it behooves us to know about how these followers engage with the doctrine as they pursue the prosperity that it promises. The purpose of this study is to explore follower (church member) perspectives on how they construct the link between PG and their own prosperity (social mobility).

1.12 Aims and Objectives

My main objective is to explore the symbolic dimensions of the intersection between religion, specifically the PG espoused by Neo-charismatic Christianity and the social mobility of its followers. By adopting a symbolic interaction (SI) view in my engagement with adherents of two of Ghana's pioneer churches of this kind I hope to accomplish the following ends:

1. To gain insight into the cognitive worlds of Neo-charismatic Christians,
2. To explore what Neo-charismatic Christianity means to its adherents by examining how they make meaning and apply the doctrine of prosperity in their everyday lives, and
3. To examine how adherent self-concept(s) arise from reflected appraisals within the context of their association as members of Neo-charismatic churches.

1.13 The Research Questions

With these in mind I developed the following research questions:

1. From a Neo-charismatic Christianity perspective, what are the symbols adherents associate with social mobility?
 - Are these symbolisms shared by adherents of both churches?
2. What are the local interpretations (meanings) of these symbolic constructions and what influences the sedimentation of these meanings?
3. How do adherent self-concept(s) arise from reflected appraisals within the context of their association with the symbolism that arises from the PG?
 - What implications may this have for social mobility?

1.14 Research Justification and Contribution

The research on charismatic churches is vast but I agree with Ellingson's (2010) observation that this is primarily descriptive and draws data from pastors and church leaders. In the African context I also find that many of the assertions made are based solely on the researchers' own interpretation or point of view. For these reasons we do not know much about what the members of these churches think, let alone the bearing that this has on social mobility. Given the place of religion in Africa generally and Ghana in particular coupled with the popularity and assertions that the PG is "the salient sector of African Christianity today" (Gifford, 1998:33) an understanding of its potential role in the lives of those who practice it is timely. Given that the core message of the PG is for their members to be socially mobile, successful or to 'move forward', a popular phrase in Ghanaian parlance used to signify progress, I have found that what this signifies to members has not been explored. This research uses SI theory to present an emic perspective of Charismatic Christianity and member social mobility in Ghana. It is a unique contribution to the sociology of religion

because a study of this nature has not been conducted. It also employs a theoretical perspective that is seldom used in this discipline.

Given the large numbers and diversity of PG churches in Ghana, it is not possible within the available timeframe and resources to cover a significant number of them. Accordingly, the two churches (ACI and ICGC) under consideration are also the oldest PG churches in Ghana, and both fall within the confines of Ojo's (2006) faith builder types. Further, Wariboko (2012) who provides a detailed disaggregation of PG teachings provides for ACI and ICGC to be viewed as faith builder churches with covenant and nationalist leanings respectively.

1.15 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is composed of nine chapters and is structured as follows:

Chapter One provides a general introduction to this study and examines the various characterizations of the PG.

Chapter Two constructs the processual underpinnings relating to the emergence of Charismatic Ministries in Africa generally and in Ghana specifically. It therefore gives historical context to the emergence of indigenous Neo-charismatic churches in Ghana.

Chapter Three is a review of the extant literature in the field of study. It provides the background to my study, explains the context in which it is situated within the broader literature and presents the key concepts deemed to be of importance. In so doing it identifies insufficiently explored areas in religion-social mobility research and indicates the gap(s) which the present work seeks to fill.

Chapter Four sets out the theoretical framework employed for my research. I detail my choice of SI and explain why it has been chosen against other theories like functionalism and phenomenology. I then focus on 'situational' SI, the variant of SI that is used to support my

analysis. Key concepts such as symbols, meaning and the self-concept and how these relate to my work are discussed in detail.

Chapter Five offers an account of the methodological and philosophical foundations of my work. It justifies the choice of an interpretivist approach with a qualitative design. I discuss the research strategy, data quality, access negotiation, ethical considerations, researcher's background and data analysis.

Chapter Six is the first of three empirical findings and discussion chapters presented in this thesis. It explores the multiple symbols that adherents identify to be associated with social mobility from a religious point of view.

Chapter Seven, the second empirical chapter presents the findings and discussion on the meanings that adherents attach to social mobility. It also examines the actions of adherents following meaning-making.

Chapter Eight, the third and final empirical chapter presents the findings and discussions related to two dimensions of the self-concept: self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Chapter Nine provides a summary of the study and presents the conclusions. It also presents the limitations of the study, the contribution that the thesis makes and suggests areas for further research.

1.16 Conclusion

This chapter introduces the thesis. It has highlighted the centrality of religion in the African worldview of which Ghana is a part. It has also contextualized the study in three main ways:

1. It engages in a discussion of what the religious landscape of Ghana looks like and the place of Neo-charismatics in the milieu.

2. It gives a tour of the global and local links that pertain within Neo-charismatic expressions of the PG. This is detailed in discussions on various models and interpretations on a wide variety of topics including how the PG is appropriated in the African environment.

3. It provides a detailed account of how the church services are structured. This is based on the observations that I made when I participated in church services during the time that I spent on the field.

It also presents the research problem, aims and objectives and the research questions that the thesis seeks to answer. Following this I present a justification for the research project and describe the contributions that this work will make to PG scholarship.

The nine chapters that constitute the thesis are outlined in brief to provide a snapshot of what the reader can expect to find in the ensuing chapters.

The next chapter explores the history of Christianity in Ghana as it pertains to the Neo-charismatic fraternity.

CHAPTER TWO

Charismatic Christianity in Ghana: A Historical Account

2.0 Introduction

Charismatic Christianity (an umbrella term used to describe Christianity that emphasizes ‘Spiritual Gifts’) has witnessed an explosion in following with a thriving and massive presence in Latin America, Africa, some parts of Asia and among certain ethnic groups in Europe (Berger, 2009; Corten, 1997; Droogers, 2001; Freston, 1998; Lehman, 2001, Martin, 2002; Poewe, 1994). Berger (2009) declares that it is the fastest growing religious movement in history with conservative and liberal estimates putting the number at 250 million and 400 million followers respectively. Africa alone is estimated to have gained 109 million converts since the 1980’s (Barrett & Johnson, 2002). In the developing world approximately 9 million new converts are recorded every year (Barrett & Johnson, 2002). It is thus not surprising that there is increasing interest in and recognition of the role of charismaticism as a new and rapidly growing form of Christianity particularly in the global south. (Anderson & Hollenweger (eds), 1999). Of particular interest to this study are the African Charismatic Ministries or Churches which emerged in the 1970’s (Anderson, 2004; Soothill, 2007) and have developed into the most significant expression of Christianity on the continent, especially, in the cities. We thus cannot understand African Christianity today without also understanding this latest movement of revival and renewal (Anderson, 2000; 2004; Hastings, 1979; Soothill, 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to construct the processual underpinnings relating to the emergence of Charismatic Ministries in Africa generally and in Ghana specifically. This

exercise is not intended to be theological primarily because theology lies outside the remit of this study. My aim is to provide the necessary foundational background to set the scene for the main study which will explore how these churches play a role in the social mobility constructions and experiences of their followers in the Ghanaian context.

I will begin with an explanation of some of the key terms which run through this chapter. Following this I will give an account of the history of Classical African Indigenous Churches after which I proceed to engage in a discussion on the emergence of Contemporary African Indigenous Churches in the form of Neo-Charismatics on the continent in general and Ghana in particular.

2.1 Clarification of terminology

2.1.1 Charismatic Christianity

Originating from late 19th century Greek the word ‘Charismatic’ when used in Christianity refers to power or talent which is divinely (God) conferred (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013). These powers or talents are gifts from the Holy Spirit of God to Christians (Ositelu, 2002) and include wisdom, knowledge, healing, miracles, prophesy, speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and the interpretation of tongues (Good news Bible, I Corinthians 12: 4-11).

Whilst acknowledging the similarities and overlapping features of the group, Charismatic Christians are usually divided into three categories: Classical Pentecostal, Charismatic Movements and Neo-Charismatics/Pentecostals (Hollenweger, 1997; Anderson, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005).

Classical Pentecostals emerged at the start of the 20th century and refers to those affiliated to Western Pentecostal denominations, committed to Pentecostal theology and prescribing to the

‘classical’ Pentecostal glossolalia which is a post-conversion experience (Anderson, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Soothill, 2007).

Charismatic movements originated in the 1960’s as recognized groups whose members have experienced renewal and baptism of the Holy Spirit within historical or mainline Catholic and Protestant churches (Baptists, Catholics, Methodists and Presbyterians) but remain members of these churches (Anderson, 2004; Coleman, 2000, 2002; Csordas, 1992; 1997; Ojo, 2006; Soothill, 2007).

Neo-Charismatics are new churches that emerged in the 1950’s. They also emphasize the renewing experience and works of the Holy Spirit but do not necessarily subscribe to the ‘classical’ Pentecostal glossolalia which indicates a baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidence of re-birth. Further, they do not adhere to Pentecostal theology and are neither affiliated to Western Pentecostal nor Catholic and Protestant denominations (Anderson, 2004; Soothill, 2007). Building on the work of Domwachuku (2000) in which he uses Indigenous Charismatic Churches to mean churches founded by indigenous Nigerians the designation used in this study to refer to Neo-Charismatic Churches either founded in Africa by indigenous Africans or more specifically in Ghana by indigenous Ghanaians is Indigenous Neo-Charismatic Churches (INCs).

2.1.2 Evangelical Christians

Evangelicals are “... a worldwide family of Bible-believing Christians committed to sharing with everyone everywhere the transforming good news of new life in Jesus Christ, an utterly free gift that comes through faith alone in the crucified and risen savior. To put it more simply, evangelicals are gospel people and Bible people...” (George, 2004:102). They place a prominence on the Bible as the ultimate religious authority (Biblicism), emphasize the life-changing experience of God following ‘re-birth’ (conversionism), promote active sharing of

the faith (activism) and focus on the redemption of humankind by the death of Christ which is the only way to salvation (crucicentrism) (Bebbington, 1989).

2.1.3 African Indigenous Churches

Churches founded on the continent by indigenous peoples of the continent without foreign mission agendas have been designated African indigenous Churches (AICs) (Anderson, 2001; Appiah-Kubi, 1981; Chikometsa, 2006; Clarke, 2006; Daneel, 1970; Kuhn, 2008; Ositelu, 2002). The meaning of the acronym AICs has been used to mean a number of different things including African Initiated Churches (Anderson, 2001), African Indigenous Churches (Appiah-Kubi, 1981; Clarke, 2006), African Independent Churches (Daneel, 1970; Kuhn, 2008) and African Instituted Churches (Chikometsa, 2006; Ositelu, 2002), all of which are in reference to diverse group of churches of African origin. This study adopts the term African Indigenous Churches first for consistency and second because in my estimation the word 'Indigenous' best describes the home-grown nature of these types of churches. It is important to note that two kinds are identified on the bases of when they emerged. Those which begun in the 1820's are designated Classical AICs, and those beginning in the 1970's, Contemporary AICs.

2.2 The Origins of Classical African Indigenous Churches on the Continent

Classical AICs were the first expressions of Christianity outside the mission or historical churches (Catholic and mainline Protestant churches, i.e.-Baptists, Catholics, Methodists and Presbyterians) on the continent south of the Sahara. Between 1820 and 1960 they became the dominant expression outside the latter (Clarke, 1983; Barrett, 1968).

Records recognize the West African region as producing the first AICs by secession from the historical churches (Clarke, 1983; Barrett, 1968) even though the exact time and place of

occurrence of these events has been a subject of controversy. Whilst Clarke (1983) records the first AIC as The Protestant Baptist Church in Monrovia, in 1822, Barrett (1968) claims the earlier year of 1819 when the Settlers' Meeting started in Sierra Leone following secession from the Wesleyan Mission. It should be noted that The Settlers' Meeting fizzled out before gaining ground but The Protestant Baptist Church prevailed, perhaps the reason why Clarke (1983) omits the former from his account. Continentally, Southern Africa, Central Africa and East Africa followed in that order in 1882, 1888 and 1921 respectively (Barrett, 1968).

These continent-wide developments were met with suspicion and apprehension even by world bodies such as the International Missionary Council which met in Tambaram, India in 1938. This is evidenced in the final report of the meeting which recommended that an in-depth investigation into the root causes of (AICs) was crucial to remedy what they perceived to be a serious problem in many parts of Africa (International Missionary Council, 1939). The aversion to their growth likely contributed to the labels of nativistic, messianic, sects and other unpalatable designations found in much of the earlier discourse on AICs (Anderson, 1997).

Between 1860 and 1960 approximately five thousand (5,000) AICs were documented with a combined continental total of approximately 7 million adherents by 1967 (Barrett, 1968). By far the largest populations were in Southern Africa with South Africa alone accounting for over 3 million members (Lamin, 1983; Barrett, 1968, West, 1975). These figures from censuses of recognized registered groups may not be an accurate representation of the actual numbers on the continent at the time but nonetheless provide some idea of what the adherent population was. Some of the churches in this period are Isaiah Shembe's AmaNazaretha in South Africa, the church of Christ on Earth founded by Simon Kimbangu in Zaire and Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Nigeria.

Their emergence, growth, survival and popularity in Africa south of the Sahara where Christianity was controlled by well-established Western Historical Missions are both perplexing and insightful. Clarke (1986) and Flanagan (1981) posit that AICs appeared to have the answer to pressing social, political, cultural and economic problems or at least presented the solutions in a way that people better understood. That being said the literature exposes a complexity of factors at work. Sundkler (1948) cites racial injustice, tensions and land problems as the main reasons for their rise and growth in South Africa. These precipitating factors however appear to be quite specific to the South African context. In West Africa, for example, Turner (1979) explains that the AICs sprung up mainly because of diverging religious beliefs and not as a result of many of the push factors that characterized the formation of other AICs particularly in South Africa. Other commentators such as Clarke (1986); Flanagan (1981); Opoku (1980) have suggested one or a combination of the following reasons:

- Historical or Mission churches were seen to be domineering and looking down on Africans, with an increasingly negative assessment of African capabilities for leadership in many missionary societies,
- Christianity was increasingly seen to be promoting western culture and stamping out indigenous cultures and norms. Western missionaries promoted their own ideals at the expense of those of Africans and failed to recognize African culture in their practice and worship, and
- Historical Churches and imperial colonialism were perceived to be from the same stock and both benefiting from the economic marginalization of indigenes.

The AICs appear to be the product of a variety of political, social, religious and cultural situations. Their formation and growth can thus be said to be the culmination of a profound

clash that stems from a clash of identities (political, social and cultural) and a clash concerning the meaning and purpose of religion.

2.3 Types of African Indigenous Churches

Scholars of African Christianity have divided Classical AICs into different categories to show that like their historical counterparts they are not a homogeneous group and that though similarities may exist they are diverse and this should not be watered down (Sundkler 1948, 1961b; Beecher, 1953; Parrinder 1960 and Hastings, 1975).

There is a wealth of descriptions and groupings but I find Turner's (1979) typology which draws from the works of the authors above as the most useful for the purposes of this historical account. He categorizes AICs into 2 main groups: those formed from secession and those formed out of the teachings and works of prophets. It is apparent that by and large these two groups are given different labels depending on the geographical region in which they are found. Secessionist types are called Ethiopian in South Africa, Separatist in East Africa and Orthodox, African or Independent in West Africa. Churches founded by Prophets or the influence of same are classed as Zionist in South Africa, Pentecostal or heretical in East Africa and Spiritual, Prayer-healing or Prophet Movements in West Africa.

2.3.1 Secessionist Churches

These are nationalist churches which were established mainly in opposition to and in defiance of European dominance and leadership both in the church and politics. Examples include the African Church in Nigeria and Tembu Church in South Africa. These churches maintained the practices of the mainline churches from which they seceded and claimed neither prophetic nor supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997; Clarke, 1986; Turner, 1979; West 1975). Their emergence seems to suggest a defiance of 'imperialism' and

according to Anderson (1997) they did not “flourish as much as other AICs did, largely because they did not sufficiently adapt to the African context nor fully free themselves from the cultural baggage of Western Christendom”(Anderson, 1997:4).

2.3.2 Prophet Churches

For the churches founded by prophets, the Holy Spirit is central to church activities, existing as experience and not merely as doctrine as is typical of historical and secessionist churches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). These prophets usually have little or no formal education, communicate mainly in indigenous languages and employ the use of objects such as holy water and oil in worship (Ojo, 2006). The power of the Holy Spirit is invoked to enable interpretation of signs, visions and performance of miraculous works especially of healing (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997; Anderson, 2003, 1997). It is important to comment on the inclusion and acceptance of women as founders and spiritual authorities, elevating them from auxiliary, marginal and subservient roles carved out for them in the mainline churches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Barrett, 1968). Prominent among these include Grace Tani a Pioneer of Ghana’s Twelve Apostles Church, Alice Lenshina of the Lumpa Church in Zambia, Gaudencia Aoko founder of Legion of Mary church in Kenya and Christiana Abiodun Akinsowon co-founder of Cherubim and Seraphim Society in Nigeria. The World Council of Churches (WCC) in its Kitwe consultation (1962) used three criteria to warrant inclusion into this band: the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, reference to various forms of revelation and healing and an emphasis on Christianity that meets the needs of the people.

The place of the Holy Spirit in their worship is similar to what we find in Charismatic Christianity. This has led Cox (1996), Hollenwegger (1972) and Anderson (2004) to specifically link these churches to Classical Pentecostalism which according to Anderson first appeared on the continent in 1907 when missionaries from America’s Azusa Street arrived in

Liberia and Angola. It is plausible to suggest that these organisations provided fertile ground for the growth and development of contemporary AICs, a notion which will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 Development of a Contemporary African Indigenous Church Movement

The 1970's signaled a new era in the expression of Charismatic Christianity on the continent, first simmering and then exploding to claim a significant proportion of the Christian population evidenced by an estimated 31 million adherents at the turn of the decade (Barrette, 1982). Contemporary AICs in the form of INCs crept onto the religious scene and have since become the fastest growing branch of Christianity in Africa (Anderson, 2004).

The first of these churches were founded in the mid-1970s by Nigerian graduates who had participated in campus revivals in the University of Ibadan when evangelical student groups like the student Christian movement and Christian Union embraced Pentecostal styles of worship in the early part of the decade (Ojo, 2001). It is written of how this new way of worship spread like wildfire to evangelical groups in other universities and colleges through evangelistic activities despite strong opposition from the leadership (Ojo, 2001). Similar occurrences took place all over the continent albeit at different times. In East and Southern African countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia the process begun in the early 1980s, in French-speaking countries like Ivory Coast, Republic of Benin and Guinea the revival begun in the mid-1980s (Ojo, 2001).

INCs are almost entirely urban, attract young, educated, professional members, and conduct church services up to 4 hours long. Their style of worship is characterized by maximum participation of the laity in ecstatic clapping, singing and dancing. Their sermons or messages are directed at addressing contemporary issues relating to employment, promotion at workplaces, wealth and health. There is also an emphasis on the importance of the gifts of the

Holy Spirit and the sermons are usually given through English which is the main medium of communication in all church services (Anderson, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Ojo, 2006). They also regularly hold open air mass evangelistic events, tend to take an anti-sacramental stance and their founders or leaders are generally highly educated with a fair number being university graduates and professionals who are designated pastor, evangelist, teacher and more recently bishop and Archbishop (Ojo,2006). Despite their varying doctrinal and practical emphases the essential aims of these churches and their associated organizations are first to “deepen the religious experience of their members” (piety) and second “to empower these Christians to confront the difficulties of life and to resolve personal and communal dilemmas in their contemporary society” (power) (Ojo, 2006:88).

They are founded by African ‘religious entrepreneurs’ who have ingeniously blended a variety of Christian traditions whilst recognizing the particular socio-cultural environment (s) in which they operate. These indigenous churches employ mostly American neo-charismatic “techniques, style and strategy in organization and expression” Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:99) but at the same time “reflect modern African ingenuity in the appropriation of neo-Pentecostal Christianity” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:99). Brouwer, Gifford & Rose (1996) are however of the view that they (INCs) are not a pure African initiative because of the conspicuous North American influence. Furthermore, Soothill (2004) and Ojo (2006) credit Classical Western Pentecostals and Evangelical Christians as precipitating their emergence. Anderson however argues that they emerged purely as products of churches of western Pentecostal origin (Anderson 1997; 2000; and 2004) but Cox pronounces them as “the African expression of the worldwide Pentecostal movement” (Cox, 1996:246).

Arguably, the most popular feature that exemplifies INCs is the “PG” (Anderson, 2004:146; Gifford, 2007:22) or “health and wealth gospel” (Pew Forum, 2006:11; Mora, 2008:404), “faith gospel” (Hunt, 2000:331) which they propagate. This emphasizes “that God would

grant good health and relief from sickness to believers who have enough faith in him...(and) that God will grant material prosperity to all who have enough faith in him” (Zulu, 2014:26). On the African continent this doctrine was first espoused by the founder of the International Church of God Mission a Nigerian by name Benson Idahosa who became its most influential exponent (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Ojo, 2006). Born in Benin City Nigeria on 11th September, 1938 he is perhaps the most influential figure in the growth of INCs on the continent.

2.4.1 Summary of the development of Indigenous Neo-charismatic Churches

From the foregoing it is conceivable to argue that INCs seem to have emerged out of Evangelical student groups that became influenced by Classical Pentecostalism. Plausibly, Classical AICs, particularly Prophet-founded churches with whom Classical Pentecostals share some commonalities, also played a role however subtle that may have been. I therefore find it problematic that the literature does not recognize the influence of Classical AICs in the genesis and proliferation of these ministries. This first crop of AICs laid the foundation for the emergence of contemporary AICs perhaps not ideologically but they demonstrated to indigenes that it was possible to have home-grown churches which not only appealed to the populace but could also stand the test of time. Reflecting on the features of Pentecostal, Evangelical and Prophet-founded churches I am convinced that churches ascribing to this brand of Christianity have borrowed and fused various elements of all three (Pentecostal, Evangelical and Prophet founded) church practices successfully and in the process carved out a new niche.

2.5 Types of Indigenous Neo-Charismatic Churches

It follows from the narrative above that though INCs exist as individual ‘one-man’ founded entities they share many similarities. It is however worth pointing out that they (INCs) are not

exactly identical thus “generalizations (about INCs) are rapidly becoming unhelpful” (Gifford, 2004: viii). To illustrate the point made above Gifford proceeds to cite examples of a number of prominent INCs in Ghana which in his estimation have different missions: Action Church International focuses on faith/prosperity/health and wealth/spiritual warfare; Lighthouse Chapel is focused on planting new churches and training lay leadership; Word Miracle Church International is focused on evangelistic and healing crusades; and International Central Gospel Church on teaching. Gifford does a good job of this because it is a difficult task to locate peculiar distinguishing features of this genre of churches because of their fluid nature which normally involves the preaching of prosperity, performing of miracles and healings sessions. Having said this, it is important to attempt a classification of these churches as doing so will provide a useful reference point and serve as a basis for analytical work.

Two broad groupings based on governance were identified by Ojo (1987): Independent denominational churches which practice solitary leadership and trans-denominational churches which exercise collective leadership. Marshall (1992) also suggested two distinct groups but her distinctions were based on doctrine: the ‘holiness churches’ whose doctrine enforces strict personal ethics and enforces ‘righteousness’ or ‘holiness’ and the ‘PG churches’ that emphasize material success and miraculous works which address the needs of their members.

Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) identifies three types: Autochthonous Churches called Charismatic Ministries which usually prefer to assume international connections but are an entirely indigenous initiative, trans-denominational fellowships which are exports from North America intended to provide associations where people from existing churches can join for fellowship but still remain in their mother churches and renewal prayer groups (Charismatic Movement) in mainline Catholic and Protestant churches.

Matthews Ojo in his 2006 publication proposes an exhaustive classification into six distinct groups based on the paradigms of ‘power’ and ‘piety’. These are modernists, reformists, deliverance, faith seekers, faith transformers and faith builders.

Modernists are Prophet-led churches which have abandoned some of the original practices that embodied their faith by introducing new styles to present their churches as current (Ojo, 2006).

Reformists are of the ‘Charismatic renewal’ type identified earlier. These are charismatic sections of mainline Catholic and Protestant churches which seek to revive and renew their mother churches through fervent prayers and Bible study meetings (Ojo, 2006).

Faith Seekers focus on renunciation of past commissions and conversion to a new path in which the convert assumes a new identity with Jesus Christ and thus acquires power through an established relationship with God. The power acquired provides the means to tackle pertinent needs and resolve personal, social and economic crises. They regularly embark on door-to-door evangelism and venues for meetings could be make-shift (Ojo, 2006).

Faith Transformers are popular among rural deprived populations. They link the happenings in a nation or locality including prevailing social, economic and political situations to activities in the spirit realm. Activities are centered on prayers for redemption from these spiritual forces. The focus of faith transformers is to preach, secure converts and plant churches in ‘unreached’ communities and testimonies are often about how successful they have been in this mission (Ojo, 2006).

Deliverance Churches promote a full extrication from ancestral curses, demons, traditional gods and other forms of evil in a believer’s ‘traditional’ past. This is achieved through series of complex prayers culminating in the ‘delivered’ entering into the fullness of fellowship

with Christ who empowers them to forge forward into the future to an abundant, fulfilling life (Ojo, 2006).

Faith builders emphasize the realization of untapped individual human potential to surmount contemporary problems and difficulties of daily life. Their constituents are mainly educated, middle-class urban dwellers who seek ‘rapid social mobility through the acquisition of material comforts or societal recognition’ (Ojo, 2006). Members are motivated to harness their potentials which are divine –given and are taught to believe and trust in the divine-favor of God for a future in which they will triumph over the difficulties of the present (Ojo, 2006).

I find the six-tier classification espoused by Ojo (2006) to be the most useful because he details the essential features of the different types which is particularly illuminating. From his classifications I identify the INC type relevant to this study is the *Faith builders*.

2.6 Archbishop Benson Idahosa and Indigenous Neo-Charismatic Christianity in Africa

An account of INCs particularly the *Faith Builders* (Ojo, 2006) type cannot be made without mentioning the life and work of Benson Idahosa as this would render it incomplete. Idahosa worked relentlessly to promote it all over the continent. Converting to Christianity in January 1959 he joined the Assemblies of God Church, leaving in 1968 to found an independent prayer group which later grew to become the Church of God Mission and later the International Church of God Mission (Garlock, 1981). The Reverend Sidney Granville Elton a British freelance Pentecostal minister made a lasting impression on the young Idahosa. In particular Idahosa grasped the concept of planting churches as a means of spreading the Pentecostal faith in Africa, which agenda Pastor Elton was implementing in partnership with the prominent televangelists Oral Roberts and Gordon Lindsey. In 1971 Benson Idahosa received a scholarship arranged by Reverend Elton with support from his long-time

collaborators Gordon and Freda Lindsay of Dallas, Texas to attend a Bible school called Christ for the Nations in the United States for one year (Ojo, 2006).

On his return he began to promote the gospel of prosperity, a new doctrine which spread like wildfire to audiences beyond his church via his weekly televangelist broadcasts and numerous evangelistic missions. Idahosa himself openly demonstrated this doctrine through his ‘flamboyant lifestyle and by his emphasis on productive faith, miracles and prosperity’ (Ojo, 2006). In the mid-1970s he founded the Idahosa World Outreach for evangelistic campaigns outside Nigeria and The Redemption Hour Faith Ministry International Incorporated to support televangelism. Notably, he organized crusades in Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi all cities in Ghana in 1977 and 1978 and broadcast weekly bulletins of ‘Redemption Hour’ on Ghana’s national television station. His biggest contribution to the African Charismatic space in general and Ghana in particular was the training of pastors in his Bible School of All Nations which begun in 1975. The graduating class of 1988 featured seven African countries of whom 15 were from Ghana, 7 from Chad, 2 from Zimbabwe, 3 from Kenya, 2 from Cameroon, 4 from Cote d’Ivoire and 1 each from Togo and Sierra Leone (Ojo, 2006). Prominent Ghanaian pastors trained by Idahosa include Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams of class of 1977; Bishop Agyin Asare who trained in 1986; and Reverend Christie Doe Tetteh (Anderson, 2004; Gifford, 1994; Ojo, 2006; Soothill, 2007). In 1981 he assumed the title of Archbishop and became the first Archbishop outside the mainline churches of Nigeria. Until his death on 12th March 1998 Idahosa played a critical role in propagating the faith in many countries in Africa by instilling in those he trained the idea of founding churches which led many of his students to become pioneers of his doctrine of prosperity in their home countries.

2.7 Christianity in Ghana

On 20th January 1482 the Coastal town of Edina (present day Elmina) was visited by the Portuguese under the leadership of Diego D'Azambuja for trade purposes but mainly to build a castle to stop competition between them and other merchants particularly the Spanish for the gold found in those parts (Debrunner, 1967; Sanneh, 1983). This proposal (to build a forte) was met with local opposition which was quieted once the King of Edina, Nana Caramansa (the name Caramansa is disputed) was convinced of the commercial and strategic benefits (Sanneh, 1983). The first Church in what is present day Elmina, Ghana was of the Roman Catholic order and built as part of this settlement. The first indigenous converts in 1503 were from the Royal house of Efutu (near Elmina) consisting of the king and six of his elders, but it was not until 1573 that minimal missionary work took place outside San Jose. During that period Christianity could at best be described as dormant with Sanneh (1983) giving an account of numerous conversions and re-conversions in the environs of Efutu, Abura and Komenda to the new religion mainly by traditional rulers which conversions he attributes as being largely due to economic and political undercurrents. Christianization of the general population begun in 1828 with concerted efforts by the Basel Mission (Clarke, 1986; Smith, 1966), followed by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1835 (Clarke, 1986), Bremen Mission in 1847 and Society of Africa Missions (Roman Catholic) in 1880 (Amanor, 2004).

2.8 Historical Origins of Charismatic Christianity in Ghana

Two Ghanaian scholars who have written extensively about Charismatic Christianity in Ghana- Cephas Omenyo and Asamoah-Gyadu differ in their categorization of the different periods that have characterized its expression and experience in Ghana. They provide excellent and comprehensive expositions on the subject matter. Whilst Omenyo (1994)

locates the developments in five main strands and time periods, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) whittles it down to three main ‘waves’. For the purpose of this study I have relied extensively on both works but teased out information I deem to be most relevant to provide a holistic view of the origins and growth of what has become “...the most cogent, powerful and visible evidence of religious renewal and influence” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:14).

I have identified four epochs in the journey; the Spiritual churches (from 1900-1930), Western Classical Pentecostal churches (1930 - 1960), the Evangelical-Charismatic revival (1960- 1980) and Indigenous Neo-Charismatic (1980 to the present).

2.8.1 Spiritual Churches

The Spiritual Churches or Sunsum Sɔ̀rè in the Akan dialect and Mumo Solemo in Ga were the first organized indigene-led expression of Christianity in Ghana (then called the Gold Coast) outside the historical churches. Baëta in his 1962 study suggests that leaders of these churches preferred this designation (spiritual) because it reflected their way of worship which involved the invoking of the Holy Spirit whose presence elicited a number of ‘signs’ including

“rhythmic swaying of the body, usually with stamping, to repetitious music (both vocal and instrumental, particularly percussion), hand-clappings, ejaculations, poignant cries and prayers, dancing, leaping and various motor reactions expressive of intense religious emotion; prophesyings, ‘speaking with tongues’, falling into trances, relating dreams and visions, and ‘witnessing’, ie-recounting publically one’s own experience of miraculous redemption” (Baëta, 1962:1).

Secession from the Wesleyan Methodist Church to form the Methodist Society near Cape Coast in 1862 signaled the beginning of the AIC movement in Ghana (Barrett, 1968). This

group was however short-lived and there was a period of dormancy until the 20th century. Historical accounts (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Baëta, 1962; Debrunner, 1967;) point to the famed African Kru Prophet William Wade Harris as having awakened the movement in Ghana when he visited the Apollonia and Axim districts of Ghana in 1914 preaching, teaching, baptizing, exorcising evil spirits and prophesying to the masses (Clarke, 1986). Subsequently, the AICs that were established were prophet-led although some of the founders were former members of historical mission churches. Within the Ghanaian context these churches became formalized about a decade before Classical Pentecostalism (indigenous or Western missionary) appeared, and are therefore precursors of Classical Pentecostalism. Among the first Indigenous churches to be established were the church of the Twelve Apostles and Musama Disco Christo Church (Baëta, 1962).

The Church of the Twelve Apostles is the oldest spiritual church on record in Ghana which sprung directly from Harris' evangelization mission (Clarke, 1986). There were three founding members: converts of the prophet- a woman by name Grace Tani and two gentlemen John Nackabah and John Hackman in 1918 (Baëta, 1962; Clarke, 1986; Anderson, 2003; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). Grace Tani and John Nackabah were former priests of Traditional African religions. They emphasized the "activity of the Holy Spirit in enabling certain men and women to predict future events, warn of impending misfortunes, detect evil-doers and above all to cure illness" (Baëta, 1962:10).

Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) which means 'Army of the Cross of Jesus Christ' was founded by Joseph William Egyanko Appiah. Inspired by fellow Methodist catechist Prophet Samuel Nyankson, a divine healer and miracle worker the prophet's calling came on 18th of August 1919 when he began to speak in a new tongue, accompanied by miracle works of healing, a development which was not taken too kindly by the Methodist Church (Baëta, 1962). This new awakening led him to form a prayer group called the Faith Society

within the Methodist Church at Gomoa Ogwan in the Winneba District of the Central Region of Ghana in the same year. Despite threats of excommunication unless he complied with the parent church's order to end what they deemed to be 'occult practices' (Baëta, 1962; Clarke, 1986) J.W.E Appiah continued his mission and eventually in 1922 was forced to leave the church. He formally established the MDCC, assumed the title of 'Akaboha' (king) I and on 17th October, 1925 led his followers to build a new town christened Mazano, a heavenly word meaning 'my own town', first near Gomoa Fomena and then near Gomoa Eshien in 1951 (Baëta, 1962). Akaboha I was succeeded by his son Matopoly Moses Akaboha II in 1958. In that year the church claimed 150 local branches in all Ghana's regions with the exception of the Northern Region, and a total of 18,000 members (Baëta, 1962). The 'Spiritual Church' claim of the church came from the direct experience of the Holy Spirit by the founder, his successor and members which manifested in faith, healing and prayers accounting for their initial rejection of the use of medicines (Opoku, 1980).

By 1967 there were at least 200 spiritual churches with a combined total of 200,000 members in Ghana (Barrett, 1968). Surveys conducted by the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) between 1988 and 1993 showed a reduction in the membership of the Spiritual Churches. This survey counted the numbers of people attending Sunday services because it was deemed to be more accurate than relying on the records of the churches themselves. Membership of The Church of the Twelve Apostles and the MDCC for example declined by 22% and 17% respectively during that period. This decline had been noted earlier by Baëta and Hastings in the 1960's and 70's. More recently, Asamoah-Gyadu in 2005 found that many of the Spiritual Churches recorded by Wyllie in a 1960 survey had gone out of existence. There is currently no empirical study that systematically catalogues the reasons for the downward trend, although schisms due to contested successions following the death of a founder(s), control of resources and the advent first of the Classical Pentecostals and later INCs are some of the

likely contributory factors (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). In recent times growing pressure from these new entrants has forced some Spiritual Churches to modify their outlook to reflect modern trends (Ojo, 2006) whilst others have migrated to provide spiritual healing centers or camps for the sick (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo, 1994).

2.8.2 Western Classical Pentecostal Churches

The advent of classical Pentecostalism in Ghana is said to have begun with Apostle Peter Anim who was of Presbyterian origin (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo, 1994). He initially formed the Faith Tabernacle in Asamankese (Eastern Region) in 1922 as an affiliate of the Philadelphia based Faith Tabernacle movement which emphasized healing of diseases through fervent prayers, but became increasingly Pentecostal as he read publications by a group called the Apostolic Faith based in Oregon (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo, 2006). In 1930 he began to speak in tongues and eventually severed the relationship with his collaborators to form the Apostolic Church in 1935 (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). In 1936 the Apostle aligned with the Bradford based Apostolic Church, United Kingdom and in 1937 the first Western Pentecostal missionaries, Mr. & Mrs. James McKeown arrived in Ghana (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo, 1994). Two years later, disagreements on the belief and emphasis of faith healing between Apostle Anim and the McKeown's resulted in a split. The Apostle and members in support of the practice (which it has since abandoned) formed the Christ Apostolic Church. The McKeown's subsequently fell out with the mother-church in Bradford and formed the Gold Coast (Ghana) Apostolic Church in 1952 and members who declined to side with either of the two choosing to remain under the Bradford leadership formed the Apostolic Church of the Gold Coast (Ghana) (Amanor, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). The years that followed were rife with litigation between the McKeown faction and the Bradford-aligned faction over the use of the word 'Apostolic'. Eventually the

Government of Ghana intervened and in 1962 McKeown's group adopted the name Church of Pentecost and laid the matter to rest (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005).

The GEC survey (1988-1993) whilst indicating a decline in classical AIC membership showed that membership of Western Classical Pentecostal churches saw an increase. The membership of the Church of Pentecost increased to 259,920 showing an increase of 31%. Similarly, that of the Apostolic Church stood at 51,100 showing an increase of 27% and that of the Christ Apostolic was 36,720 corresponding to an increase of 36%. Contrasting the Pentecostal Churches with the AICs, Amanor (2004:18) describes the latter as having 'the tendency to veer more towards syncretism and occultism than their classical Pentecostal counterparts who are more orthodox in belief and base their discipline and practice on Biblical standards.'

2.8.3 The Evangelico-Pentecostals

The dominant expression of Conservative Evangelical doctrine in Ghana has been through the Scripture Union (SU) and Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students (GHAFES). The SU, a fellowship with origins in the UK designed for Secondary Schools actively begun in 1952 (SU Ghana, 2013). The tertiary wing also with origins in the United Kingdom begun as the Ghana Inter University Christian Fellowship (GIUCF) in 1966 but changed its name to (GHAFES) in the 1970s to include colleges which were not universities (GHAFES, 2013). Both are structured as non-denominational Bible study, worship and mission fellowships and were mandated to hold meetings outside regular church hours to promote 'responsible church membership', a policy which directs members to participate in and attend church services in their churches of origin and contribute to same (Asamoah-Gyadu,2005:102). As graduates of second and third cycle institutions who belonged to the SU and GHAFES settled into working life they initiated home fellowships which evolved into well-structured Town

Fellowships to provide a place for fellowship and sustain the evangelical flame (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). While some members were already of Pentecostal persuasion others increasingly adopted Pentecostal ethos which resulted in speaking in tongues and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit such as prophecies and visions becoming popularized. Statements were issued by an uncomfortable leadership to the effect that every true Christian already had the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit did not manifest itself in such chaotic and noisy ways but this and other attempts proved futile and only served to widen the gap between leadership and the grassroots (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). This created a space for Pentecostal-Evangelical preachers like Evangelist Enoch Agbozo credited as the most influential ‘marketer’ of Pentecostal-Evangelicalism to operate. Preaching in schools, colleges and universities he eventually felt the need to provide a place where ‘converts’ could worship and express themselves freely without fear of being chastised or restricted. The Ghana Evangelical Society (GES) was formed in 1973. Young people from all walks of life attended GES’s Friday night vigils which were the main activity of the ministry but were still encouraged to stay in their mother-churches in line with the SU/GHAFES policy.

Other ministries at the time include Evangelist Isaac Ababio’s Hour of Visitation Choir and Evangelistic Association (HOVCEA) which produced and broadcast a fiercely evangelical and popular weekly radio program dubbed ‘Hour of Visitation’ until the early 1980’s when sponsored religious programs were banned, the Youth Ambassadors for Christ Association (YAFCA) in Accra led by Rev. John Owusu Afriyie, Tears of Jesus in Takoradi led by Brother Yamoah and the Upper Room Fellowship in Kumasi led by Emmanuel Asante (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo,1994). They all emerged out of the Evangelical Fellowship network and incorporated Pentecostal pneumatology in their activities (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005).

The growing discontent was however not restricted to the SU and GHAFES movements. Many young people in other Christian denominations felt that the ‘...virtual marginalization of the spirit in the traditional churches and the ‘ordered’ acceptance of spiritual manifestations in Classical Pentecostalism’ (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:109) were holding them back from the full experience of Christianity. Exacerbating the situation was the increasing exposure to foreign evangelists such as Oral Roberts, Benson Idahosa and Billy Graham who inspired Charismatic enthusiasm with crusades and circulated religious literature, audio and visual material produced by their ministries (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005).

2.8.2 The Advent of Indigenous Neo-Charismatic Churches in Ghana

The Evangelico-Charismatic movement grew from strength to strength with many young people particularly in Accra, Tema, Takoradi and Kumasi attending either the GES or similar ministries which as mentioned earlier encouraged members to continue in their traditional churches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). Nicholas Duncan Williams a young graduate of the Bible School of All Nations was one such freelance evangelist, who organized a fellowship first at the Association International School car park and later the International Students Hostel in the Airport residential suburb of Accra. In his account of reasons for founding his church called Action Faith Ministries captured by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) he recounts a growing frustration among members of his fellowship who were youthful, full of energy, vibrant but unable to express themselves in their mother-churches and feeling they could no longer continue attending services there. Pressured by the growing insistence of members to establish a church which offered the full complement of church activities, where they would worship and fellowship he took the brave step to do so by launching Christian Action Faith Ministries also called Action Chapel International in May 1980. This unprecedented move signaled the beginning of the indigenous neo-Charismatic era in Ghana and a permanent

change in the country's religious landscape. ACI is the oldest INC in Ghana which belongs to the type (*faith builders*) central to this study.

Following suit Mensah Otabil founded the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) in 1984, Joseph Eastwood Anaba founded Fountain Gate Chapel in 1987 and Lighthouse Chapel International was established in 1987 by Dag Heward-Mills (Gifford, 1994). It is interesting to note that the founders are mostly men with Christie Doe Tetteh who in 1994 founded Solid Rock Chapel International one of the few women-founders (Soothill, 2007).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an illuminating tour of the Christian religious landscape of Ghana leading up to the birth of INCs which are the interest in this research project. Alongside explaining important terminologies that relate to the subject area it has also sought to provide some context which serves the purpose of locating INCs within the Ghanaian Christian space. An insightful summary of the links INCs have and share with the past, its links to the wider global evangelical movements as well as the key features and developments that relate to them have been highlighted.

In our discussion of the INCs it is clear that it is a complex, varied and contextually-oriented religious identity, a situation stemming partly from the stand-alone, non-denominational nature of churches which are largely individually founded. With no established hierarchy or governance system with worldwide jurisdiction these churches are unregulated and therefore free to mold the PG into what they will. This freedom to be innovative in 'selling' the PG is an advantage many of the older mainline churches do not have and is undoubtedly one of the strengths of this brand of Christianity. Also, the prospect of worldly success which God wills for human-kind and which success does not compromise the chance of salvation in the after-life appears to be an added attraction.

Having engaged with the literature concerning the historical antecedents and contextual background of INCs in chapter three I engage with the literature that speaks to the specifics of the research project.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature deemed relevant to the current work in three main sections. The first section focuses on social mobility generally. It demonstrates the multidimensional nature of the concept (social mobility) by drawing on a wide range of studies. The second part engages with the scholarship that is concerned with religion as an important determinant of outcomes conventionally used in the determination of social mobility. The third section provides an overview of religion-social mobility research in Africa and then focuses on charismatic forms of Christianity and member social mobility on the African continent. The overarching aim of this chapter is two-fold: first it provides the necessary background to the current study, explains the context in which this work is situated within the broader literature and the key concepts deemed to be of importance. Second, it identifies insufficiently explored areas in religion-socialmobility research and indicates the gap(s) which the present work seeks to fill.

3.1 Social Mobility

Social mobility refers to a change in social standing characterised by “movements by specific entities between periods in socioeconomic status indicators” (Behrman, 2000: 72). It is therefore not unusual that the indicators commonly used in social mobility research are income, occupation and education (Gockel, 1969; Mueller, 1980; Warren, 2007). Other indicators like health (American Psychological Association, 2007) and wealth (Heaton *et al.*, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009) are also used, though marginally. These changes result in movements which are described as vertical when mobility is in the upward (promotion) or

downward (degradation) direction and horizontal when mobility is along a continuum. Vertical mobility therefore necessarily implies a change in the social standing of the case (individual or group) whilst horizontal mobility results in movement that does not change the social status category of the case (sociology guide, 2011). Notable scholars who have written extensively and provided invaluable insights into this concept include Bertaux & Thompson, (2007), Blau & Duncan, (1967), Breen, (2004), Ganzeboom, (2010), Goldthorpe, (2003) & Lampard, (2007). There are two types of mobility: inter- and intra-generational mobility. While the former has been a subject of immense interest and study by researchers, the latter has been sparingly examined. Both of these types can be examined as subjective social mobility (qualitative) or objective social mobility (quantitative). We next examine these concepts for clarity and in order to further our understanding of their use in the context of this piece of research.

3.1.1 Intergenerational Social Mobility

Intergenerational mobility is concerned with the differences in social mobility between different generations and is viewed as a plausible way of determining the “extent of equality of economic opportunity or life chances” (Blanden, Gregg & Machin, 2005:4). The fundamental requirement for successful intergenerational research is detailed socioeconomic information from at least two generations of a case. This can be challenging and sometimes near impossible particularly in regions where record-keeping is poor or where the collection of socioeconomic data is relatively recent and does not extend far back enough to enable such comparative analysis to be done. Although in some instances it may be possible for persons to remember the status of previous generations the veracity of such information may be called into question. It may also be subject to and fraught with recall errors or gaps. In light of some

of these challenges most intergenerational studies have been conducted in the developed world, where there are adequate resources to support such research.

3.1.2 Intragenerational Social Mobility

Intragenerational social mobility also called income mobility examines changes in socioeconomic status that take place in a single generation of a group or within an individual's lifetime (Fields, 2001). The goal is to understand status achievement independent of that which may have occurred in previous generations. Sørensen, (1975; 1978) criticised the dearth of interest in intragenerational paths of mobility which according to him has the advantage of providing evidence of 'actual' mobility experiences. Beyond this, intragenerational mobility is a more reliable index of mobility particularly in regions where intergenerational data is unreliable or unavailable and can form the basis for future intergenerational research. In the current study social mobility is approached in its intragenerational form.

3.1.3 Objective Social Mobility

Much of the research points to social, economic, material, educational, physical and cultural factors in the years of childhood and youth as having a marked effect on the direction taken by the individual as an adult (Blane *et al.*, 1999). A number of empirical studies using surveys have expressed this.

Herrnstein and Murray (1994) using data from Armed Services qualification tests conducted ten years prior found a significant correlation between those test results and the current living conditions of those who had undergone the exams. But Korenmana and Winship (2000) using the same data set concluded that the socio-economic status of the parents was just as important as the scores attained in the test (intelligence) in current living situations. Breen

and Goldthorpe (1999; 2001) in their England study also found that after taking intelligence and the effort put in educational investment into account the social class of an individual at age 33 was very much determined by the social class of origin. Likewise, Halsey *et al.* (1980) reported similar results but Saunders (2002) using the same data set as Breen and Goldthorpe (1999) found that the individuals abilities, motivations and qualifications held more sway than class of origin. The different ways in which the data are treated accounts for these inconsistent results.

Iannelli and Paterson's (2005) analysis using data from the 2001 Scottish household survey found that parents with higher social positions used these to enable their children with low qualifications remain in the status band by way of social networks and financial resources which they did not employ as much with their children who had achieved higher qualifications. In a similar vein data from Denmark and Canada and analysed by Bingley *et al.* (2011) suggested that most employment opportunities particularly at higher levels were found through family and friends or social networks.

3.1.4 Subjective Social Mobility

In an intragenerational study to explore subjective mobility of immigrant Moroccan women in the Netherlands van den Berg (2011) defined subjective social mobility as those definitions and expectations of social mobility beyond the dominant and traditional to include factors like housing mobility and emancipation. She found that the women in her study whilst defining social mobility in traditional terms for their children thought of their own mobility journeys- 'class upgrading' and 'moving up the social ladder' differently. Learning to read the Quran, speaking Dutch and better housing conditions defined their understanding and experiences of moving up. van den Berg finds parallels between these subjective narratives and Bourdieu's definitions of class as dependent on cultural, economic and symbolic capitals.

Whereas van den Berg (2011) discusses subjective mobility devoid of intergenerational and dominant models the majority of commentators do make reference to them. For example Kelly and Kelly (2009) using data from the ISSP 1999/2000 inequality III surveys from thirty countries examined background factors such as parent's educational background. They found that the perception of mobility was influenced by background factors with parent's education being particularly salient, in that participants with highly educated parents were less likely to think of themselves as being socially mobile because there wasn't much room for upward mobility. They thought of themselves as staying within the class of their origin implying horizontal mobility. Conversely respondents who felt that they had assumed a higher occupational status than their father were more likely to think of themselves as having achieved vertical upward mobility and thus had moved into a higher social class. That being said Kelly and Evans (1995) found that education and achieved income were more important. Education was more salient in Nordic countries and continental Europe where higher education served to increase one's access to the labour market (Knudsen, 1988) as compared to the UK and the USA where more people had higher educational qualifications thus reducing its advantage (Gross, 2003). But higher educated people thought of themselves as being part of the elite class even though that did not necessarily go hand in hand with increased income as was found by Lindermann (2007) in Estonia.

The literature indicates that mobility studies whether objective or subjective are generally interested in finding out whether the factors that influence mobility are dependent on the respondent or on their social origins. How they subjectively define, experience and perceive the process of attaining mobility or success is less popular. I must clarify that I do not intend to 'measure' social mobility but rather to give an insight into the ways in which individuals construct social mobility, particularly as it relates to their religious affiliation. This makes my exploration of social mobility a subjective one.

The next section engages with the scholarship that is concerned with religion as an important determinant of outcomes conventionally used in the determination of social mobility.

3.2 Social Mobility: Inferring a Religious Factor

Indubitably, the ground breaking work of Weber (1905) pioneered scholarship in the study of religion and society, bringing the material consequences of religion into mainstream sociological discourse. But this assertion was made without empirical support highlighted by Iannaccone (1998:1474) when he says that “the most noteworthy feature of the Protestant ethic thesis is its absence of empirical support.” Over the years the role of religion in development has garnered a lot of scholarly interest evidenced by numerous empirical works which specifically focus on the relationship between socioeconomic mobility or status and religion (Darnell & Sherkat, 1997; Featherman, 1971; Greeley, 1969; Keister, 2003; Lenski, 1961; Woodberry, 2006). Most of these works emanate from the West particularly the United States of America which is surprising given the salience of religion and religious life in many other parts of the world.

Leege (1993:3) stated “Religion is not only an affinity. It is something that people act out in public and private ways” to mean that secular behavior is an outcome of religious beliefs. It is documented that religious affiliation influences the perception of costs and benefits of economic and demographic behaviour of individuals and families over the life-cycle (Sherkat, 2000; Lehrer, 2004; Warren, 2007) but there is a dearth of explanations of how and why this happens. Whereas Mueller (1980) finds a significant but weak relationship between religious affiliation and educational attainment, Gockel (1969) views religion as a conduit for strategic social relationships and contacts but concludes that occupation and education play a more crucial role in determining economic outcomes than religion does. Consistent with general mobility research, the findings from these studies are not always generalizable but

context-specific. For example, interrogating the link between Islam and educational attainment, studies in Ghana (Takyi & Addai, 2002; Heaton et al, 2009), Nigeria (Reichmuth, 1996), India (Shariff, 1995; Borooah & Iyer, 2005) and Indonesia (Jones, 1976) all concluded that Muslims were disadvantaged compared to other religious groups. The different studies however employed different measures of education and thus make it difficult to infer cross-country sameness. Based on data from the World Value Survey, Guiso *et al.* (2003) find that religiosity is associated with a higher emphasis on the importance of saving. Similarly, Keister (2003: 181) states that “religious doctrine seldom discourages saving and nearly always encourages correct and conventional living.”

On the subject of socioeconomic status and religious affiliation there is wide ranging consensus that the social characteristics of an individual influence the denomination they chose to identify with (Heaton, 2013, Warren, 2007). On this account (of pre-existing differences) it is not religious choice that leads to differences in social class but the reverse (Heaton, James & Oheneba-Sakyi, 2009). This position is also advanced in Ojo Matthews’ (2012) work on African initiated churches in which he ably demonstrates the different characteristics in terms of the socioeconomic status of members of PG church-types. Furthermore, Heaton (2013) suggests that people with similar perspectives and ambitions are likely to locate themselves in certain religious traditions and not in others.

In consonance with this we find that as an emergent form of Christianity in Ghana in the 1980s Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) reports that the PG appealed to mainly educated vibrant energetic youth who left their mother-churches because they felt that as long as they remained in those establishments they would neither be able to express their religious views vocally nor practically.

3.3 Religious Affiliation and Status Attainment Behavior

There is empirical evidence which suggests that religious orientation influences a host of individual and family behaviours (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999) including fertility, education, marriage, work and the timing as well as the order of these and other outcomes (Chiswick, 1988; Ellison & Bartowski, 2002; Lehrer, 2008). Religion also provides people with the tools for developing strategies for savings and investment as well as the strategies employed in solving problems (Keister, 2003). In these ways religion has a direct impact on wealth by defining worthwhile objectives (oriented to this world and/or the afterlife) and indirectly, through its effects on education, fertility, and labor supply behavior (Keister 2003, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). In her 2011 work Keister, focussing on earnings stated that religion may have a direct influence on earnings through religious teachings that pertain to wages and financial success (Keister, 2011). She also provided evidence that showed that religious beliefs influence orientations towards work, savings and investing all of which are critical to wealth accumulation. Keister attributes this to cognitive processes but does not elaborate on what these processes are. But in a subsequent study Keister and Borelli (2014) attribute this to the internalization and putting into practice the teachings and other religious instructions stating that by this “...there may be a direct relationship between religious beliefs and financial decision making that would affect savings and wealth” (Keister & Borelli, 2014: 121). They however proceed to admit that this is only vaguely understood. Similarly, Heaton *et al.* (2012:317) suggest that “...at the individual level, people act on beliefs and perspectives gained via their religious experience” for example the importance one’s religion places on “...economic prosperity may influence individual action.” This influence is captured in the works of Fitzgerald & Glass (2011); Glass & Jacobs (2005) and Keister (2008a) who found that people report beliefs and act in consonance of these beliefs in their orientations towards work and money.

Darnell and Sherkat (1997) conclude that fundamentalist and conservative Protestants expressed significantly lower educational aspiration and lower attainment compared to their peers of other religious persuasions. They inferred that this was because protestant fundamentalists and conservatives, many of whom claim Biblical inerrancy show a strong aversion to secular education. In some instances however, such as in Hunt & Hunt (1975) inferring a religious factor can be complicated. In their study the empirical data on black urban Catholic and Protestant students in Baltimore yielded mixed results. Specifically, Catholics had higher educational and occupational aspirations than their Protestant counterparts but this advantage was observed for those of high and middle class backgrounds and not those of lower classes. Lower-class Protestants had higher aspirations than their Catholic counterparts on both variables (education and occupation) an observation which suggested that religious affiliation may not to be the salient factor. Whilst falling short of interrogating what could account for this they inferred that middle and working class young Catholics having been exposed to successful examples of successful secular achievers in their communities were more inclined to think they too can be successful.

Similarly, Geode (1977) in an extensive appraisal of selected catholic-protestant socioeconomic achievement studies found that Protestants performed better when father's occupation, ethnicity, generation, region and community size of origin were controlled. However, when variables such as region of present residence, community size of present residence and education were controlled there was no difference between the two groups. It is worthy to note that although these studies may or may not point to an advantage for certain groups they do not provide the substantive reason(s) and processes that account for these observations. This may be due to the fact that the respondent's voice is not captured and so researchers make deductions which they deem to correlate with their findings. Thus, how religion influences social mobility and the extent to which it does so remain unclear. In this

regard Lehrer (2004) advocates for a more synergised or consolidated approach to the study of religion's role in various life decisions which may not be directly related when viewed in isolation (choice of marital partner, fertility, education, wealth etc.) but which have consequences for social mobility outcomes.

Admittedly, the works cited above are Protestant and Catholic based but nevertheless they demonstrate that conclusions on the relationship between religious denomination and socio-economic attainment are by no means clear-cut. Ultimately, the objectives of the research project determine the variables that will be measured and where they fit (independent, intervening or dependent) in the model. Furthermore, women are a sparingly researched constituency in religion-social mobility research and neither are the possible differential social mobility outcomes for men and women captured.

There is a growing scholarship which demonstrates that religious denomination does not act alone but acts in tandem with the degree of religious involvement (religiosity) with respect to its influence on individual goal orientation (Brinkerhoff, 1978). We examine this premise in more detail below.

3.4 The Role of Religiosity in Social Mobility Outcomes

Scholarly works by Lenski (1963) and Glock & Stark (1965) brought the influence of religious involvement into mainstream religion-social mobility research. They developed multidimensional religiosity scales with variables based on participation in church activities and church membership, and found that religion was a more important consideration in the social mobility decisions of persons who displayed higher levels religiosity. Following from these pioneering works it was suggested that people of lower socioeconomic status would be more involved in religion and its associated activities compared to their peers of higher social standing (Glock *et al.*, 1967), a prediction based on the deprivation-compensation model of

religious involvement. In this model religiosity compensates for social and material disadvantages associated with occupying a lower socioeconomic status. Subsequent empirical works have however not supported this model (Mueller & Johnson, 1975; Taylor, 1986; 1988a; 1988b) but rather suggest that the factors that account for religiosity of any kind are not status-dependant (Beeghley, *et al*, 1981; Cornwall, 1989).

For example, Lehrer (2004) finds that religiosity accentuates the effects of affiliation which suggests that the more an individual is involved in the religious activities of their particular religious group the greater the influence of their religion on their actions. This is supported in a recent study by Schieman (2011) where although people who have achieved higher educational status are less likely to take decisions based on religion, the outcomes become more nuanced when religiosity is factored into the analysis. Specifically, religion appeared to attenuate the effect of education for the more religiously active.

3.5 Gender and Religiosity

Gender disaggregation in the study of religiosity has also been of interest. Empirical studies show that on average religiosity is higher in females than in males (Mueller & Johnson, 1975; Collet & Lizardo, 2009; de Vaus and McAllister, 1987; Miller & Hoffman, 1995; Miller & Stark, 2002; Walter & Davie, 1998) (see Sullins, 2006 for exceptions). The reasons given for these differences range from childhood socialization (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975) to physiological differences rooted in risk-aversion theory (Collett & Lizardo, 2009; Miller & Hoffman, 1995; Miller & Stark, 2002). Flowing from the foregoing religion is expected to be a stronger influence in decision-making for females than for males.

Generally speaking, the degree of religious involvement (strength of religious beliefs, religious participation and religious commitment) in the determination of life outcomes such as social mobility has been largely ignored in scholarly endeavours (Lehrer, 2004). Although

we find that religiosity has consequences for mobility most commentators prefer to dwell on the association of religious affiliation with socioeconomic status. Anecdotally, in comparison to men, women in Ghana are considered to be more religiously involved.

In the current study religiosity is delimited to religious participation which I define as the frequency and level of involvement in church activities. But neither gender nor religiosity are disaggregated in this work. The respondents in the study are considered to be ‘equally religiously involved’ regardless of their gender. This is explained as part of the methodology (page 110 in Chapter Four).

3.6 Religious Affiliation

Premium is given to the influence of religious affiliation (also variously referred to as religious denomination, religious preference or religious orientation) in the determination of mobility (El Khoury & Panizza, 2001; Gockel, 1969; Lehrer, 2004). The operationalization of religious affiliation is a subject of disagreement.

Many scholars have convincingly argued that when broad categories like Catholic, Protestant and Jew are used as denominational categories it is reductionist and does not embrace the variations that exist within them (Bouma, 1973; Mueller, 1980; Means, 1966; Rhodes & Nam, 1970; Roof, 1979; Warren, 2007). They bring to the fore the importance of considering the variety of sub-groups which may have slight differences in teaching, beliefs and practice but nevertheless belong to the larger group. More recently, Heaton (2013) in a transnational study refers to the broad categorisation of religions as a weakness of his study. Taking cognisance of the above, the current study relies on the observations of Wariboko (2012) which enable him differentiate between types of PG churches based on the core messages preached by their pastors.

Another controversy worthy of note is the period in an individual adherent's life that should be given prominence. Whereas most studies focus on religious affiliation at the present time or at the time of the study (El Khoury & Panizza, 2001; Gockel, 1969; Lehrer, 2004), this is rejected by Mueller (1980). According to him religious affiliation should be based on religious origin an idea rooted in the status attainment approach to social mobility advanced by Blau and Duncan (1967). Under this approach aspects of family background (cause) influence educational attainment and occupational aspirations and expectations (intervening variables) which result in earnings (outcome). In line with this viewpoint, Keister (2003; 2007) shows that childhood religion affects adult socio-economic outcomes as demonstrated by greater upward mobility of individuals raised in the Catholic Church compared to conservative and mainline Protestants. But he also acknowledges that the effect of childhood religion is most pronounced in young adults. Similarly, Keysar & Kosmin (1995) find that religious and family background are more influential to social status outcomes of younger women (aged 18-24) than for older women (aged 25-44) whose "...achievements are consequences of their own choices and decision making rather than family and religious origins"(Keysar & Kosmin, 1995:60). Thus we find that though credible, the status attainment approach is more suitable for researching younger cohorts rather than cases where respondents are further along in the lifecycle and may have changed denominations.

Save that previous religious affiliations of adherents are mentioned the current study does not examine the significance of the history of adherent's religious affiliation in detail. The focus is on current religious affiliation as the salient factor of the influence of religion on adherent social mobility outcomes.

3.7 Religion and Social Mobility in Africa

There is a dearth of research which interrogates social mobility on the continent of Africa. Two intergenerational studies (Bossuroy & Cogneau, 2013; Louw, 2006) but no intragenerational studies were found by this researcher. As a result, it is conceivable to observe that there is also a paucity of scholarship on the relationship between religion and social mobility on the African continent. As is consistent with general mobility research, the body of work appears to be survey-based. It is also worthy to note that many of them focus on how religious affiliation influences educational outcomes (Doctor, 2005; Heaton et al, 2009; Takyi & Addai, 2002) and wealth (Heaton *et al*, 2009).

Extending their study to include wealth and group-level analysis Heaton *et al* (2009) also find that generally Christians in Ghana and protestant Christians specifically exhibit higher levels of education and wealth compared to Muslims and adherents of other religions. The authors speculate that these differences may be as a result of factors including social capital and access to schools both of which are provided by religious associations.

Two notable studies in Malawi and Ghana have focused solely on women, religion and educational attainment (Doctor, 2005; Takyi & Addai, 2002). Both studies recorded findings which indicate differences in schooling by religious affiliation and are consistent in their analysis which show that Christian women attain higher educational status than Muslim women and women of other religious persuasions. Takyi & Addai, (2002) offer a more detailed analysis by introducing three age cohorts (15-24, 25-34 and 35-49) and conclude that religion plays an important role in determining whether or not women are educated,

particularly younger women. What then is the relationship between charismatic Christianity and social mobility? This question will be examined in the ensuing section.

3.8 Charismatic Christianity and Social Mobility

The literature generally points to positive outcomes for social mobility. Research based in Latin America (Brazil) found that the charismatic faith is associated with changes in consumption, with abstention from alcohol, tobacco, drugs and gambling (Lehmann, 1996; Martin B, 1998; Martin D, 1996; 1990). The ensuing monetary savings transformed household budgets with more disposable income available to families. For people, particularly of low economic standing PG is empowering (Harrison 2005; Marti 2012) as its message is understood as liberation not only from sin but from poverty which is an evil force (Yong, 2012).

On the African continent Solaru (2000) contends that the tithe doctrines of charismatic churches culminates in worsening poverty of adherents with monetary resources benefiting the emerging religious elite. Garner (2000) and Marshall (1993) in a contrasting view contend that in South Africa and Nigeria respectively membership of charismatic groups leads to a demonstrable change in economically significant attitudes and behaviour, which make upward mobility more likely. Additionally, Gifford (1998) and Spinks (2003) posit that women who attend charismatic churches generally aspire to be upwardly mobile and that these churches empower them to focus on attaining their goals regardless of their socio-economic status. These churches are a source of support usually through messages that encourage them to believe it is possible to move up the social mobility ladder.

Similarly, Maxwell (1998) in an ethnographic study of a Zimbabwean PG-type church indicates that some members recounted that they had been empowered to become socially mobile whilst others had been 'saved' from absolute poverty post-conversion. This implies

that ordinary members consciously link their current socio-economic status to religion but how their new religion has led to this remains a mystery. He gives an in-depth exposition about an activity called ‘working of talents’ which implores women members to set up small-scale businesses which serves to imbue in them “...self-reliance, indigenous business and black empowerment...” (Maxwell, 1998: 359). He however falls short (taking it as a given) of interrogating whether or not the women find that they have indeed become upwardly mobile. Gifford (2004a) observes that in Ghana there is widespread belief in the influence of spirits and the ability of these churches to free their members of these evil spirits which prohibit financial success may provide the energy and confidence needed to succeed. Also in Ghana Bonsu and Belk (2010) in an ethnographic study allude to some measure of economic mobility of members of a charismatic church in Ghana based on their assessment of opportunities provided by the church which may promote social and economic mobility. Their observations include the monetary support provided by the church to its members for profit-making ventures and the incessant encouragement of members by the clergy to patronise the services of other members and further to offer them employment in their enterprises when vacancies become available. Furthermore, they include adherent testimonies of how this monetary support and church networks have helped them financially. The discussion that ensues essentially reports the accounts of respondents but does not analyse them. Thus although the study highlights some interesting points the conclusions reached appear rather superficial.

3.9 Summary of Extant Literature

The field of religion-social mobility research is active, particularly in the developed world. The review has demonstrated that despite the wealth of work that has been done, the nature of

the relationship remains a hotly contested issue. The marginal research in developing or emerging nations in this discipline makes it a rich ground on which much can be mined with regards to the role religion or religious beliefs play in secular outcomes of which social mobility is a part. In this respect Lehrer, (2004:722) recognises the need for similar studies to be conducted in "...less developed economies". The current study situated in the Ghanaian context may be seen as a direct response to this call. From the forgoing discussion, there is little or more appropriately, inadequate research investigating the subjective perceptions of how adherents link religion and social mobility not only in the developing world but globally. This represents a gap in knowledge which this study hopes and seeks to help bridge. This doctoral thesis also has the added advantage of providing context-specific information on the PG which researchers, academics, the religious and all those interested in the subject matter may find useful.

3.10 Summary of Research Position in Relation to the Literature

1. I locate my work in the context of *glocalization* (see pages 7-8 of Chapter One for a detailed discussion). This enables a view which embraces local appropriation of the prosperity theology.
2. Social mobility is examined as an intragenerational concept with respect to how through religion adherents engage in actions that can result in changes that they deem are related to their own social mobility. These may include socioeconomic indicators like income, occupation, education, health and wealth. But the focus of this research is to allow adherents to convey their own constructs of how they perceive their own mobility and not to give them pre-defined indicators from which they must choose.
3. It would seem out of place to be examining social mobility without reference to social class of adherents. The elements that go into the determination of social class are complex

and it would be unfair to expect adherents to be able to give an adequate presentation of where they are on the social ladder: upper, middle or lower. The remit of this study is not to verify that social mobility has occurred but to understand how social mobility is constructed and interpreted from a religious point of view.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter sought to engage with the literature as it relates to the research interest both in general and specific terms. The examination of the social mobility literature showed that in the developing world social mobility research is limited. Social mobility is a multi-layered concept which is complex to investigate and subjective experiences pertaining to it are a less popular area of research. Accordingly the doctoral thesis is situated in the subjective, intragenerational frame.

A careful consideration of the debates surrounding the PG with respect to the particular segment(s) of society it relates to, appeals to or it is relevant to shows that there is no consensus on the matter. Following from the above, this research project adopts a ‘class-neutral’ approach and jettisons any pre-defined status categories.

The exploration of scholarly works by various contributors established that a large body of works from Max Weber to more recent works on religion and social mobility inadequately capture the subjective experiences of adherents, a lacuna this doctoral thesis seeks to help fill.

CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical framework

“There is no empirically observable activity in a human society that does not spring from some acting unit” Blumer, 1962 pp: 187

4.0 Introduction

Symbolic interaction (SI), a framework that has not proved popular for researching religion's role in society is chosen for my study. Because of its unpopularity the quantum of empirical studies in the sociology of religion which are supported by it are limited. Against the backdrop of the process of religious conversion, power negotiation and the fluidity of religious movements in the sociology of religion Neitz (1990) discussed the emergence of meaning as socially constructed in the 1980's and how that signified a gradual approach toward SI. Maines and McCallion (2002) examined how religion can play a role in power relations and Shupe (2003) looked at how SI might be used to interpret religious institutions in different societies. The mainstay of symbolic interactionists interested in religion has been on religion's role in the construction of meaning as well as the formation and maintenance of self-identity (Jorgensen, 1984; Straus, 1986; Creelan, 1987; Kaufman, 1989; Bruder, 1998; Wolkomir, 2000; Ajzenstadt & Cavaglio, 2002; Armato & Mardiglio, 2002; Hicks, 2008; Shoffstall, 2008).

From an interactionist point of view Beckford's (2003) description of religion as a social construct which changes within time and space fits in well with the social constructionist approach of SI, and resonates with Blumer's (1969) idea that sensitizing concepts should form the basis of knowledge production and not definitive concepts.

Before I settled on SI I had considered other theoretical approaches. I will briefly touch on these and then I will return to the discussion of SI and its application in this piece of research.

4.1 Theoretical Considerations

Sociologists of religion, including Durkheim who is considered a pioneer of the discipline, typically describe beliefs and rituals as religion's two most important components (Berger, 1990; Chalfant *et al.*, 1994; Durkheim, 1954, Schneider, 1990; Yinger, 1965). Weber, (1958; 1963) tends to focus on beliefs which he says are shared by followers of a common religion the interpretation of which helps the followers to live successful lives. The possibility of intersubjective meaning formed from the "...unified system of beliefs, rituals, and practices" Durkheim (1995: Original 1912) was labelled "collective representations". These ideas, beliefs and values all of which are shared by individual members of the religious community give rise to common behaviors. This was entertained by both scholars as that which allowed for the persistence of religion as a collection of believers who carry or perpetuate a culture. But Marx and Durkheim offer distinct perspectives on what religion is and what it does in society. Durkheim's understanding of religion examines what religion does in communities, a functionalist perspective which he distils into social cohesion and social control. Karl Marx (1964: Original 1848) views religion as an oppressive system created by the bourgeoisie class to pacify the proletariat, keep them in their place and thus maintain the status quo, hence his famous statement "[Religion] is the Opiate of the Masses." The conflict perspective of religion is modified by Max Weber (1996: Original 1930) as he explains how Calvinism combined with the protestant ethic led to the development of modern capitalism. Introducing the idea of *verstehen* (deep and empathetic understanding) to the study of large scale human behavior he used it in the application of his theory of social forces. Weber found that religion, in the form of Protestantism was the social force that gave rise to capitalism. He validated his

theory by conducting comparative studies of European countries and concluded that protestant countries industrialized faster than catholic ones. Predestination, a fundamental doctrine of Calvinism was used to justify the accumulation of wealth of some and the abject poverty of others. Marx and Weber are unified in their view that religion serves to maintain or perpetuates societal inequality.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is credited with introducing phenomenology as a philosophical theory (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2008), but its relevance as an approach in sociology was developed by Alfred Schutz (Overgaard & Zahavi, 2008). Unlike social action theorists phenomenologists reject the idea that social forces or laws influence human behavior. Rather, they seek to reveal how human awareness is implicated in the production of social action, social situations and social worlds (Natanson, 1970).

The foregoing perspectives are not appropriate for this research work because although they are concerned with human behavior (action) they do not concern themselves with the individual interactions that culminate in meanings that give rise to action. Furthermore, their interest in examining large scale patterns in society (macro-level analysis) is outside the scope of this study where empirical work is conducted at the individual or micro-level.

4.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction fits in with the objectives of this work. It is a micro-level theory in which the interpretation of cultural symbols is of primary importance because the meaning(s) that individuals attach to these symbols or objects is held to drive behavior. Thus all aspects of our lives; what we hold to be our experiences, what we say, how we say it and why we say it, what we do, how we do it and why we do it, in essence how we live is shaped by SI. Applying SI to religion means that Durkheim's elements of religious belief, rituals and practices are socially constructed. Accordingly, the meaning(s) that believers of the particular

community attach to them are meaningful because the community agrees that they are meaningful (Blumer, 1969). SI also posits that the meanings that arise from interpersonal interaction have significant influences on the self-concepts of the interacting individual. This will be the focus of research question three which is discussed in detail later in this Chapter. In a nutshell utilizing a SI perspective allows us to look at what religion does in the life of the follower.

Whereas a psychological perspective on meaning presumes that perceptions of meaning are rooted in individuals' subjective interpretations of experiences and interactions (Baumeister, 1991; Brief & Nord, 1990a; Wrzesniewski, 2003) the sociological view presumes that individuals ascribe meaning to things or come to see certain aspects of their lives as more or less meaningful in ways that reflect socially or culturally influenced worldviews and value systems (Geertz, 1973; Kluckhohn, 1951; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Mead, 1934). The words meaning and meaningful are often used interchangeably and this has created some confusion about what they mean (Roso *et al.*, 2010). Seeking to cure this confusion Pratt and Ashforth (2003) describe meaning to be the interpretation (output) of something or what something signifies whilst meaningfulness is the amount or degree of significance that a person attaches to something. In this work the differentiation offered by Pratt and Ashforth serves as a guide in the discussion of meaning and meaningfulness. Thus meaning refers to the type of meaning whilst meaningfulness is the degree of significance attached to the meaning.

SI is particularly appropriate because it allows for the simultaneous emphasis on the elements of process, construction of meaning and symbol as insider perspectives are gleaned.

I now discuss SI to further our understanding of how it is understood and used in this doctoral thesis.

4.2.1. Explaining Symbolic Interaction

SI is "...a process in which humans interact with symbols to construct meanings. Through SIs we acquire information and ideas, understand our own experiences and those of others, share feelings, and come to know other people. Without symbols none of this could happen." (Wood, 1992:63). "Symbols include words and many objects, and almost all acts around others contain a symbolic element. Words are the most important symbols, making human thinking possible." (Charon, 2007:58). The idea of SI rests very much on the German phenomenology of Husserl (1970) and Simmel (1950) and the philosophy of pragmatism found in the ideas of James (1890), Cooley (1918) and Mead (1934, 1977). Hebert Blumer, a student of Mead developed these ideas into a coherent theory which he named SI or SI theory in 1969. It is a social psychological theory which seeks to portray and understand the process of meaning making in order to understand human action. Perspective, interaction and meaning are the key focus of this theory which further emphasizes how people interpret themselves, others and their situations. It posits that people act individually, collectively and societally "...toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them, the meaning of things is derived from the social interaction that one has with one's fellows and these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he [sic] encounters" (Blumer, 1969: 2). In Blumer's explanation "things" can be physical objects (including other people and oneself), concepts such as social mobility and social status attainment or emotions like fear and happiness. The meanings given these objects come about as a result of past socialization and social interaction. Social interaction connotes communication (which is in itself symbolic) and is the mode through which significant or relevant symbols are produced as well as conveyed in language. In the interpretive process "The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes and

transforms the meaning in light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action.....meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action” (Blumer, 1969:5). Thus as Stets (1998) states the actor’s definition of the situation gives meaning to the symbol but these meanings may be reinforced or may change from further interactions with self (internal conversation) as a consequence of further interactions with others. This implies that meanings attributed to things may change as the actor considers relevant symbols such as the self, “...the activities of others, the anticipated activities of others, conventional definitions of the situation, past experience, goals, interest, values and so on” (Danico, 2004:51).

4.2.2 The ‘Schools’ of Symbolic Interaction

There are four variations of SI: the situational/processual or Chicago school; the social structural or Indiana school; the self-theory or Iowa school; and the historical-biographical school (Longmore, 1998). The *situational or processual approach* (Chicago school) is the ‘original’ and dominant perspective put forward by Blumer. It contends that survey methodology is inappropriate for use in this framework because the interpretive processes and the context in which these take place are fundamental to the individual’s formation and use of meaning. For Blumer this understanding is acquired through observation (induction) and not deduction which uses theory to generate a hypothesis.

Conversely, the proponents of the *Iowa school* associated with Manfurd Kuhn, (1964) advocate the use of positivist methodologies. They use surveys and other objective measures (Meltzer *et al.*, 1975) although they generally agree with other sections in Blumer’s interactionist framework.

Social structuralist (Indiana school) ideas are also consistent with much of the situational approach (Stryker, 1981) but we find that there are two key areas of departure. First, is the

preference to use mixed-methods approaches and second, is the emphasis on the active role of social structure in the way people interact with things.

Finally, the *historical-biographical approach* “brings in temporal considerations at the personal (as biography) and societal (as history) levels and is concerned with the larger cultural context within which selves are constructed” (Gecas & Burke, 1995: 44).

Thus, the premise of all three frameworks (Iowa school, social structuralist and historical-biographical) is that reality is socially constructed, macro-level phenomena are a product of actions at the micro-level and that these actions begin in the interpretive processes which occur at the individual level. These interpretations lead to the formation of meaning.

I shall in the ensuing section, concisely examine the situational approach because it fits in well with the anti-positivist methodology adopted for this work. It is my hope that the brevity will not be achieved at the expense of oversimplification of the understanding of the core theoretical principles of ‘situational’ SI.

4.3 ‘Situational’ Symbolic Interaction

In furtherance of Blumer’s work Denzin, (1995) succinctly laid out the theoretical and empirical practices which are fundamental to SI. He posits that the focus here is not on grand theories which describe society as a whole but rather a framework which enables us to “... study how people produce their situated versions of society, (and) thus a local understanding is important Denzin” (1995:44). In order to achieve this ‘contextual knowledge’ methods such as “...small-scale ethnographies, life stories, in-depth interviews...” are promoted. Rejecting objectification and quantification of human experience the outputs from enquiry are “...texts which remain close to the actual experiences of the people” and “...convey pathos, sentimentalism and a romantic identification with the persons being written about”

Denzin, (1995:44). Furthermore, an in-depth understanding of the social world cannot be achieved if we "...ignore the lived experiences of interacting individuals" in our enquiry as we ask questions of 'how' meaning is constructed and not 'why' it is constructed as it has been (Denzin, 1995: 44).

Flowing from the foregoing, three tenets of SI may be identified and these can be distilled into the core principles of *subjective meaning, language and symbols* respectively. Therefore, **meaning** is not inherent but is formed by the interaction(s) between subject (person) and object where an object is anything to which attention can be paid or action directed. Through **language** objects become **symbols** to which meanings are attached and actions are directed. Rose, (1962a:5) defines a symbol as "A stimulus that has a learned meaning and value for people and man's response to a symbol is in terms of its meaning and value rather than in terms of its physical stimulation of his sense organs" the symbol therefore serves to orient the individual to themselves, to others and to the world.

4.4 Symbols

In answering research question one symbols that are identified as associated with social mobility are explored. The symbolic analysis of religion has largely been an anthropological concern. Ritual has also tended to be the main interest of scholars of symbolic anthropology, notably of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz. For Geertz symbols are the "...means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz, 1973:89). Geertz argued for an emic approach to the study of sacred symbols in ritual performances. He said that "religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if often implicit) metaphysic..." (Geertz, 1973:90). For him religious symbols are models "... of the relations between the self and the world, and also a model for how to act in this world, a set of distinctive mental dispositions that motivate

specific forms of action” (Hoskins, 2015: 861). In a nutshell symbols are an instruction manual for the life journey.

On the other hand Turner implores us to differentiate between a symbol and a sign (Turner, 1975). In his conceptualization “a symbol can have multiple meanings” (Turner, 1975:155) as well as “...trigger social action and can give personal action form in a public arena” (Hoskins, 2015:860) whereas the meaning of a sign is straightforward and a way through which “...we master the world...” (Turner, 1975:155). Turner’s ritual analysis was developed during his study of the Ndembu tribe in the 1950’s. He defined ritual as “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings and powers” Turner, (1967:19). Religious symbols he postulated were the “storage unit” comprising objects, words, relationships, events, gestures or spatial units related to ritual observances. In this way symbols represent core religious values which can transform human attitudes and behavior because of their transcendent properties. He made the point that the transcendent or supernatural nature of rituals gave it extra value over and above secular forms of thought. Turner put forward three levels of ritual meaning: exegetical, operational and positional. The exegetical meaning extracts the meaning of the ritual from the practitioners (lay or specialist) themselves, operational meaning is borne from researcher observation of the ritual and how it is used and the positional meaning is derived from the researcher placing the symbol in relation to other symbols within the ritual complex thereby illuminating how it becomes meaningful.

Beyond the ritualistic foci of Turner and Geertz there are a number of other ‘symbolic levels’ that can be identified in this thesis. This includes social mobility which represents the fulfilment of the cardinal promise of the adherent’s faith which is that all believers will be successful in physical or this-worldly terms. Religion also presents a wide spectrum of symbols including religious forms like ritual observances (tithing, prayer, fasting, sprinkling

of oil and water, etcetera), teachings, art works etcetera all of which reflect ideals and values which are of deep religious significance to believers. Other objects which assume symbolic status by virtue of the religious space are the founders (leaders) and other followers who adhere to the religion. Leaders influence their followers to action primarily through what they do (their behavior) and what they say (inspirational and visionary messages) (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, 1977) when they address their followers. For example Davidson & Cadell (1994) found that pastors are significant others for many parishioners and as such through the language of their sermons are able to influence parishioner attitudes towards work.

It is important to note that through the process of human interaction objects are indicated, become part of the world of a community or culture assuming the status of “key symbols” (Ortner, 1973:1338), “dominant symbols” (Turner, 1967:31) or “core symbols” (Schneider, (1968) 1980:1). But how do we establish what these symbols are? Based on extensive field experience Ortner, (1973) puts forward five observations of which more than one would be signaled by the members of the culture if a symbol is core to that culture. Ortner’s indicators are as follows:

“1) The members say that X is culturally important. (2) They appear to be either positively or negatively aroused about X, rather than indifferent. (3) X comes up in many different contexts. These contexts may be behavioral or systemic: X comes up in many different kinds of action situation or conversation, or X comes up in many different symbolic domains (myth, ritual, art, formal, rhetoric, etc.). (4) There is greater cultural elaboration surrounding X, e.g., elaboration of vocabulary, or elaboration of details of X's nature, compared with similar phenomena in the culture. (5) There are greater cultural restrictions surrounding X, either in sheer number of rules, or severity of sanctions regarding its misuse” (Ortner, 1973:1339).

Writing from an American perspective Bowler (2013) expresses that typically PG is centered on four themes: faith, wealth, health and victory. Adopting the *glocalization* framework (pages 7-8 of Chapter One discusses this in detail) which stresses that there isn't a uniformity in the mode of expression of prosperity theology Bowler's four themes are broad enough to serve as a starting point, particularly in the discussion on symbols of prosperity or social mobility. Folarin (2006) in his work on the Nigerian PG also notes denominational differences in the way these themes which he terms as elements are developed and emphasized.² It is my contention that all the symbols which adherents interact with become factors (of varying significance or meaningfulness) in the way adherents view and act towards their social mobility objectives.

4.5 Meaning

"Self-indication is a moving communicative process in which the individual notes things, assesses them, gives them a meaning, and decides to act on the basis of the meaning."- Blumer, H. (2005: 93)

The goals, motivations, activities and behaviors of individuals have been found to be influenced by the meanings they give to their beliefs and experiences (Dweck, 1999; Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003; Epstein, 1985; Fox, 2002; Silberman, 2003, 2004). Marshall, (1986: 125) suggests that people "...create the meanings that allow (them) to make sense of, and to make (their) way in the world". Further, meaning making is recognized as a key process and activity for the generality of humankind (Frankyl, 1984; Geertz, 1973; Taylor, 1983).

The meanings individuals attach to religious forms (stories, instruction, rituals, symbolism, discourses etc.), have received attention in a number of academic works (Barwise, 1988;

² Bowler and Folarin's assertions are from their analysis of the teachings of these churches and not from adherent accounts.

Gluckmann, 1970; Grant II, 2001; Johnson- Laird, 1988 & Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Departing from the views that meanings given to religious forms can be generalized, the scholarly field has developed to a stage where religious meanings are no longer viewed in a 'one size fits all' fashion but in frameworks which focus on the "... pluralistic meanings that it elicits" (through) "...religious symbols, stories and practices (which) are not universally shared and that they vary by social context." (Grant II, 2001:233,234). Research question two interrogates the meanings adherents give to the symbols that represent social mobility and the actions that they pursue following meaning-making. The process of making meaning begins with the formation of the symbols (explored in research question one) which become a "tool kit...for strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986:273). These symbols trigger an internal conversation with self which gives rise to thought, then meaning and finally action as the output.

Individuals act based on their 'definition of the situation', which is their socially constructed view of the world. The definitions are created over time and through social interaction, these definitions become sedimented creating patterns of action and structure (Blumer, 1969; Fine, 1992; Prasad 1993). A SI perspective assumes that social mobility is driven by the way that things related to it are constructed within the religion, and that we can best understand social mobility by analyzing the related symbolic processes that are sedimented into the religious culture. The 'definition of the situation' is popularly conceptualized as 'frames' in research works. As a concept it has been used in a variety of disciplines including psychology (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), political science (Gamson and Lasch, 1983; Entman, 1993) and communications (Tensbrunsel and Messick, 1999). Drawing from these studies MacLean, (2008:6) defines frames as "...the cognitive categories and analytical labels people use to describe, interpret, and sort out events, issues, and entities for themselves and others in order to understand and predict their environment." MacLean (2008) suggests that it is not

uncommon for different disciplines to use different terminologies when discussing framing. I adopt and use the term ‘symbolic constructions’ (Prasad, 1993:1411) instead of frame because I feel the uses of the word symbolic makes it easily associated with SI unlike ‘frames’ which is arguably, ambiguous.

The significance of meaning is determined by a factor called sedimentation which implies permanency of a concept in a culture with agency giving way to structure (Fine, 1992). In this context sedimented meanings are those which are shared by adherents and are therefore highly influential or more meaningful. They are at the top of the meaning pyramid representing a higher level of influence in comparison to others found in the culture. It is important to note that the nature of interaction experiences can change thus altering the internal dialogue. This suggests that the meaning of symbols may change at different times in a person’s life. Sedimentation and the factors influencing it are discussed as part of research question two.

4.5.1 The Study of Religious Meaning

Not surprisingly, there are a number of viewpoints social scientists interested in the study of the meaning(s) people give to religious instruction, symbols and rituals. These include gendered/feminist (Palmer, 1994), historical and documentary content analysis (Stark, 1996), textual interpretations (Bartowski, 1997), subjective belief (Stark and Glock, 1968), transcendent symbol (Geertz, 1966; Berger, 1967), cultural object (or story) (Wuthnow, 1987) and meaning as practice (Ammerman, 1996; Grant II, 2001; Warner, 1996). This review concentrates on the latter four of the above because the first three are not applicable to this research. Investigating meaning in the subjectivist paradigm leans towards the classical sociologists like Marx, Weber and Durkheim. They conceptualized religion as a system of subjective beliefs and attitudes about reality and drove the idea that religious symbols are

interpreted as shared meanings or intersubjective meanings by people of the same faith and that this is a source of group cohesion and unity of purpose. This approach has been popular particularly with American sociologists beginning with Stark and Glock, (1968). Despite the anti-positivist stance of classical sociologists (Durkheim is an exception) proponents have mainly used survey methodology as a means to investigate individual's religious opinions, values and beliefs. At the center of the subjectivist approach to religious meaning is the place of religion as a by-product of other social forces, for example social class, poverty and egalitarianism thus diminishing its importance as it is not studied "... as a significant factor in its own right" (Grant II, 2001).

Pioneering the religious meaning as transcendent symbol Geertz (1966) and Berger (1967) extended the ideas of classical theorists by introducing concepts which take cognizance of "...specific contexts in which a symbol or individual is located" (Grant II, 2001: 237). Here hermeneutics and phenomenology are the primary modes of interpreting meanings around religious symbolism(s) and ritual practices. It is hinged on the idea that it is possible to investigate meanings by studying the patterns and relations in religious symbols.

Presenting meaning as cultural object Wuthnow (1987) fused some elements of subjectivism and transcendent symbol, particularly the contextual nature of meaning found in the latter. He is however emphatic that symbols evoke multiple meanings and that how meaning is communicated and institutionalized is more important than what is communicated. The fulcrum of this perspective is that since meaning is contextually or socially constructed meaning cannot be an absolute truth. Methodologically this approach is suited to discourse and historical analysis, although some sociologists, notably Greeley (1996) have employed surveys.

The religious meaning as practice is the newest of the four approaches discussed and can be described as a fusion of all three of the above as it borrows some key elements from each of them. It maintains the institutional influences (social forces) associated with the subjectivist approach whilst taking cognizance of the “emotion” religion elicits (Warner, 1996: 213). Emotion here introduces psychology into the study of meaning. From symbolic transcendence it recognizes that symbols generate meaning and emphasizes that the same symbols are not always subject to universal interpretation, as the meaning given them would depend on the particular religious group doing the interpretation (Ammerman, 1996). From meaning as cultural object it retains the notion that how the individual makes meaning is key but argues that the focus should be on “... how people make a life rather than how they make sense...” Thus the focus here is on “action” rather than “thought” (Grant II, 2001).

All four viewpoints raise important considerations relating to the rich multidimensional nature of religious meaning and how it can be approached. With these in mind I next discuss the approach that I will be adopting in this thesis.

4.5.2 Application of Meaning in this Study

Blumer’s interaction culminates in the formation of meaning which for him is at the center of human behavior with meaning attributed to abstract, physical and social objects, from which reality is projected (Blumer, 1969). As an interactionist symbols are not limited to inanimate objects but extend to social symbols which in this research project are people; adherents and leaders alike.

Typically, beliefs and rituals are assumed to be the most important symbols of religion (Yinger, 1965; Schneider 1970; Roberts 1990; Berger, 1990; Chalfant *et al* 1994) and consequently meanings derived from religion have mainly looked at meanings derived from beliefs and rituals as they relate to the sacred. These sorts of meanings are “... readily

available to practitioners. If you asked them what a ritual, gesture or a term meant they would be able to tell you” (Bush, 2012). For example, in Catholicism the host is held high during the Eucharist to express the elevation of heavenly realities against earthly ones whilst the congregation kneels to express submission to God and the Church hierarchy (Bell, 1992).

I agree with Weber (1958; 1963; 1980) that beliefs are reinforced by the consistent performance of religious rituals as a collective in formal spaces and the interpretations of these help believers succeed in life. He also goes beyond the sacred to suggest that people from the same religious grouping would be expected to behave in similar ways towards things. But this does not necessarily stem from their having full consensus on meaning. For example Fernandez (1965) in his interviews with 20 members of *Biwiti*, a group derived from the Fang ancestral cult in Gabon found that there was consensus and variation in the meanings people give to the religious symbols particularly rituals, but in spite of this group members exhibited similar behavior. Similarly, Stromberg (1981) in his study on how meanings influence “inner worldly” activism in a Swedish reformist sect conducted in-depth interviews with three members. He found that whilst they spoke of the same symbols and statements as being meaningful to them their interpretations of these were substantially different. But despite the variations they all pointed to activism as being the consequence of these meanings. Stromberg asserts that the reasons for the differences can be explained by the leadership: they promote varying interpretations of religious symbols as long as members believe in Jesus Christ and make no official direct linkages between symbols and “this-worldly consequences.” The consensus on the end-result, activism is a consequence of what he calls “formal or structural consensus (...) that is vital to the sociological coherence and basic unity in ideological orientation in the group as a whole” (Stromberg, 1981:557). In other words they act towards activism as they do because it is a core principle (value) of the Church which the members identify with and therefore exhibit activist behaviors. Thus there

can be a unity of purpose even where consensus is missing. In line with this SI scholars are agreed that meaning or interpretation of symbols has behavior-affecting consequences. While symbols may elicit different meanings I expect that as in Stromberg's 1981 study there would be "formal consensus" that adherents take actions to ensure the attainment of social mobility. The above examples are an indication of the multi-vocal and polysemous nature of meaning (LeVine, 1984). Taking cognizance of these ideas meaning is viewed using the cultural object approach. According to Griswold (1994), a cultural object is "a socially meaningful expression that is audible, visible, or tangible, or can be articulated. A cultural object, moreover, tells a story, and that story may be told, sung, set in stone, enacted or painted on the body." (Griswold, 1994:11-12). Accordingly, as a religious doctrine, the PG is representative of a cultural object. Adherents as consumers of this cultural object make meaning "in the course and the process of interaction with and use of the object in the context of everyday experience" (Harrison, 1995:12). This accords with the SI perspective that meaning does not reside in the object itself but is decoded by the actor in an ongoing process which involves both construction and re-construction of meaning within a social, economic and historical context (Hall 1994, 1980; Denzin, 1990). In this work religious doctrine is conceived as fluid, negotiated, and emergent in the context of human interaction and meaning making.

4.5.3 The Meaning of Money

Regardless of the discipline or point of view from which scholars have approached the meaning of money there is a general agreement that the ways in which people perceive money and act towards it is largely governed "...by powerful often unrecognized (emotional) forces that reside deep in the psyche of individuals" (Medina et al., 1996:126).

With respect to money and the meanings that it holds scholars have not explored how money is understood by the religiously aligned. This may be because for many religions money is not a key concern.

Scholars like Yamauchi and Templer who have taken on the study of money as relates to the meanings that it holds have developed scales which explore the dimensions of money. For example Yamauchi and Templer's (1982) money attitude scale which put forward four dimensions of money namely (1) power-prestige, (2) retention-time, (3) distrust, and (4) anxiety has been used in scholarship notably by Gresham and Fontenot, (1989), Medina *et al.* (1996) Roberts and Sepulveda (1999 a, b) and others. Analysis of survey data consistently reveals that for most people money is viewed in the dimension of power-prestige. According to Goldberg and Lewis, (1978) this represents the interpretation of money as a means to acquiring status, an intangible (symbolic) object as opposed to the ability to afford material things such as cars, houses or even food. But Eastman *et al.* (1997) view wealth as the possession of status objects the very material things that Goldberg and Lewis (1978) discount. For Walker and Garman, (1992) people who are oriented towards power-prestige view money as an object that affords one the ability to pursue their self-interests by removing the obstacles that stand between them and the goods and services necessary to do so. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, (1981: 39) express the view that money is a "form of power that consists of respect, consideration, and envy from others and represents the goals of a culture" which power according to Bell, (1998) is represented by material wealth. There is some debate about the factors that influence how money is understood. Rokeach (1973) and Tang, (1992) find that values (including religious values) guide perception of and action towards money. Furnham & Argyle, (1998) argue the perceptions about money and the role that it plays can be a function of a host of factors ranging from demographic to personality

traits, but this is refuted by Yamauchi and Templer, (1982) who find that the meanings attributed to money are independent of these.

Scholarship does not appear to have an interest in the meanings that money or wealth have in the religious space.

4.5.4 Religion and the Meaning of Health

The importance of exploring religion as a context for understanding the meanings of health has been advocated by scholars as an exploration that can offer accounts of health that are different from mainstream accounts (Dutta, 2008; Gilgun, 2002; Hodge, Limb, & Cross, 2009; Lowery, 1998). Research also indicates that the religious worldview informs how health is interpreted (Dutta, 2008; Kleinman et al 1978), an example of which is the Native American religious beliefs which place the spirit at the center of a person's health (Gilgun, 2002; Lowery, 1998). The worldview also informs how health is approached and how a wide variety of health behaviors and health decisions are understood by cultural members (Dutta and Yeha, 2010). These form the basis for which Dutta (2008) asserts that religious beliefs and perceptions about health are intrinsically linked.

4.6 Self-Concept

Encompassing identities and self-evaluations (self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-image) the self-concept or self-perception is a key dimension within SI (Gecas, 1982). At all levels of interaction the notion of the self is central, involving an inner dialogue which Mead (1934) refers to as the 'I' and 'Me', the talker and the listener which he expresses is a reflexive process where an individual sees themselves as both subject and object. This reflexive ability means that we are able to hold an inner conversation with ourselves in a manner that reflects the way in which we are spoken to or reacted towards by others.

There are many definitions of self-concept. Baumeister (1999:56) provides the following self-concept definition: "the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is". The Collins English dictionary defines it as "the whole set of attitudes, opinions, and cognitions that a person has of himself or herself". Consistent with the interactionist approach is Rosenberg's definition of the self-concept as "the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having referenced to himself as an object" (1979:7). I find Rosenberg's definition apposite for this work. Since the self-concept develops through interactions with agents of socialization (Rosenberg, 1982) it is therefore based on how we define ourselves in relation to others (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Social-psychological theories to which SI belongs identify four main sources of knowledge about the self: reflected appraisals, social comparisons, self-appraisals and cultural and societal influences (Gecas 1982; Rosenberg 1981, 1991). In SI thought the self-concept arises from "...reflected appraisals of significant others in one's social environment" (Franks and Marolla, 1976:325). It is to this which we next turn our attention.

4.6.1 The self-concept: A Product of Reflected Appraisals

Reflected appraisals are implicit in Cooley's (1902) influential concept of the "looking-glass self" and in Mead's (1934) theory which states that the self-concept develops through the process of taking the role of the other and holds that the way that people feel about themselves is contingent upon their judgements of what others think of them. The process of reflected appraisals is the cornerstone of the SI perspective on self-concept formation and has been the subject of many studies across a myriad of disciplines (Ostrow, 1982). According to Cooley (1902: 184), reflected appraisals consist of three components: "the imagination of our appearance to [a referent]; the imagination of [the referent's] judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification." Two kinds of referents are

critical to the process, those whose opinion matters to us (particularized other(s)) and those who we use as a point of reference for viewing the self because we belong in the same social group or community (generalized other(s)) (Cooley, 1902; Felson, 1989; Mead, 1962).

The self is produced by observation and conversation within oneself and is therefore not accessible to empirical investigation but provides the philosophical underpinning for social-psychological inquiries into the self-concept. The self-concept is the output of this internalization which arises out of the individual's reflexive, social, and symbolic activities (Gecas, 1982). Research question three examines how adherent self-concept(s) arises from reflected appraisals within the context of their association with the symbolism that arises from PG. The implications that this may have on social mobility are also explored.

A study by Ichiyama (1993) evidenced that the reflected appraisals of significant others are internalized by individuals, affect their self-appraisals and that people generally tend to project their self-appraisals onto others. Thus reflected appraisals are not factual evaluations but subjective perceptions of those evaluations. Swan and Read (1981) suggest that people are more inclined to accept positive judgements about who they are. They are therefore inclined to seeking out appraisers who will judge them positively whilst avoiding those who are likely to judge them negatively.

4.6.2 Application of Reflected Appraisals in this Study

Reflected appraisals are especially relevant in this work because apart from the general interactions between members during church services most of those who participated in this study were actively involved in various voluntary groups in their respective churches. This exposed them to further interactions as they tended to spend long periods in group interaction. Research has shown that people want to belong to groups which come with high prestige and respect (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) because it helps them maintain a positive self-

image and enhances self-esteem (Dutton et al., 1994). They also value the opinions that others in the group have of them as this is perceived as reflecting their status in the group and enhances self-esteem (Fuller *et al.*, 2006). In the context of group interaction reflected appraisals are neither easily distinguishable on a case by case basis nor on the view of how individual significant others perceive the subject but are based on the perception of attitudes held by an entire group. The generalized other will be applied in the analysis of member-interactions with the whole while the particularized other is applied to reflected appraisals arising out of specific member-member interactions where they arise. But reflected appraisals are not limited to member-member interactions. In the context of this work it extends to include two more levels of interaction: between the lay faithful and founders and between the lay faithful and the supernatural. As standalone entities these two ‘species’ of interactants can be analyzed within the frame of particularized others.

The present study concerns itself with the two core dimensions of self-concept: self-esteem, and self-efficacy both of which are products of reflected appraisals. Self-esteem refers to “people’s evaluations of their own self-worth—that is, the extent to which they view themselves as good, competent, and decent” (Aronson *et al.*, 2001:19). Generally the extant literature presents a dichotomous view of what self-esteem is, outlining it as self-worth and a sense of power, competence or personal efficacy (Brissett, 1972; Gecas, 1971; Franks and Marolla, 1976; Tafarodi and Swan, 1995, 1996). The above present self-efficacy designated here as personal efficacy as a feature or a dimension of self-esteem. Owens, (1993) and Aronson *et al.* (2001) advance the minority opinion, only highlighting the dimension of self-worth. Self-esteem is viewed as the key to financial success, health, and personal fulfillment, and regarded as the antidote to underachievement, crime, and drug abuse (Branden, 1994; Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989). This is because “high levels of self-esteem are empirically associated with ostensibly valued characteristics such as creativity, emotional

responsiveness and inter-personal skills; low levels of self-esteem imply socially undesirable attributes such as passive dependency, poor social skills, defeatist attitudes and general incompetency” (Franks and Marolla, 1976:324).

Self-efficacy as defined by Bandura, (1994:1) is “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave.” Feelings of capability are accompanied by a sense of effectiveness and control over situations and or tasks (Tafarodi and Swan, 1995). A sense of high self-efficacy also motivates purposive behavior (Schunk and Meece, 2006; Smith, 1968 and White, 1959, 1963) and determines how much effort as well as how long a person will persevere in enacting goal attainment when confronted with difficulties (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Pajares, 1997; Seligman, 1975).

The similarities between the two dimensions may lead to a conclusion that self-esteem and self-efficacy are one and the same. The distinctions advanced by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998:67) may be helpful in dealing with this difficulty. They put forward three differences.

1. Self-esteem represents evaluation across a wide variety of different situations but self-efficacy is the conviction a person has about their capability to perform specific tasks in particular contexts.
2. Self-esteem tends to be more stable but self-efficacy tends to change over time with the emergence of new information and experience with carrying out tasks.
3. Self-esteem is more affective and derives from how a person feels about themselves for example self-worth but self-efficacy is more cognitive based with people exhibiting different levels of mastery (high and low efficacy) in various tasks with neither of these resulting in a change in their overall self-esteem.

4.6.3 Religion and Reflected Appraisals

Paris (1982); Taylor & Chatters (1988) and Williams (1974) comment on religious groups as network driven and effective in bringing together individuals who have similar status characteristics and share common religious beliefs. The interactions that take place between them may have implications for their self-esteem or self-efficacy (sense of empowerment). In addition to that church members have been shown to be key in supporting other members emotionally and financially (Maton 1987; Maton & Rappaport 1984) which boosts self-esteem. Ellison, (1993:1029) in his study on Black churches explains that formal and informal involvement in church communities are activities through which people "...gain affirmation that their personal conduct and emotions with regard to daily events, experiences, and community affairs are reasonable and appropriate" and that in this way "...churches may provide an interpersonal context in which members are evaluated by coreligionists, and hence come to evaluate themselves..." (Ellison, 1993:1030) in terms of their "social performances (e.g., friendliness, community service) and their spiritual capital (e.g., morality, insight, wisdom)" (pp 1043) rather than on their socioeconomic status or physical appearance.

In this same study interactions with a divine being were found to enhance self-efficacy by yielding a sense of empowerment because of the belief that God is a supporter, collaborator or partner and therefore the believer is not alone. Further, the belief that God "...has unconditional positive regard for every person" (Ellison, 1993:1030) has the ability to improve self-esteem.

Focusing on interaction with the divine by means of an active (frequent) prayer life has been speculated as having positive implications for self-esteem, self-worth and overall life purpose for committed Christians (Black, 1999; Ellison 1991, Mattis and Jagers, 2001; Pollner, 1989). Beyond speculation empirical research shows that the frequency of prayer has a

positive effect on self-esteem and a negative effect on self-efficacy (Ellison, 1993; Koenig et al., 2001). Schieman *et al.* (2003) however suggest that rather than frequency the content or context within which prayer is enacted should be examined as this will offer a deeper understanding of the subject.

Bergner and Holmes (2000) have distilled four requirements which must be met in order that a reflected appraisal becomes significant enough to affect self-concept, and one of these is that interaction with the ‘appraiser’ should be numerous and consistent, which means that frequency of interaction cannot be written away. I share this viewpoint as can be seen from the selection criteria used in recruiting respondents (detailed on pages 109-110 of Chapter Five) but also acknowledge the views of Schieman *et al* (2003) concerning context and content.

Researchers have found that in times of stress or other potentially destabilizing occurrences belief in the potency of the divine reduces worry and self-blame but may diminish self-efficacy by detracting from personal efforts to solve the problem (Ellison, 1991, 1993; Spilka & Schmidt, 1983; Wikström, 1987). Persons tend to reframe the situations positively as opportunities for personal or spiritual growth or as part of a broader divine plan thereby giving them the confidence that they are able to deal with problems over the long term (Ellison, 1994; Idler 1995; Pargament 1997; Pargament et al. 1990). But the association is not all positive with some studies pointing to an erosion in self-esteem due to feelings of self-doubt and guilt which arise from the awareness about the sinful nature of humankind that is highlighted by religion (Branden, 1983; Ellis, 1980).

Interaction with the divine is augmented by scriptural study, regular participation in rituals, worship activities, and other collective spiritual events which are accorded sacred significance and serve to guide and reassure the practitioner (Ellison 1991; Idler 1987; Idler

& Kasl 1997; Pollner 1989; Poloma & Gallup 1991; Williams et al. 1991). Through these activities religious and spiritual beliefs assume a greater relevance and practitioners acquire feelings of hopefulness, optimism and peace and rid themselves of negative emotions (Ellison & Levin 1998; Levin & Chatters 1998). In this way reflected appraisals are extended to include supernatural influences.

The construction of relationships with the divine 'other' may also be through Biblical figures or in the case of charismatic Christians founders of their churches who are symbols of divine authority. Engaging in role-taking with these forms further establishes divine relations and engenders positive experiences and perceptions of self (Pollner, 1989; Poloma & Pendleton, 1989; Schieman *et al*, 2005).

We gather that research on religion and the self-concept is vast. But none of the above examine how this plays out in PG circles. The added uniqueness of the application of reflected appraisals in this work is the meshing in of PG symbols in the analysis of the self-concept.

4.7 Justification For and Drawbacks of Symbolic Interaction

The basis of the SI framework is the view that reality is a subjective construct which makes it a good theoretical match for studies where objectivity or facts are not the focus. This viewpoint coheres with the interpretive approach of this doctoral thesis. I am interested in the subjective accounts of the meaning a belief system (PG) holds for adherents specifically with respect to how it informs their attitudes towards social mobility and their actions towards the attainment of same. Blumer's explication of the three core components of the theory gives added appeal to the use of constructivism. The subjects here are adherents interacting with different types of objects at different levels; symbols represented by religious leaders, other adherents, religious forms (beliefs, rituals, artifacts etcetera) and social mobility. In my view

all these objects are subject to interpretation by adherents and may influence their behavior. The choice of this framework is based on the presence of all three of the basic tenets postulated by Mead in his conceptualization of SI and further developed by Blumer and others. In adopting an interactionist approach I conceive of doctrinal meaning as multi-vocal as well as polysemous and thus go against the “sacred canopy” school of thought (Berger 1967; Berger and Luckman 1966) where doctrinal meaning is fixed.

It must however be noted that as a theory, situational SI has its drawbacks. For example, it has been criticized for being too broad, emphasizing individual behavior, ignoring emotional and psychological factors and not being falsifiable (McClelland, 2000; West & Turner, 2007). To counter the claim of falsification, proponents of SI argue that it is not a unified theory but a framework that guides the enquiry on what constitutes data and thus it should not be viewed in the conventional sense of generating data that test theory. This is concisely explained by Young, (1991:1) who argues that “SI theory is a loose set of assumptions about how symbols are used to create a shared frame of meaning which, in turn, is used to organize and to interpret human behavior in loose and ever changing patterns of work, commerce, family, worship and play”. The emphasis of self-concept formation as a function of reflected appraisals has been criticized as being one-sided and in danger of offering an over-socialized, passive view of man (Turner, 1962, 1968; Wrong, 1961).

Some scholars have gone as far as designating all qualitative research as belonging to the SI tradition (Willis, 2007). Further, criticism of SI is based on its focus on the particular (individual) which suggests to some commentators that it nullifies the significance of macro elements such as social forces, power structures like institutions and history on human actions (Barry, 1995; Denzin, 1995; West & Turner, 2007). But surely that claim is contestable because the very foundation upon which the theory rests is that human beings by their very nature will interact with all things in their environment. These limitations notwithstanding, SI

remains a popular heuristic tool for studies such as this one where the individual is conceptualized as the ‘meaning maker’ in the social world.

4.8 Conclusion

As set out in the introductory chapter this work is set in two of the pioneering Indigenous Neo-charismatic Churches in Ghana with the goal of shedding new light on the hitherto largely unexplored cognitive worlds of followers of the doctrine of prosperity espoused by the churches. This chapter has positioned my work within a theoretical perspective that speaks to all the elements of interest that I will be examining. The added appeal to SI is that it will allow me to present a viewpoint of the PG through the exploration of symbols, meanings, actions and self-concepts in a way that has not been done before. In so-doing I hope to contribute to the scholarship in this field in a unique way especially in the Ghanaian context.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology

“Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted” **Albert Einstein**

5.0 Introduction

The nature of social science research; how it should be conceived, its philosophical underpinnings, theoretical leanings, methods of empirical data collection and analysis continues to be debated. These views result in paradigms which “...determine how members of research communities view both the phenomena their particular community studies and the research methodology that should be employed to study those phenomena” (Tuli, 2011: 98). A paradigm can therefore be said to be “...a pattern, structure and framework or system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions” (Olsen, Lodwick, & Dunlap, 1992:16).

It follows that the approach to research is dependent on of all the above considerations. In a nutshell the researchers' view of the social world (ontology) and the way they think the social world should be investigated in order to understand it (epistemology) determines the research approach that will be pursued. This chapter presents the philosophical, theoretical and analytical approach adopted by the researcher for this study. It also discusses the methods, sampling strategy, ethical and practical concerns as well as limitations pertaining to the study. All these elements serve to fulfill the overarching purpose of this chapter which is to situate my work methodologically.

5.1 Approach to Social Science Research

Quantitative and qualitative approaches represent two distinct pathways in social research. Proponents of the quantitative approach, an approach greatly influenced by the natural sciences include Comte, Durkheim and Mill. Quantitative approaches have been described as “dominant paradigm and positivist position” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:11). Realist ontology where reality is conceived as comprising “...hard, intangible structures that exist irrespective of our labels” and existing “separate from the individuals perception of it” (Aryal, 2007:57) sits comfortably in a quantitative framework.

The qualitative approach as espoused by the likes of Dilthey and Weber developed after the former. It has been described as an “alternative paradigm” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:46), “naturalistic paradigm” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and “interpretive research” (Smith, 1983:6) to name a few. Ontologically nominalism which views reality to be a relative construct which is determined by “...names, concepts and labels that help the individual structure reality” (Aryal, 2007: 57) is consistent with a qualitative approach.

The general definition given by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) is apt:

"Quantitative research is based on observations that are converted into discrete units by using statistical analysis. Qualitative research, on the other hand, generally examines people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:2).

Worthy of mention is a third approach, mixed methods research. A “mixed method design (called multi-method, triangulated and integrated design is an amalgamation of both

quantitative and qualitative research methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data” (Tilley & Long, 2014: 250). Whilst Tashokori and Teddlie (1998) present mixed methods as a research methodology other notable proponents consider it to be a method (Creswell, 2003; Elliot, 2005; Greene et al, 1989). The ensuing discussion will center on realism and nominalism associated with quantitative and qualitative approaches respectively. On opposing sides of the divide on the nature of the social world they give rise to two distinct epistemological positions: positivism or objectivism which aligns with realist ontology and anti-positivism also called subjectivism which aligns with nominalist ontology.

5.2 The Nature of Social Science Research: Positivism and Anti-Positivism

Emanating from the philosophical ideas of Auguste Comte positivism promotes a scientific method of exploring social reality based on the scientific assumptions of determinism, empiricism, parsimony, and generality (Bryman, 2012; Cohen *et al*, 2000). Methodologically, a nomothetic approach (devoid of the individuals own narrative or perspective) is adopted, and thus an understanding of the social world is gained by scientific observation (Bassey, 1995) where the inquirer does not become involved in the world of those he or she is researching. It is assumed that this type of inquiry will generate facts which are objective and constitute reality. Consequently, findings are represented quantitatively in numbers which explain the world (Bassey, 1995; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Mutch, 2005). For the objectivist “knowledge is stable because the essential properties of objects are knowable and relatively unchanging. The important metaphysical assumption of objectivism is that the world is real, it is structured, and that structure can be modeled for the learner” (Jonassen, 1991:28).

Anti-positivism on the other hand is a counter ‘movement’ which proposes that a single phenomenon can present multiple, complex realities due to varying interpretations which

cannot be reduced to facts (Cohen *et al*, 2000). Qualitative methodology is employed by researchers who lean to this approach. Here what constitutes reality is subjective in the sense that it is constructed by the individual according to the sense that they make out of it. In this way we gain insights into the reasons, opinions and motivations that underlie human conduct through the language and behavior that those individuals express during the enquiry.

5.3 Researchers Choice of Approach

It is my contention that the questions this research seeks to answer will not be adequately addressed by a quantitative or positivist approach either methodologically or as a tool for data collection. Status attainment or social mobility which is one of the key concepts in this thesis has been widely examined mainly through positivist lenses. Early empirical works used large data sets of numeric data to conduct tabular analysis of mobility's connection with education, occupation and social origins (Glass, 1954; Gusfield, 1961; Halsey *et al.*, 1961; Jencks, 1972; Lipset and Bendix, 1959; Lipset and Rogoff, 1954; Miller and Form, 1951; Turner, 1960; Wilensky, 1964). Following this Blau and Duncan's pioneering work in 1967 heralded the introduction of causal models predicting individuals' status attainment with variables like socioeconomic status of origin, father's educational attainment, respondents own educational and occupational attainment etcetera. The field of social mobility research continues to grow and still mainly relies on large data sets for analysis (Bingley *et al.*, 2011; Breen and Goldthorpe, 1999; 2001; Halsey *et al.*, 1980; Herrnstein and Murray 1994; Iannelli and Paterson, 2005; Korenmana and Winship, 2000). Researchers who have chosen qualitative designs and thus elicited subjective views in their work on social mobility are in the minority (Kelly & Evans, 1995; Kelly & Kelly, 2009; Gross, 2003; Lindermann, 2007; van den Berg, 2011). Nevertheless they too usually use large data sets and concentrate on how objective indicators influence subjective social position. van den Berg is an exception in her work with

a small sample size and respondents ‘deciding’ for themselves what it is that constitutes status attainment.

This study is conducted qualitatively for a number of reasons. Firstly, qualitative designs generate richer data and can provide important outcomes with smaller samples (Maxwell 2005; Denzin et al. 2006; Brown 2010). Secondly, the study intends to observe the religious life of respondents under a natural setting which Creswell (2003) elucidates is an important component in qualitative research designs. Thirdly, a study that seeks to unravel the meanings from the symbols that surround the respondents in their lived experiences of social mobility will require the use of qualitative data collection instruments that allow for in-depth investigation into the nuances of their journeys. The study of these subjectivities is bound to throw out a complex mix of elements, which require an approach that is capable of explaining these complexities. In-depth interviews that “generate data which give an authentic insight into people’s experiences” (Silverman, 1993: 91) are the popular data collection tool in qualitative research. Also quantitative research has been found to be inadequate in handling complexities (Gummesson, 2006) as it tends to hold some variables constant. Further informing my choice is the fact that extensive data sets such as those employed in the empirical works cited in this sub-section are first of all only sparingly available in Ghana, Furthermore, the use of survey data is at odds with my overarching aim which is to understand social status attainment from an emic perspective. I want the participants themselves to tell me what they think, experience and make of their mobility journeys. With the goal of shedding new light on the hitherto largely unexplored cognitive worlds of followers of the doctrine of prosperity espoused by the churches my research aims to explore how individuals define, interpret and give meaning to their own social mobility paths and how individuals perceive the intersection of social status attainment and PG in Ghana’s INCs. These are not suited to a positivist approach which mainly relies on numbers and seeks to

infer causality. Words and not numbers are better suited to the description and explanation of meaning, necessitating the collection of non-numerical data. I do not seek to elicit hard facts or truths but rather to unravel detailed, subjective views in order to foster a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences (personal outcomes and meanings) of status attainment or social mobility. Anti-positivism which fits in with a qualitative design is therefore a more suitable approach for this study.

Anti-positivism is also consistent with my belief that knowledge about the world is gained by a detailed observation of what we seek to understand (ideographic methodology) and not by 'removing' ourselves from it. I therefore proceed to conduct the research using an interpretivist mode of enquiry which I reckon to be appropriate and best suited for my work.

5.3.1 The Choice and Appropriateness of Interpretivism

Interpretivism is concerned with the "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998: 67) through an emic or insider perspective. It is adamant that the social world is fundamentally different to the natural world and seeks to understand the world from the individuals' view-point which necessitates the use of different methodologies to those advocated by objectivists (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Maxwell, 2006; Merriam, 1988). This focus on the personal perspectives of people means that it is a good fit for my study. In line with this approach investigation, interpretation and analysis are qualitatively done with words as the medium of describing the findings (Bassegy, 1995; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Mutch, 2005). Interpretivism lends itself to a number of theories which can be viewed under three broad perspectives: social action, SI and phenomenology. In the preceding chapter which presents the theoretical framework of the thesis these perspectives are discussed and their place (or not) in this work is established.

5.4 Research Strategy

Having adopted an interpretivist approach with a qualitative design it presents a number of methods which I could use as data collection tools. Ethnographic, grounded theory, phenomenology, case study, biographical, historical and clinical strategies can all be adopted (Denzin and Lincoln 1995; Creswell 2003). I adopt methods consistent with the ethnographic approach which is popularly used in the study of culture. As a tool ethnography is useful for discovery, enabling researchers to “uncover relationships that have not been explicitly spelled out in theoretical formulations” (Wilson & Anmol, 2010), and as such it is conducive with the SI framework which this study has adopted.

As a multi-method approach ethnographers have employed various methods in their quest for knowledge. Some have focused solely on living with the particular groups of interest whilst noting down their observations of the 'natives', a mode which is not enough to constitute ethnography (Lassiter, 2002). Central to ethnography is the collection of detailed observations and interviews “...to provide rich, holistic insights into people’s views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit” (Reeves *et al*, 2008: 512).

For this study I used Denzin (1970) observer as participant approach mainly as a way of further and better understanding the PG world and not as a principal data collection method. This meant that I spent extended periods of time at the church sites as I took part in as many church related programs as I could. These activities included Sunday services, midweek services, group meetings, prayer meetings, zonal meetings, visitations to members’ homes and church outings like the Easter picnic. The major research approach was in-depth interviews which were semi-structured. The conduct of the interview depended very much on how the interviewees responded to the questions but all the interviews were meaning-

centered as I tried to understand the diverse personal meanings that adherents held with respect to aspects of their faith that symbolized social mobility. To a lesser extent I conducted some focus groups to complement the data from the individual interviews. The use of complementary methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions were key to fostering a deeper understanding of the subject.

5.4.1 Data Collection Timelines

Fieldwork was conducted from December 2013 to the end of July 2014. A second round of data collection which mainly involved member checking was conducted from November 2015 through March 2016. Thus a total of eleven (11) months was spent collecting data.

5.4.2 Identifying and Selecting Churches

Two churches, International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) and Action Chapel International (ACI) were selected based on two main criteria. First they were the oldest of the group of churches which can be classified under the INCs and second the extant literature suggested that although they are both indigenously founded and classified as Neo-charismatic churches their doctrines show significant differences (pages 9-11 of Chapter One engages in a detailed discussion of these). I thought that the element of contrast would enrich the study and that gave me the added impetus to proceed along that path of enquiry.

5.4.3 Identifying and Selecting Respondents

I excluded newcomers, inactive members and members in leadership positions. Newcomers and inactive members were excluded because I wanted to focus on members whom I deemed had become 'established' in the church as well as had regular contact with the church.

Members in leadership positions or those who had held leadership positions were excluded because they had received some pastoral training and so they occupied privileged membership status. This placed them somewhere in the space between ordinary members and the clergy. I defined newcomers as those who had been church members for less than five years. This was based on my personal hunch that this exhibited a deep sense of commitment to the church and that the experiences gathered over the course of at least half a decade would be better grounded and therefore richer. My definition of active was two-fold: First that they were registered members of the churches (certificates of membership were shown to me before proceeding with the interviews) and second that they participated in at least half of the activities run by the church for the laity³. The study thus adopted purposive sampling. This is where "...the researcher exercises his or her judgment about who will provide the best perspective on the phenomenon of interest, and then intentionally invites those specific perspectives into the study" (Abrams, 2010:538).

5.4.4 Data Collection Methods

Given the interpretive nature of my work it was important that I play my part in the co-creation of knowledge. I participated in ACI and ICGC church services and activities as an active participant observer. At the outset my intention was to attend only the services but because there was consistent reference to the membership process I sought permission to also attend some pre-membership classes as a way to further familiarize myself with the teachings and doctrine as well as to help me identify with respondents' narratives about the membership process. Participant observation is an experiential tool which aids in the understanding of a culture "...on a very personal, intimate and particularistic level (Lassiter,

³ Preliminary visits to the churches revealed that both churches apart from special church services, programs and meetings church activities were usually held on two days during the week.

2002:86). Church services were observed in cycles of 4 weeks over a period of 7 months. I took down notes as I actively participated in the activities during services. Active observation was done primarily because it was important that I blend in so as not to be conspicuously 'different' and to avoid becoming a subject of interest. I was able to take down notes without drawing much attention because it was the practice of most attendees to do same during church activities.

Face to face in-depth semi-structured interviews and informal discussions with participants were conducted. The former style of interview enables the capture of diverse, multi-faceted views resulting in "...rich, complex and nuanced data (Stausterg & Engler, 2011:310). Although there was a set of interview questions, these only acted as a guide and each interview took a very different trend and style (Myers and Newman 2007).

The interview schedule consisted of three main sections. Each section was designed to address a different research question. With permission interviews were audio recorded. Informal discussions with participants were held after transcription at the convenience of the respondents. These sessions were not audio recorded. Rather I wrote down notes of these encounters after the discussion as I deemed recording notes whilst engaging in a conversation was not only unnatural but could be distracting.

Finally in an effort to access additional information which I may not have been able to generate in one on one interviews I conducted four focus group discussions (FGDs). The ability of FGDs to facilitate the production of 'new' information is by its very nature as an interactive session between participants. This often yields spontaneous, rich and insightful data which would be difficult to get in one on one interviews (Kitzinger 1994; Kitzinger 1995; Wong 2008). The interaction leads to the negotiation and renegotiation of meanings and sometimes to the defense and rationalization of arguments (Stausterg & Engler, 2011).

5.4.5 The Respondents

A total of forty-six respondents were interviewed. Twenty-five were from ICGC and twenty-one ACI. The ICGC respondents comprised the following: eight students, two private business owners, three health workers, a teacher, a journalist, seven who were engaged in dual careers⁴ and two retirees. The ACI respondents comprised three students, seven private business owners, an investment analyst, a university lecturer, an administrator, a health worker, four people engaged in dual careers and three retirees.

With the exception of two respondents all the others were members of church groups. Respondents were drawn from a range of groups. At ICGC they called them functional groups. The respondents comprised of intercessors, medical, counsellors, ushers, security, traffic and hosts and hostesses and mothers of Zion. At ACI they were called departments. The respondents in this study were drawn from women of action, Sunday school, firm foundation, prayer strike force, counselling and temple protocol departments.

5.5 Data Quality

Respondents were given the option of reading through the transcripts from the individual interviews. This was repeated for those who participated in the focus groups. In the case of focus groups respondents were able to identify sections that could be attributed to them. This was a painstaking and time-consuming technique but “transactional validity” (Cho & Trent, 2006: 321) or “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:314) improves the quality of the data. It is “an interactive process between the researcher, the researched and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus by means of revisiting facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted” (Cho

⁴ Dual career refers to adherents who are formally employed as doctors, teachers, lawyers, bankers and other professional occupations but engage in paid work outside their formal roles.

& Trent, 2006: 321). As a technique respondent validation ensures that participants' voices are interpreted more accurately but it also raises some challenges. Lincoln & Guba (1985: 315) note that it is incumbent upon the researcher not to appear adversarial and that it should not be used when "...one has reason to doubt the integrity of informants." Practically, this was done following transcription. It enabled participants to revisit the views they had expressed to ensure that they had been correctly represented. It also served as an opportunity to clarify points participants had made which I was unsure about. Additionally I was able to probe further into some views expressed in the interview which required additional explanation or clarification.

5.6 Access Negotiation

Prior to my arrival in Ghana I established contact with two friends of mine one of whom I knew was a pastor at one of the churches of interest. Upon my arrival they contacted the pastors responsible for the day to day administration of the churches and set up appointments for me to meet them. I was granted immediate access at one of the sites. I was however met with much hesitation from one of the churches because although I explained my work and provided evidence to indicate that I had no ulterior motives the pastor in-charge was not convinced about my intentions. He therefore requested a formal letter of introduction (on the University of Birmingham's letterhead) from my immediate supervisors. Once this was provided I was granted unrestricted access to the site and to the members.

The pastors introduced me to lay leaders of the different church groups to brief them about my research. I requested ten minutes to present my research to their groups during one of their meetings following which I would answer any questions they might have and hand out a brief outline of my study together with what participating would involve. I also included a slip to be filled out and returned to me if any of them were interested in participating. I stayed

through the meetings to collect any returned slips and to answer any further questions members might have. Once I began interviewing participants would sometimes refer me to other members whom they thought could also participate in the study.

5.7 Ethical Considerations

The importance of research ethics in qualitative research gained prominence in the 1960's and has since become an integral feature in research practice (Bulmer, 1982; Homan, 1991; Kimmel, 1988; Orb *et al*, 2001). As a first step I sought for and was granted ethical approval for the project from the University of Birmingham ethics committee.

I also approached the leadership of the church to discuss my work and be given their consent for me to be on their premises as a researcher. In agreement with Kellehear (1996: 98) that interviews by virtue of their conduct create "...an unnatural social situation, introduced by a researcher, for the purpose of polite interrogation. It is this situation, delicate by definition, which is ethically questionable" I understood that as the initiator of the interaction it was my responsibility to act in ways that would make the participants comfortable. In order to achieve these (ethics and comfort) I took a number of actions. I first met with leaders of the different church groups to brief them about my research. Following this we agreed on a date when I would make an oral and written presentation to the larger group following which there was time for questions. I stayed on to answer any further questions and also indicated that I could be contacted at a later date via the contact number and email which I had included on the research information sheet handed out to every member. This sheet addressed issues such as what the research seeks to interrogate, what participation involves, what the information will be used for and issues of withdrawal, confidentiality and only persons who agreed to take part in the study were requested to give their consent. Participants who agreed to be part of the FGDs signed a separate consent form for that. All participants were assured of their

confidentiality and anonymity. In honouring this I have in the empirical chapters given the respondents pseudonyms. In recognition of the importance of autonomy a clause was included to allow withdrawal of participation from the study at any time and for any reason. Participants were also asked for their approval for a research assistant to be present during the interviews, informal meetings and focus group discussions if the need arose. Their permission was also sought for a transcriber to assist the researcher with transcription of the audio recordings.

To further ensure their comfort all interactions (interviews, informal meetings and focus group discussions) were held at venues determined by participants. Also the date and time of these interactions was subject to the convenience of participants.

The concept of harm in qualitative research is not neatly defined. In the context of this research I did not anticipate any harm would be done the respondents. Interviews, informal meetings and focus group discussions were all conducted at times and places that respondents deemed to be appropriate. During the interviews I gauged the comfort levels of participants from their tone or facial expressions. I also consciously showed interest in what respondents had to say so that they felt that what they were saying was important.

I engaged a transcriber early on in the project. She signed a confidentiality agreement which guaranteed that she would neither divulge anything said by the respondents to other parties nor use the information she was privy to in any way. After she transcribed six transcriptions I took over and did them myself because I realized that I would be better versed with the data by doing the transcription myself. I did not engage a research assistant.

5.8 Researcher's Background

I was brought up in a Presbyterian home, and although my father is a pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana we were encouraged to learn more about other faiths even though our religion and its associated activities were very much a central part of family life.

As intimated in chapter one (page 16) my interest in Ghana's Charismatic churches began in 2002, the year I commenced my undergraduate studies at the University of Ghana. I gradually became interested in the messages of success that were preached and the reaction of the crowds of both students and others in attendance. Furthermore I was impressed with the fact that these churches were not just individually 'owned' but by Ghanaians! I began to ask colleagues who were members about their beliefs, their attraction to the church and what these churches offered that others didn't. Following the completion of my studies I continued to attend services and crusades when I could. Indeed my contemporaries are aware of my penchant for charismatic churches and regularly invite me to join their church activities. I also read texts, listen to audio teachings and watch church broadcasts on television. Thus, my interest has not waned but increased. I converted to Catholicism in 2008, and it remains a puzzle to some of my charismatic friends that I am not a member of a charismatic church. I describe myself as a Catholic who is comfortable in the midst of other denominations and faiths. This study will compare and contrast two charismatic churches which the literature suggests have distinct ideologies. I will attempt to give a contextual presentation of the two. The concept of cultural relativism, “an anthropological approach which posits that all cultures are of equal value and need to be studied from a neutral point of view....so that a particular culture can be understood at its own merits and not another culture’s” (Glazer, 1996:1) serves to guide me as I seek to present an understanding of the lives of some Neo-charismatic Christian faithful through their own experiences and in their own words.

5.9 Data Analysis

5.9.1 Audio recordings

Following each interview and focus group discussion audio recordings were uploaded onto a laptop and listened to repeatedly. This helped me to get a sense of how the interview or focus group discussion went, how to improve the line of questioning going forward and identify any gaps which I could address in the second meeting with the respondents. Reviewing the data in this way also led to a better understanding of the data and helped in the identification of emergent themes and concepts before coding began (Bradley *et al*, 2007; Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Pope & Mays, 2000).

Following this exercise the audio recordings were transcribed using Microsoft Word. There are two dominant ways of transcription: naturalism and denaturalism. In naturalism language represents the real world and so as much detail as possible is captured verbatim (Schegloff, 1997). Therefore, idiosyncratic elements of speech including sighs, pauses, laughter etc. are included in the transcript. Denaturalism removes these elements dwelling on the meanings and perceptions within speech that construct reality (Cameron, 2001). There are however many variations and permutations incorporating the use of both methods depending on research objectives, questions and goals (Oliver *et al*, 2005). In this work denaturalism was the dominant mode of transcription because my work is concerned with the meaning-making process and not the content and pattern of speech which would be required in conversational analysis.

An iterative approach was adopted throughout the process from reviewing the transcripts to the final compilation of concept cards which answered the research questions. Following transcription data was reviewed to identify emergent themes after which coding was done. Themes are defined as "...general propositions that emerge from diverse and detail-rich experiences of participants and provide recurrent and unifying ideas regarding the subject of inquiry (Bradley *et al*, 2007: 1766). Thus the development of themes acted as a precursor to

the development of codes. The codes helped "...catalogue key concepts whilst preserving the context in which these concepts occurred" because the nature of their application is such that codes are labels assigned to segments of the 'raw' transcripts which are deemed to speak to a particular concept" (Bradley *et al*, 2007: 1761). Codes are generally crafted based on either induction, common in grounded theory research (Glaser, 1992) or deduction where pre-formulated codes are applied to the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The codes were developed using an integrated approach of both induction and deduction. Inductive codes focused on concepts which did not fall within the theoretical framework and deductive codes were those which were identifiable theoretically. They were then organized under "concept cards" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Martin & Turner, 1986). The concept cards were developed and maintained using an iterative approach. In the development of each card I constantly asked myself whether the card contained elements which could all be grouped under that theme, else the card would cease to reflect a meaningful category. This meant that I had to add new elements which sometimes required the reconstitution of concept cards under different labels. In this way I was able to identify the various symbolic constructions and their specific unifying themes which I used to help address research question one. For the second research question the same process was used in organizing the diverse meanings of each of these constructions, which then helped me to recognize the meanings that were sedimented. Another set of cards was developed to address the influences behind sedimentation. To answer question three the process of developing concept cards was replicated and used to identify the reflected appraisals which are the concern of research question three.

The "validity-as-reflexive-accounting" (Altheide & Johnson, 1994:489) approach (see 4.7.1 for a detailed explanation of this) approach was used as the interpretations/explanations and conclusions that emanated from themes were formed. This enabled me to return to the text several times to determine whether the conclusions reached were consistent with the data.

5.9.2 Researcher Reflexivity

Taking cognizance of my role in the conduct of this work I was reflexive throughout the research process. Reflexivity does not negate subjectivity but acknowledges and incorporates “...the researcher’s personal framework consciously as the basis for developing new understandings” (Levy, 2003: 94). A reflexive approach was incorporated from data collection through analysis. Alveeson and Sköldberg (2009) identify four levels of the process which for me served as a guide.

Aspect/Level	Focus
Interaction with empirical material	Accounts in interviews, observations of situations and other empirical materials
Interpretation	Underlying meanings
Critical interpretation	Ideology, power, social production
Reflection on text production and language use	Own texts, claims to authority, selectivity of the voices presented in the text

Table 1: Levels of Reflexivity (Alveeson & Sköldberg, 2009: 273)

Through reflexivity the themes that emerged from the data reflect a shared understanding of the phenomenon. This, I hope adds transparency to my work as there is an explicit admission of points that have been emphasized, downplayed and missed out in the research and why this is so. In so doing reflexivity also served to improve the quality and validity of the research.

5.10 Conclusion

The research adopts an ideographic methodology and interpretivist enquiry which are both consistent with anti-positivist epistemology. SI, specifically situational SI is the theoretical lens through which the research questions are examined. It is chosen because it provides an appropriate guiding framework for the study of meaning (a key concept in this work) from the perspective of those who ascribe to neo-charismatic Christianity; an insider perspective.

Further, interaction, another concept in this work sits comfortably in this framework. In line with these the study will be conducted ethnographically using active participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal meetings and focus group discussions. The analytical strategy incorporates iteration, thematic analysis and reflexivity. Issues of reliability and validity of data were addressed through reflexivity and “member checking”. Practical challenges, ethical concerns and research limitations have been duly noted.

CHAPTER SIX

Multiple Symbols of PG

“Symbols include words and many objects, and almost all acts around others contain a symbolic element. Words are the most important symbols, making human thinking possible”

Joel M. Charon (2007, p. 58).

6.0 Introduction

The first research question was designed to uncover the multiple symbols that adherents identify as associated with social mobility from a religious point of view. There was also an interest in finding out whether any constructions were more relevant to some adherents than others. Symbolic constructions of social mobility which in adherent terms was synonymous with success and prosperity surfaced in my interviews, focus groups and in my observations of the interactions (particularly conversations) between adherents. With the exception of a few divergent voices the constructions tended to be consistent between members of the same church. There were also some differences in the degree and significance of the symbolizations in the two churches.

A constellation of shared symbols were identified by adherents as representative of the doctrines of their respective churches as far as social mobility was concerned. This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part describes the various symbolic constructions and the second discusses these symbolic representations from an interactionist perspective. Except for a few instances the views of the respondents of ACI and ICGC are compared and contrasted under themes that integrate the views held by adherents of both churches.

6.1 The Symbolic Constructions

An analysis of the data from the interviews, focus group discussions and to a lesser extent observations and informal discussions with members of the two churches that I researched resulted in five underlying unifying themes. Specifically adherent accounts led me to identify fifteen⁵ symbolic constructions of social mobility. These were further classified into five distinct categories each of which represented different symbolic elements but was characterized by a unifying theme (Pages 117-119 explain in detail how these constructions and categories were formulated). Table 2 below is a summary of these findings:

Table 2: The Symbolic Representations

Unifying theme	Category	Symbolic constructions
Construction of Social mobility	Mainstream	health, wealth
Promise of member social mobility	Automatic	Birth-right, declaration
Religious rituals for thriving	Transcendent	sowing seeds (sacrificial), prayer, holy water, anointing oil
Do it yourself	Pragmatic	hard work, education, investment, private enterprise, prayer
Significant other	Founding father	authority, motivation
Adherent-adherent interaction	Member networks	Support

⁵ Prayer occupies two categories: transcendent and pragmatic. It is counted as one hence the total of fifteen and not sixteen symbolic constructions

6.2 The Construction of Social Mobility

As a study couched around social mobility it was imperative to ascertain what adherents thought about social mobility. In a sense this concept represented the central symbolic level around which the other symbols were focused. Adherents of both churches expressed that their churches actively pursued a doctrine that promoted the accumulation of wealth and maintenance of good health. The PG has been named the “health and wealth gospel” in much of the literature (Pew Forum, 2006:11; Mora, 2008:404). The indicators of health and wealth have also been advanced, albeit in only a few instances in mainstream research on social mobility (American Psychological Association, 2007; Heaton et al, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). More recently Bowler’s (2013) work details these two interests as key on the agendas of churches of this type. These views are exemplified in the following responses:

“Here it is making money so that you don’t have to rely on anybody, you don’t have to struggle and being of sound health. But mostly the money aspect is what I see and hear more of.... Even the Bible says in 3 John 2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (ICGC respondent interview, student)

“The main aim is to be rich. To be rich in your pocket. That is what we are all striving for here. Papa tells it as it is: money solves problems..... Then there is the health aspect too but I would say that making more money is priority.” (ACI respondent interview, student)

From these quotes we find that the attainment of wealth was of greater symbolic significance to adherents of both churches. This it appears is based on the frequency and emphasis which the church founders place on them when they address congregants. If money is of God then the views of Charismatic Christians are antithetical to a host of Christian scholars, most notably Billy Graham (1955) who stated that money distracted Christians from God, and therefore the pursuit of it was opposed to the true nature of a Christian. More recently Tang,

(2010) endorsed this view in his assertion that religious people were more likely to view money as evil. But the posturing of charismatic Christian adherents suggests that this group of Christians hold a different view of money: it is a 'good' to be possessed and acquired. It is a central concept in the worldview of the faithful, assuming a sacred value because God expects that they, His children ought to be materially wealthy by acquiring and possessing money. This is expressed succinctly by Victoria, an ACI member:

“Many of the things that we do: the prayer, tithing, declaration, the messages from papa are towards being financially well off. God desires that we be wealthy as He tells us in Deuteronomy 8:17-18. We fail him and ourselves if we do not possess that wealth.” (ACI respondent interview, private business owner)

That being said health emerged as the more significant symbol for older respondents, specifically those above 50 years of age. Interestingly though many of those in this bracket stated that the doctrines of their respective churches promoted wealth over health, they had adopted the latter as paramount. In a focus group discussion a number of participants expressed some interesting sentiments which are represented by the quote below:

“Yes it is wealth, money. Money is the ultimate symbol of success or social mobility. As my other colleagues have rightly said the health part of the promise is there too but I think that it is more on the quiet. You hear it here and there in the messages but not so much. You see most of the people in this church are young, when I first came here I had just landed my first job after schooling. I was twenty-four. I was into the money-making aspect of things so that was the message that I carried with me. But as you grow the money aspect is not so important as before. I have made my money but if I had not this is not the time to begin to worry about that. My concern is to be healthy, strong and vitalized so that I live a dignified life. If I fall ill I will use that money to pay bills and I'm not really earning anything now so my social status

can come down because of that. If I am healthy I can maintain my level. The health aspect is what I see as my success now.” (ACI focus group discussion)

At ICGC older respondents spoke in similar ways and often added that the annual health walk organized by the church was about the only time when health took center stage. The quality of life of older respondents is more strongly linked to health because naturally advancing years are more likely to come with health related issues. In addition older persons were mostly retired and were therefore no longer actively earning incomes but living on their savings, pensions or being supported by their children. Acquiring wealth was no longer feasible and thus of diminished symbolic significance. SI theory assumes that the symbols that come to define a concept are driven by those things that a community collectively agrees as representing it (Blumer, 1969). The prioritization of health over wealth for older people and vice versa is borne out of a culture where symbolizations surrounding what social mobility is are multiple. This makes it possible for changes in the significance that symbols have for community members, in the same way that the meanings that are attached to things can change.

The projection of one theme over another is not new. Hunt (2000) found same to be true in his analysis of European churches. Going by Jackson’s (1987) view the skewness towards wealth suggests that these churches do not pursue the PG in its pure form. By pure we mean advancing a message that projects both health and wealth in equal measure. These notwithstanding the findings are novel because they are based on the opinions of people who are followers of the religion and not on the observations of researchers as is the case in previous research projects.

Having established that health (marginally) and wealth (significantly) evidence social mobility we next turn our attention to the symbols that are associated with their attainment.

6.3 The Promise of Member Social Mobility

That social mobility was guaranteed for members of the church was an idea that resonated with members of ACI but not with ICGC respondents. For ACI members it was based on the Biblical promise that Gods plan for all believers was that they should be prosperous. This, they held, was a foundational doctrine of their church. Respondents intimated that verbal declaration of both the belief in the promise of prosperity and the belief that prosperity is yours were the hallmarks, as expressed below:

“...Here we do not joke with claiming what is ours. God decreed that we are on top even before we were born but in order to tap into that you have to open your mouth and say that you are on top so that it would come to pass. You do not have to be in this church long to know that this is what we do. We are told to declare, declare, declare that is it. Declaration is what puts you in the position to unlock the prosperity.” (ACI respondent interview, investment analyst)

“It is written in the book of John that prosperity is the portion of every believer. But you have to declare that you are ready to take what is yours.” (ACI respondent interview, retiree)

This category channeled faith, another of Bowler’s (2013) PG themes. It also gives credence to assertions that the independent characteristic of this crop of churches gives rise to different interpretations of what constitutes doctrine. It is therefore an exhibition of the *glocalization* frame which Gifford (1998), Kramer (2002), Wariboko (2012) and other scholars express. In the ensuing sections we will find that *glocalization* of the message of prosperity is pervasive in the symbolizations that adherents refer to in their constructions of social mobility. Bowler’s (2013) theme of faith we will find is so pervasive that it underlies a number of constructions as shown in the next section.

6.4 Religious rituals for thriving

This theme is unique because it is the only one that speaks to the subject of religious rituals. Categorized as transcendent respondents spoke about the symbolisms of sowing seeds, prayer, holy water and anointing oil.

6.4.1 Sowing Seeds

According to respondents the agrarian-based metaphor of sowing seeds was from Genesis 8:22 and represented all monetary contributions made by adherents to the Church. These were in the form of the obligatory payment of tithes and the non-obligatory (voluntary) giving of offerings to the Church. I found that monetary contributions to the Church are a unifying ritual because it was the only symbolization in this category that respondents of both churches indicated and were unanimously agreed on in respect of its symbolic significance as the sacrificial component of their faith. There was consensus that sowing seeds was “...to establish a covenant between we the believers and God. The monetary sacrifice is in place of the animal sacrifices that were happening in the days of Abraham and Moses. But after Christ there was no longer the need for living sacrifices. So we plant the money which is the seed into the fertile ground which is God’s Church and the seed germinates and bears fruit. That is the principle.” (ICGC respondent interview, retiree)

Elaborating further on the concept of sacrifice an ACI respondent said thus

“Money is sacrificial because God recognizes that it is the currency of the day. So for you to take from that is a sacrifice that you are making trusting that He will come through for you.”

(ACI respondent interview, dual career)

6.4.2 Offerings

The non-obligatory sowing of seeds dubbed offerings were unspecified amounts of money aimed at *“bonus rewards”, “additional favor”, “answers to specific prayer requests”, “top-up on your blessings”* and so forth. It thus represented an auxiliary measure or mechanism which failure to honor did not exclude an adherent from blessings but rather from the additional perks described in the quotes above. I was in the company of two friends, both ACI members as they discussed the happenings after an evening’s prayer service. It emerged that they had both gone forward to place offering envelopes at the altar during the service after the Archbishop had announced that anyone who wanted to sow a seed in anticipation of something could do so. I asked whether the tithe could not serve that purpose to which they both responded with an emphatic “no”. One of them explained thus: *“The tithe is the covenant that establishes your favor and positions you to receive the blessings. The offerings top-up on your blessings.”* Thus offerings were of lower symbolic significance as compared to tithes to which we now turn our attention.

I recall that during one of the ICGC church services that I attended a lady seated a row in front of me frantically searched for her checkbook during the time for tithes saying (not to anyone in particular): *“Where is my checkbook oooo. Where is it? I need to write my first fruits check. Ah! There it is! I thank God. I shall not miss my blessing.”* This statement made by her underscored the significance of the tithe (called first fruits at ICGC), which at ICGC constitutes one-tenth (1/10th) of the monthly earnings of an individual. A general understanding was that the favor of God rested upon those who honored him with their tithes as found in the old testament reading of Malachi 3:10, a verse quoted and recited by many respondents as driving home the importance of tithing, summarized in the statement that *“... from your career to your finances, basically everything that you want, to ensure your progress in life it is tied to the tithe. Malachi 3:10 says....”* (ACI, focus group).

Interestingly respondents often stated that the relevance of tithing was lost on them before their conversion to Neo-charismatic Christianity. An omission which for some explained why they had not been socially mobile pre-conversion: *“One of the first things that I experienced when I came here was on tithes. If you don’t tithe your life will be tighter. Simple! No one would force you but God is watching. In the Catholic Church they didn’t tell us that tithing affects success so I was not tithing. I was hovering at one level until I came here. Ever since I paid my first tithe my life has gone from glory to glory. It is an amazing change!”* (ICGC respondent interview, dual career).

“Had I not come here I wouldn’t have known how fundamental the tithe was to my success. Papa tells you in the plainest of language that even a child would understand, that paying of your tithe raises you up in all aspects of your life because it allows you to decree all your needs onto it because you have established a covenant with God.” (ACI respondent interview, Lecturer)

Unexpectedly, I found that tithing at ACI was expanded beyond the tenth of monthly earnings to include the first income of the year, the first salary following a promotion at work and the first salary in a new job. This was at odds with the Biblical verse which was quoted as the key basis for tithing because the verse does not appear to promote stratification of tithing. This diversified view of tithing was often seen as a privileged one as expressed by these respondents:

“Over the years I have adhered to the tithing rules set by papa and without fail. Even as a student I obeyed the rules and would give a tenth of my pocket money. I even sowed the first salary I earned as a national service personnel. Papa has taught us all the tithing secrets which many Christians don’t know about. Because I follow all to the letter my career is increasing, my earnings are increasing. People wonder how. It is in levels, the ordinary tithe

gives you increase but the tithe of tithes which is when you surrender all like how I gave up my salary not once but so far three times gives unprecedented increase.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

“Withholding your tithe is synonymous to robbing God. That is dangerous because you lock the windows of heaven. We are told to tithe without fail and to also pay the tithe of tithes when one happens to fall in that space. The tithe of tithes places you in a very special position with God. The rewards are extraordinary.” (ACI respondent, focus group discussion)

The ACI findings particularly that which speak to diversified sowing lend credence to the observations of Paul Gifford (1998) that sowing and reaping are integral components of the church’s ideology as well as the observations of Wariboko (2012). In his estimation the doctrine espoused by the ACI founder is the prosperity model which he locates as being a sub-set of the covenant paradigm. But both these works do not associate the ICGC doctrine, even remotely with seed sowing. Adherent responses suggest that in defining the doctrinal underpinnings of ICGC it may be worth considering the principle of sowing and reaping. Here again we find the *glocalized* PG not because of omission but in the diversification of the symbol of sowing which is unique to ACI.

6.4.3 Prayer

Missing from the accounts of ICGC members the symbol of prayer was deeply rooted in ACI. This became apparent when members would often state that a person who did not love to pray had no business being in the church. According to adherents a number of things showed that the foundational doctrine of the church was prayer: the name of the Church (Prayer Cathedral), the worldwide recognition of the Archbishop as the Apostle of Prayer, a sculpture depicting praying hands in the forecourt of the churches premises, an active intercessors

group whose purpose was to pray and a bold inscription reading “MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED AN HOUSE OF PRAYER” on the wall behind the altar inside the church. As a *glocalized* symbol prayer represented the weapon of choice for the battle that had to be waged against unseen supernatural forces whose aim was to interfere with the success of believers by either taking away what belonged to them or blocking them from receiving additional blessings. Representative of the sentiments of the respondents is the view below:

“Our prayer system is the foundation upon which all else rests. We are prayer maniacs and our Archbishop is the apostle of strategic prayer. He has taught us the language of prayer so we don’t pray by heart. We pull down, destroy, reclaim, possess and arrest because as Ephesians 6:12 says we wrestle against powers and principalities so we pray without ceasing. The witches and wizards are plenty so we pray so that they cannot overcome us and steal our inheritance.” (ACI focus group discussion)

The powers and principalities which are “...*primarily evil spirits and ancestral curses whose agenda is to thwart our personal development*” (ACI respondent, lecturer) had to be constantly engaged with to ensure that they did not become a stumbling block in the quest for success. Here we find an amalgamation of beliefs which are consistent with African traditional religious beliefs with modern-day Neo-charismatic Christian doctrine. This exhibition of syncretism suggests that the *glocalized* doctrine of ACI is quasi-modern in the sense that it not only acknowledges what Atiemo, (2013:99) calls the “...common underlying worldview” of Ghanaians which is steeped in deep-seated and long-standing traditional beliefs ascribing physical happenings, particularly misfortunes to evil spirits but perpetuates it as reported in a group discussion:

“When there is an issue we see it from the spiritual angle. We put on our prayer helmet and sword to attack and fight it...” (ACI, focus group discussion)

With adherents engaging with evil in a never-ending battle through the ritual of prayer they also never completely rid themselves of it. As we will read in the sections that follow the symbolism of prayer is pervasive. Given its prominence as a key defining symbol of ACI it is surprising that prayer as a concept has not been captured as part of the observations particularly Gifford's who is one of the leading writers on the characteristics of indigenous (Ghanaian)- initiated Charismatic churches. Here again Bowler's (2013) themes are manifest in adherent conceptions through the broad themes of faith (in Gods power) and victory (over evil) which encapsulate the construct of prayer.

6.4.4 Holy Water and Anointing Oil

Here again ICGC members made no reference to these (holy water and anointing oil) which were expressed by adherents of ACI as symbolizing powerful weapons against evil spirits and wicked forces when applied to the body or when drunk. However, their symbolic significance only came up during one of the focus group discussions. The anointing oil appeared to be the more significant of the two because it had the additional role of a medium that facilitated the flow of power from the Archbishop to the followers as respondents intimated during group discussions to the agreement of other participants.

"I would say that anointed oil is more important to us. Papa has the anointing that sets him apart as God's servant. Some of this anointing is passed from him to us through his declaration. If he declares that the oil be anointed to work in favor of our prosperity that sets things in motion. So we can smear it on ourselves or on anything that we want to carry that anointing. " (ACI focus group discussion)

The oil vials contained olive oil which was transformed from its ordinary state into anointing oil following a process of conversion superintended by the Archbishop. Adherents also reported that they were encouraged to have a vial of anointing oil on their person for use

whenever they felt that they needed protection from evil, or to be empowered for prosperity as expressed below

“Action members never lack oil. We believe in the power of the oil for the purposes of protection and empowerment. When you pray and anoint yourself it can be seen by the devil and his agents so they lack the confidence to even approach.” (ACI focus group discussion)

The limited reference to both holy water and anointing oil suggests that they were both symbols considered to be of less importance or significance. It appears that this is because they are presented as auxiliaries to prayer and as such fall within the wider themes of faith and victory. In other words the two on their own would be of no effect without prayer but prayer was a potent force on its own. Combining the three symbols the themes of faith and victory become manifest.

6.5 Do it Yourself

Characterized by respondent references bordering on pragmatism this category was evidenced in the messages that they said came from the pastors about the value of work, education, health, investment and private enterprise, positive thinking and prayer as pathways to attaining material prosperity. Underlying each of these was that individuals had to take personal responsibility if they wanted to make progress in their lives. Aside from the association of these pathways with what they had been told at church they also made Biblical references which their pastors often used in support of each of the six symbolic representations. The major difference was that prayer was expressed as the dominant representation of pragmatism at ACI, and this is discussed in the next section.

6.5.1 Pragmatism at ACI

The element of evil supernatural beings which could only be dealt with through prayer is the main reason for the inclusion and primacy of prayer in the pragmatic category. Operating within this worldview where adherents were constantly engaging with unseen evil, prayer was conceptualized in the frame of taking personal responsibility to vanquish these unseen evil forces whose mission was to thwart the enactment of the other pragmatic symbolizations like education, hard work and investment. This is exemplified in the following quotations:

“...You can be the hardest worker, invest wisely and all that but you have to take it upon yourself to pray. I mean even outside the church at your home, workplace or anywhere. If not you are out. The demons in your mother’s house and in your father’s house will bring you down...” (ACI respondent, student)

“Prayer against those snakes which seek to torment us and make our lives unbearable is to be done at all points in life and in all things. As I have previously said our bedrock is prayer. My career, business, investments are tied to a safety-net called prayer. I must make the time to pray and pray strategically into those things. That is not easy. I wake up at midnight and engage them so that they stay at bay.” (ACI respondent, lecturer)

“....Papa is the apostle of strategic prayer. He has taught us all the loopholes that the snakes in our bloodline use to get us down so you have to pray and keep praying or else you would find yourself bitten. Even the thought to work hard, save your money or start a business can be taken out of your mind by the devil and his agents. Prevention is better than cure.” (ACI respondent, retiree)

In the area of education I noted that regardless of their level of education, profession and other demographic characteristics generally members of ACI would mention the pathways and then remark that although education was a route to success a person needn’t be educated

to be socially mobile. The justification for this was that their founder and Archbishop had not attained great academic heights but was a great success. One such respondent elaborated thus:

“I can tell you that for my church there are some crucial things that are not spiritual but are about what you as a person can do or rather what you have to do to make it. When you listen to papa it is obvious that you have to work hard and invest your money and time wisely. All that he says is in the Bible. Proverbs 12:24 is on hard work and the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 is about investment. We are always made aware that these are things that we must do..... I also see that education is part but not like the others. Papa talks about how he didn't go to school so he doesn't have a classmate. But he was the first person to start a charismatic church in Ghana. Before all those doctors and other very educated people started he was on the scene. Most of them even started from here. So you can make it without the educational aspect because Archbishop has made it.” (ACI respondent interview, private business owner)

This quote represents the general thinking of ACI adherents. But there were a few exceptions. Three ACI respondents placed premium on the significance of education. One of them, a university lecturer, said this:

“From being here I can say that papa talks about having a job and doing it well, putting your earnings to good use and acquiring the knowledge that will enable you to function appropriately. Hosea 4:6 is very clear that God's people perish because they lack knowledge. Papa uses that verse a lot. I relate it to the skills that being formally educated endows an individual with. He doesn't have a classmate. He didn't go to school past primary, I think class 4 or so but he has made a great life and a big impact on the religious world. But I think that if he had gone further in school he would have been even bigger.” (ACI respondent interview, lecturer)

For Mary, a private business owner education was a symbol because she had observed it in the founder's actions:

“Papa is a spirit man. But he is very strong on education even though he didn't get the chance to go to school properly. One of the things that I admire about him is his emphasis on education. That is why he started the dominion university. He also sponsors the education of many needy people.” (ACI respondent interview, private business owner)

A beneficiary of the Archbishop's education support extended the education construct to the instructions that they received at church. He stated as follows:

“Action supported my tertiary education. I wouldn't have been able to pursue my degree without the support. Also when you come here to worship what they do is educate you on how to succeed in the world. They give you all the knowledge that you need so that even if you don't get to go to school to a higher degree you would still make it big. Papa points us to work hard, because as Colossians 3:23 says we honor God through our work. (ACI respondent interview, student)

The implications of this apparent diversity in the significance or otherwise of education will be discussed in Chapter Seven which explores meaning.

6.6 Pragmatism at ICGC

Similarly, like ACI members the person of the founder was instrumental to the pragmatic symbols that ICGC adherents talked about. Conversely, for ICGC adherent's education was the foremost abstraction that they found the Church linked to becoming wealthy. A health worker (dentist) expressed thus:

“There is a focus on re-orienting our minds from the whole witchcraft centered thinking to what you can do for yourself. He tells you that you must break away from that and use the

resources around you to create a better life for yourself. Key to this is to get an education. He is always hammering on that. Another thing he is strong about is in having multiple streams of income. We know that even though he is a full-time pastor he owns many businesses and has diverse investment portfolios. I would say 9 out of 10 of his teachings would have something concerning these.” (ICGC respondent interview, health worker)

Thus far the discussions of witchcraft have been in relation to ACI respondents, for whom their existence can be inimical to a person’s advancement. References to witchcraft which we find in the above quote were not uncommon in ICGC responses that pertained to pragmatism. It was also the only time that the role of supernatural agents surfaced in my interviews. It seemed important to first state the irrelevance of the actions of witches also referred to as “evil eyes” and “agents of the devil” as was often verbalized in the opening sentences within this theme. This suggests that the pragmatism of ICGC includes the element of cultural transformation (De Witte, 2003). Thus whilst adherents believed in the existence of and negative activities in the supernatural realm just as their counterparts in ACI do there is an expectation of members of ICGC not to consider it as they worked towards being socially mobile.

Evelyn, a retired teacher stated that through her membership of the Church she had come to place great value on education and owning her own business. In her own words:

“....Pastor Otabil will talk about education and being your own boss that even when you are sleeping these thoughts would be running through your mind. You would see that even our church cloth has an academic cap on it. That alone tells of the centrality of education here. Pastor Otabil is also very entrepreneurial so that also comes through strongly. The greatest thing that I see from ICGC is that everything is in the mind. Pastor Otabil always tells us that everything around us, good or bad is as a result of how we think. If you change the way you

think you would change the way you do things and that would change your life. ” (ICGC respondent interview, retiree)

These sentiments were also shared by those ICGC members who can be described as being poorly educated like Paul. He had not been to school but was enrolled in an adult literacy class and was a self-employed fabric dealer. He opined:

“The mindset of possibilities is what this is all about. To think that you can make things happen. He says that we must not be worrying about this witchcraft thing because we are in Christ so that cannot come close to us... He says that education is the foundation on which everything else would stand solid, so even if you sell tomatoes you should invest in getting some form of education so that you can be a better tomato seller. Also you should not wait for someone to give you work because God has given everyone something that they can sell to others so that you can make a living. For this reason he is always encouraging us to be bold and invest in a business that is our own.” (ICGC Respondent interview, private business owner)

Adherents from ICGC placed greater emphasis on all the aspects in this category compared to those at ACI. Larbi (2001), Gifford (2004) and De Witte (2003) are all agreed that his criticism of doctrines that perpetuate African Traditional Religions’ tendency to locate misfortune with evil spirits which he sees to be antithetical to modernity, the importance that he places on knowledge, education and critical thinking are aspects of Otabil’s brand that set him apart from his colleague pastors in the field of Ghanaian Charismatic Christianity.

As far as adherents were concerned pragmatism was a pervasive concept in ICGC doctrine. This characteristic meant that it was a major topic in ICGC circles as intimated during a focus group discussion

“...Apart from the sermon delivered on Sunday by our founder and general overseer at mid-week service, covenant family and antilepsis you would see that the message delivered is very much on the can do spirit.” (ICGC focus group discussion)

The “...*can do spirit*” is a popular expression in Ghana which refers to having the confidence to develop oneself. Covenant family meetings are zonal weekly gatherings initiated and resourced (learning aids and resource persons) by the Church but hosted by members. Every member is made aware of the zone that they belong to and are expected to be in attendance. The antilepsis seminars whose purpose is to provide skills for life training are organized free of charge by the Church for those members who volunteer in various capacities (cleaners, traffic management, ushers, praise team etc.) for the Church. As intimated in the methodology chapter most of the respondents in this study were members of these church groups and were therefore beneficiaries of these training sessions.

From these findings we gather two things: 1) that although these constructs are borne from a religious setting they border more on the secular than on the religious and 2) as is found in preceding constructions some symbols are of a higher significance than others. Whereas the representations of Wariboko (2012) and Gifford (1998) with respect of ACI concentrate solely on the sacred the findings suggest that there is some albeit limited reference to the secular which I think ought to be considered in our discussions on what the ideology of ACI is. It can be argued that those representations vocalized by adherents are based on what they consider to be at the core of the doctrine but this is a reductionist approach which risks excluding other relevant facets of the religion. The risk of reductionism was highlighted in the section that discusses sowing and reaping at ICGC. Gifford’s approach which can be described as exclusively bordering on the pragmatic is in consonance with the symbolizations of ICGC adherents as far as pragmatism is concerned. It however falls short of presenting the bigger picture when other symbolizations come to the fore. But Wariboko’s nationalist

tagging of ICGC is problematic because emancipation from the West is the core construct which he associates with the ICGC doctrine but that is not a concern that comes to the fore in any of the symbolic constructions of adherents.

6.7 The Significant Other

This category speaks to founder-adherent interactions. As persons held in the highest esteem by the members of their churches founders were the ultimate embodiment of the significant other, representing authority and motivation. Between the two churches respondents mentioned the founding pastors one hundred and thirty-five times in the individual interviews without directly being asked about them. As symbols of authority the directives of the founders were of prime significance and this was despite the fact that most respondents had never engaged with the leaders on a personal level. This places the founders in the category of charismatic authority advanced by Weber (1966) by dint of the reverence accorded them by their followers. That authority is exemplified by how in expressing symbolic representations adherents would almost always begin by mentioning the person of the leader and then connect each of the symbolic constructions from how social mobility is perceived to the symbols that feed into it to them. Beyond Charismatic authority was the God-given authority that they possessed as “*man of God*” a phrase commonly used to describe the privileged position of pastors in relation to the divine. For example an ICGC adherent stated

“The man of God has been called by God and set apart to teach the gospel all through his life. I hold him in high esteem for heeding the call of service to God. Every message he gives us is after spending hours in communion with the Lord. You can see it in the way that Otabil never disappoints. I thank God for the life of my pastor. His directions are a great value.” (ICGC respondent interview, retiree)

ACI respondents also held their founder in the highest esteem. The difference however was that he assumed an almost super-human form in the sense that he symbolized a living mediator between adherents and God. It was therefore not surprising that comments akin to the following were commonly made:

“God has anointed papa for ministry. The oil flows from him to us. He has a special grace because of His unique role in the perpetuation of Gods kingdom here on Earth. He was the first Ghanaian to start a ministry here in Ghana. Even most of the big pastors like Heward-Mills, Anaba and Agyin Asare all came from Action. Till this day they come to him for anointing and guidance. He is highly respected both here in Ghana and abroad”. (ACI respondent interview, lecturer)

The lowly backgrounds of both of these leaders was of both motivational and influential value, representing to adherents that they too could surmount the challenges and be successful. For example an ACI member commented thus:

“Archbishop was selling pk but today he has made it to the top. He did not go to school and he had a tough upbringing but he has made it. Through his becoming a man of God money is not a problem for him. He even does not get paid by the church because he has businesses that take care of that. What about me that is in university? Where I am is already better than his beginning so I believe that my future is bright.” (ACI respondent, student)

Similarly ICGC respondents held similar views conveyed below

“Pastor Otabil is an orphan. His life history is nothing short of amazing. He literally started his life with nothing. But through his reliance on God he surmounted all the odds against him to become what he is. His is a story of perseverance.” (ICGC respondent, student)

These views convey the general sentiments of other respondents. In a sense the leaders of the church are symbols that embody the symbolic categories of the automatic, transcendent and pragmatic all of which are directed to the mainstream (attainment of wealth and to a lesser extent health) the constructs by which adherents define social mobility.

6.8 Adherent-adherent interactions

This category was based on the social aspect of interactionism. Here again we find that the founders are instrumental in influencing how members interact with one another. The sheer numbers of members according to many respondents made it difficult to establish meaningful relationships with other members. Both ACI and ICGC respondents intimated that their founders encouraged members to be supportive of one another any way that they could. This was expressed in the following quotations

“Archbishop tells us that we as believers need to be networking amongst ourselves so that we can build empires. He always tells us that through networking we can get to know who has the skills or the money or whatever it is that can be marshalled to generate wealth. Sometimes he says that some of us do not connect service in the church to prosperity because we fail to see that people in these groups can be an asset to us. My business financing has been facilitated by a member of this church and I have also provided two members with jobs.” (ACI respondent, dual career)

“We are all striving to make it. You would not meet any ICGC member who is just content because we are expected to strive for bigger and better. Pastor Otabil reminds us to see how we can collaborate with one another so that we may move at a faster rate. He recognizes that we are many and people tend to leave after service is over so he encourages us to speak to a ‘stranger’ after service. Mostly though he admonishes us to identify what our interest is and

join a church group. That way you get to interact with people on a deeper level.” (ICGC respondent, retiree)

ICGC had developed another way of facilitating interaction between its members. According to respondents wristbands which could be purchased at the church shop served as identifiers of the churches members and promoted interaction outside of the church premises. Many respondents reported that it was a useful innovation of the church because it helped facilitate transactions as expressed by Bertrand, a banker who ran a car dealership.

“(…) when I walk into an office I am able to recognize ICGC members and they too recognize me because of this wristband. An ICGC member will assist me to complete all my transactions quickly or if I am there to see someone but need to book an appointment I do not have to go through too many hurdles.” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career)

Another respondent an IT expert who runs his own company mentioned thus *“I have been drafted to submit bids to companies I would never have known were in need of my services let alone had access to because someone in authority saw this wristband. It is a powerful little accessory.”* (ICGC respondent interview, private business owner)

Ammerman (1994) writes about the supportive role that members reported was provided by other member’s particularly in times of crises or need. The notion of support here was mainly in respect of the money-generating activities of members because the language that the leaders use in encouraging member ties has a strong leaning towards how these ties can generate wealth.

6.9 Summary of Symbols

6.9.1 Table of Symbolic Representations, Churches and Corresponding Themes

Table 3 matches the various symbolic representations and themes which ACI and ICGC adherents talked about. It shows where the symbolic representations fall within the five themes ('larger' symbols) of the gospel of prosperity as far as ICGC and ACI members are concerned.

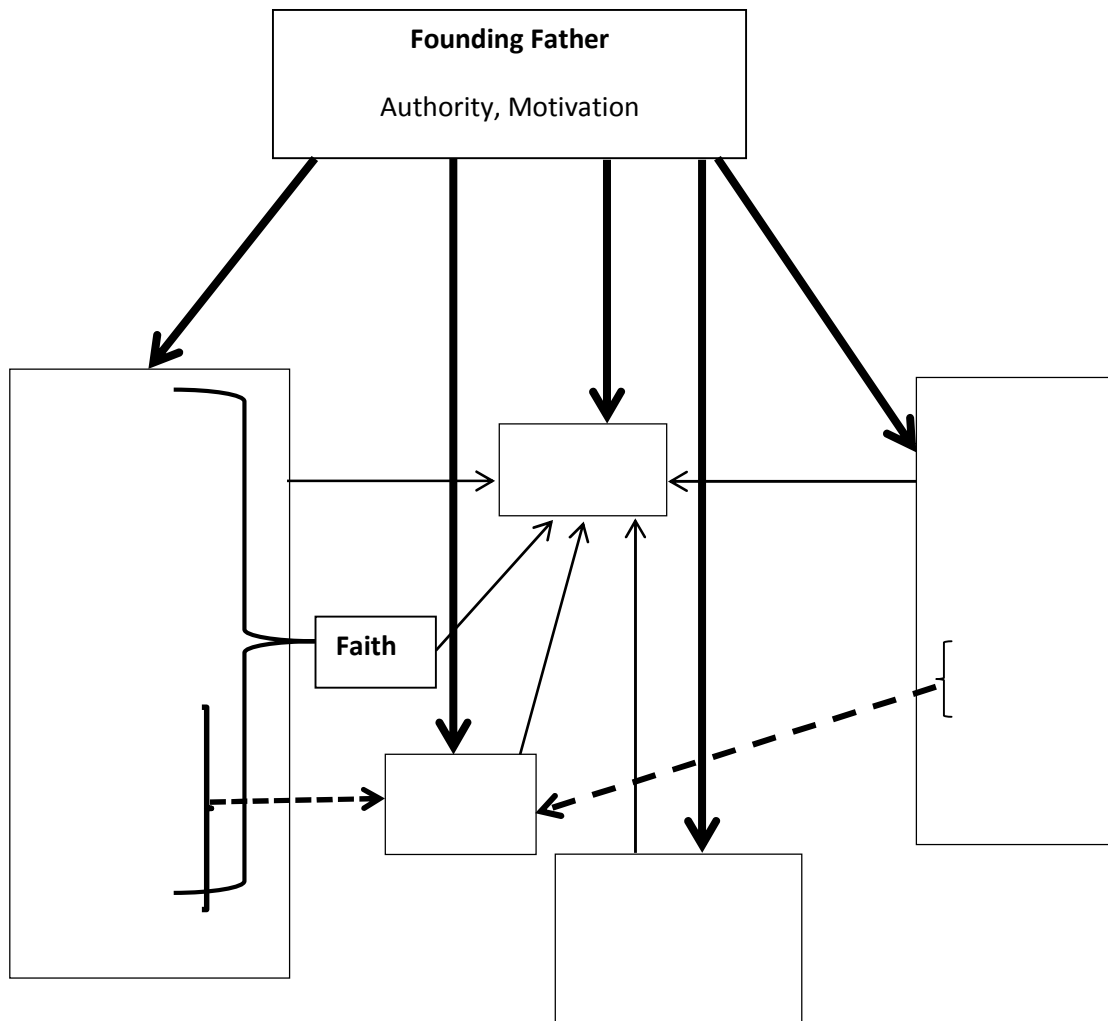
			Themes				
Symbolic representations	Indicated by ICGC members	Indicated by ACI members	Faith	Victory	Wealth	Pragmatism	Networks
Declaration		✓	✓		✓		
Birthright		✓	✓		✓		
Sowing seeds	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Prayer		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Holy water		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Anointing oil		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Education	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Hard work	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Investment	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Private enterprise	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Motivation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Support	✓	✓			✓		✓

Key: Ticks denote the relevance of respective symbolic representations with respect to adherents as well as where they can be found in the broader themes.

6.9.2 Connections between Symbols

I have also constructed a schema which reduces the text contained in the chapter to show the linkages between the various adherent constructs. Occupying the top position is the founding father of the Church. He personifies all the themes that define the PG of their respective churches and it is from him that these symbols are indicated and become known to the followers. The end point of all the symbols is wealth which for adherents is the definition of what social mobility is. Victory is unique among the symbols because it is the only intermediary symbol. It emerges as the product of some elements in the themes of faith and pragmatism and represents the connector of both the aforementioned themes to wealth.

Figure 1 Connections between Symbols



6.10 Conclusion

Although charismatic churches vary in their approaches to shaping religious subjects they share an emphasis on wealth as the ultimate product of all the symbols that represent social mobility. Wealth therefore emerges as the dominant construction of prosperity to which all actions are directed. This excludes the super-symbol of the founder who channels all five symbols of prosperity. Intra-church differences do not manifest in the symbols that adherents present as representative of social mobility. The objects of social mobility are therefore equally shared among respondents regardless of gender, age, profession and other

demographic characteristics. But there are obvious inter-church differences manifested mostly in the objects that can be located in the theme of faith. The table that precedes this section shows that the eight representations of faith are all indicated by ACI adherents as compared to one (sowing seeds) for ICGC adherents. We also find the element of prayer, a key symbol of faith in ACI in their conceptualizations of pragmatism. Because of the centrality of prayer at ACI the theme of victory is not only located in their founder who like the ICGC founder is perceived to have overcome or conquered poverty. It is indicated as a direct consequence of prayer which gives it additional significance for the members of ACI. Pragmatism and networks are two representations relevant to members of both churches which are not captured in the extant literature. This is probably because the views of adherents of these churches have not been researched with scholars making pronouncement based on ‘outsider’ views. Unquestionably, there are similarities between the two but the particular differences further the case made by many scholars that it is not a unified doctrine hence the coining of the term *glocalization* which I have also adopted in my discussions of the gospels of ACI and ICGC. In light of this research I think that *local glocalization* which speaks to the nuances of the PG within a cultural context is a more suitable terminology.

Neo-charismatic Christianity is a subculture which presents its followers three sets of symbols: performative symbols (symbolic constructions) that lead to the attainment of purpose symbols (PG themes of faith, victory, pragmatism⁶ and networks) and the representative symbol of wealth which defines what social mobility is. The purveyors of these ‘relevant’ symbolizations are the founders of the churches through their personalities as the ‘creators’ of the version of PG that they market mainly in their speech acts. In their capacity as leaders they promote specific doctrines which come to represent to adherents what social mobility is and how they can attain it. The interactions of leaders with their

⁶ Not to be confused with the pragmatic symbolic construction which is performative

followers mainly through their teachings transfers these cognitive symbols into the consciousness of the followers, the internalization of which facilitates the formation of meaning which would be explored in the next chapter. In accordance with the SI perspective the language of founders functions as the repository of the symbols which adherents identify as symbolically relevant because the person of the founder is the ultimate embodiment of authority. For these reasons it is my contention that the founders of ACI and ICGC represent the most significant symbolic representations as far as social mobility or prosperity is concerned.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Local interpretations of wealth and actions towards social mobility

“... people don’t passively perceive reality, but actively filter, create and apply meaning to their environment” Rudolph and Bartunek (1998:3)

7.0 Introduction

Having established in chapter six that there are fifteen symbolic representations associated with the attainment of monetary wealth as representative of social mobility we next turn our focus to research question two which explores the meanings that individuals attach to it. This is important within SI because it is in the context of these local interpretations (meanings) that social mobility is enacted. Wealth is a central concept in the doctrine of prosperity and this translates into the worldview of the faithful. This chapter explores the meanings and the practices or actions that follow from these meanings. The first part of the chapter chronicles the meaning making process from the initial encounter that research respondents had with the PG. This is necessary because it serves to show that meaning-making is a continuum; adherents engaging in making deductions about the PG religious doctrine even before they accept its message and become members of the churches. The meanings that they give to the PG are what lead them to convert to the ‘new’ faith. In the second part of this chapter and under the broad heading of the enactment of symbolic realities is a discussion that centers on the interactionist concern for the process whereby symbolic constructions mediate meaningful action. In so doing I describe the influence of the symbolic representations on the process of social mobility attainment. It also touches on the subject of sedimentation which deals with how some symbols become embedded or fixed in the worldview of adherents

because of their significant place within PG culture. I integrate the differences between the two churches into the general discussion; a separate section is not dedicated to this exercise.

7.1 The Process of ‘Making Meaning’

Both ACI and ICGC are branded megachurches because of the large auditoriums that house the churches, the teeming numbers of people that attend their services as well as the large numbers of formally registered members on their books. As shown in Chapter Six respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the various constructs around wealth were borne from their interactions with the founding leader of the church who himself embodies wealth. It did not appear that individual-level interaction served to frame the worldview of members, and wealth which was overwhelmingly associated with the accumulation and possession of money. It became an object that adherents referred to as indicative of status attainment through an internal cognitive process following interaction with the leader. But in exploring how meaning was made it emerged that meaning making within the context of the PG had begun before membership. Of the twenty-five respondents interviewed for ICGC twenty-two of them representing eighty-eight percent and eighteen out of twenty-one ACI adherents representing eighty-six percent were previously members of the Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist, Anglican or Methodist churches commonly labelled orthodox churches in Ghana. Adherents indicated that interactions with friends who were already members of the Church had begun the process of interpretation following the initial encounter with the PG and not after assuming membership of the faith. The processes involved five stages:

1. An initial reaction to the ‘philosophy’ of wealth (inaugural period)
2. Intermediaries which helped them to ‘see’ wealth as sacred (catalysts)
3. Reflections on the ‘philosophy’ of wealth

4. Consolidation of meaning

5. Stabilization of meaning

7.1.1 Initial Reaction to the ‘Philosophy’ of Wealth

Given that the majority of adherents had converted to Neo-charismatic Christianity from other Christian denominations their first encounter with the PG was a stark shift from what they had been accustomed. Angela and Richard of ICGC and ACI respectively stated thus:

“When I first came here the whole service from the praise and worship to the sermon were different to what I knew. A friend of mine had pestered me to join her for service and I remember wondering whether I had done the right thing by giving in. I mean it was more like a life seminar. In addition to that I noticed that a lot of people were dressed in corporate attire. I was really shocked! I was a Roman Catholic, so you can imagine it was a lot to take in.” (Angela, ICGC interview, teacher)

“A friend invited me to come to church with her. It was explosive! Papa was so charismatic, so down-to-earth and frank about the realities of our lives. But it was like whoa! How can he talk about money like that? I had never heard such a message as that. Then there was the tithe where people came forward with their envelopes to the altar. Honestly, I was taken aback and had a lot of questions on my mind.” (ACI respondent interview, student)

Respondent definitions of the situation⁷, a key concept in SI thought are evident in the responses given. At this inaugural stage of personal interaction with the PG respondents had assigned some meaning to the encounter; it was unfamiliar and uncomfortable, even in opposition to the values that they were accustomed to. But that notwithstanding it triggered

⁷How they constructed their experience

an internal dialogue which was the first step in the meaning-making process that would subsequently lead them to embrace the doctrine of prosperity. This was the case for most respondents except for three respondents (two from ICGC and one from ACI) whose sentiments about the initial encounter were opposite to the general. They defined the situation as representative of a happening that signified a positive turning point in their lives. For example Matthew, an ICGC respondent stated:

“I was totally impressed with everything here. That day the teaching was on the principles of application for a successful life. Every one of these was relevant to me, to my life. It was what I needed to be hearing. I had been hearing the your riches is in heaven talk which was good but here the message directly spoke about earthly riches and that it is not a bad thing to engage in making it here in earth.. I am a businessman and a serious one at that so for me it was on point” (ICGC, respondent interview, private business owner)

Articulating a similar view an ACI respondent also a business owner stated the following:

“I first came here for Jericho hour with a business associate of mine who was a member. The atmosphere was electric! We prayed about an array of different things. I was particularly impressed that even financial increase, growth of business and promotions were all part. I felt really good about that. We also tore down barriers, blockages and took back from the enemy what was ours. I remember telling my friend afterwards that my life was forever changed because of this experience.” (ACI respondent interview, private business owner)

The enemy in the quotation above refers to evil supernatural forces which are a bane to the success of followers. The commonality in all three respondents is that they were owners of successful businesses before the initial encounter. The ACI respondent went on to speak about how on a number of occasions he had felt uneasy because of the way the pastor at his church of origin (Methodist Church) would make statements to the effect that it “*was difficult*

for rich people to be good Christians because money was their priority.” Thus for him hearing an alternative message which casts riches as a divine gift was reassuring. Scholarship based on participant observation is unanimously agreed that the appeal of the PG to the well-off can be traced to the fact that it legitimizes the ownership of wealth (Bannon, 1987; Brouwer *et al.*, 1996; Bruce, 1990b; Fee, 1981; Gifford, 1998; Hollinger, 1991; McConnell 1988). A more detailed discussion of this can be found on pages 13 and 14 of this thesis. This study confirms that this is indeed the case not from observation but from experiences recorded by insiders. It also lends credence to the assertions of Heaton *et al.* (2009) that social class is a determinant of the religion a person may choose to align themselves to. Further discussion of this point can be found on page 160 of this thesis.

7.1.2 The Role of Catalytic Intermediaries in the Process to Conceiving Wealth as Sacred

For all respondents the process of making meaning was triggered by mediating factors or catalysts that instigated movement beyond the initial reaction (inaugural period). This applies to both those who had immediately found the message to be suited to their needs (the three business persons mentioned in the previous section) and those who were initially sceptical. Interaction with internal and external triggers characterised this process which we will explore in more detail below.

7.1.3 External Catalytic Intermediaries

From the preceding quotations we find that people who are already members of the churches play an integral part in bringing in potential members. Following the initial introduction of their friends to the PG these members went on to play the role as catalysts that aided their friends, now potential converts in further engaging with the gospel of prosperity. Respondents commented thus:

“We had a discussion about the service that I had attended. The things that had been said and done. She explained everything to me. She drove me home so we talked on the way there and she even stayed with me that afternoon to talk more. It was there that I began to realise that there was a lot that I had misunderstood or not even understood at all.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career⁸)

“Dorcas invited me three more times after that. I was able to go to two of those services. A mid-week service and a Sunday one. She was very helpful in explaining the message to me even when I was challenging her about some of the things. She was so knowledgeable. I was eventually convinced mainly because I could tell that she was applying the principles and they were working for her.” (ICGC respondent interview, retiree)

These informal interactions with friends represent the beginnings of the period of consideration of the worldview espoused by the Church. The wealthy business executives also relied on their friends but unlike the ‘sceptics’ they purposively sought to further understand the ideas propounded by the prosperity doctrine by arranging meetings with their friends during which discussions were tailored to elicit more information about church doctrine. The importance of the role of friends in recruiting new members into religions was first advanced by Lofland and Stark (1965) in their work on the theory of religious conversion. This was extended in the works of Ebaugh and Vaughn (1984) and Kox *et al.* (1991) who also found that friendship networks play an important role in introducing people to alternative religious groups and beliefs. This study extends this by framing the persuasive ability of friends as attributable to their symbolizing or designation as significant others to the potential converts, evidenced in the responses of adherents. It is this ‘respect’ that leads potential converts to accept their invitation in the first instance. As significant others, friends

⁸ Dual career refers to adherents who are formally employed as doctors, teachers, lawyers, bankers and other professional occupations but engage in paid work outside their formal roles.

are a big influence in shaping the views of would-be adherents as they trigger an evaluation of their lives and their faith, specifically the symbolic association of faith as it relates to wealth.

In the case of the three business owners another external trigger was connected to the church of origin itself. It appears that their introduction to the prosperity message had made the lack of financial focus in the ‘original’ churches increasingly noticeable. This is explained by this ACI adherent:

“Seriously, after I went to Action I began to wish that my church would not only talk about the love for your neighbour, seeking heaven and all that. Those too are important but we are in the world and the reality is that finances are a big headache for many people. But they were not touching on that aspect except to say that we should not focus too much on it.” (ACI respondent interview, private business owner)

7.1.4 Internal Catalytic Intermediaries

Respondents represented in this category were those who had, following the initial encounter decided not to return to ACI and ICGC. Internal triggers were focussed on the growing awareness that the prevailing circumstances of their lives demanded a different approach to religion. Rita explained:

“I had lost my job. I was working at the ministries as a secretary. I hadn’t been earning so much but at least I was getting something every month. They laid many of us off. Times were very tough for me and I was near broke. One of the mornings I remembered that the day that I had gone to action papa said something about declaration and prayer. At that point I would try anything. I had written those things down so I took the notebook. After reading through it I prayed with all the strength that I had in me using what I had understood. I felt better after

that and then decided to give ACI a try. That was my turning point.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

The role of financial challenges in triggering a rethink about the PG was also spoken about during group discussions. Something that stood out clearly was that respondents may have reacted differently to these circumstances had they not encountered the PG.

“Things had not been going well for me for a long time. It was as if I was just going backwards. I was going to be bankrupt. To compound issues I was also in and out of hospital. I thought about what I had heard at Action some months back, I think it was about eight months or so. At my lowest moments I thought of trying out Action because of what I had heard from papa when I first went there. I could see that to counter what was happening I needed to make changes.” (ACI respondent, focus group discussion)

Similarly an ICGC respondent stated thus:

“Things had been going from bad to worse for me. I lost my job, I had to move back to my parent’s home in order to cut my cost. I was in dire straits. I had applied to so many places but nothing. One day my mind went back to the day I went to ICGC. Something that Dr Otabil had said about tithing and trusting God even in times of great challenges which I had dismissed. I decided that I would return there that Sunday and try it out. That was it.” (ICGC respondent, focus group discussion)

Extreme occurrences are the catalyst that forced this category of would-be adherents to advance from the initial reaction and then begin to consider the message of prosperity espoused by the two churches. The narratives of these adherents brings to mind the concept of situational meaning which Park and Folkman (1997) advance as the appraisal of an instance(s) which challenge the existing meanings (global meanings) that make up the

worldview of a person. Although their assessment is made in the context of stress and coping I think that it can also be applied here. The losses of a job, impending bankruptcy or ill-health are the stressors that challenged the global meanings of adherents with respect to what religion means.

7.1.5 Reflections on the ‘Philosophy’ of Wealth

In the majority of respondents the catalysts: friends (significant others) and crises events aided respondents to re-assess their position on the ‘new’ faith and thus paved the way for them to further the cognitive process of interpretation. The meaning-making process that adherents described has been divided into three distinct phases of exploration, consolidation and stabilization, each of which feeds into the next.

7.1.5.1 Reflection as Exploration

During this phase adherents engaged in the examination of self through the actions of personal stock-taking, perception adjustment and changes in faith practice. Regardless of whether the catalytic intermediaries were internal or external all respondents expressed that they had engaged in thoughts that centred on identity and their position in life which I label as personal stock taking. A good example of this was in the submissions made by Paul an ICGC respondent whose intermediary presented as external. He averred thus:

“This experience led me to ask questions about who I am, the purpose for which I am here, and what my priorities are. It was also obvious to me that my friend who had introduced me to ICGC was doing well. I took a step back, took a good look at my life and decided that I had to shift my position. I had really hit rock bottom” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career)

Similarly, an ACI respondent whose experience was internal expressed the following:

“I thought about myself and where I was going. I thought about my friends, I thought about Reginald. It was difficult for me when I realised that perhaps my religion was rather holding me back. That exercise of introspection was tough but a step in a positive direction. I had to redirect my life to ensure that I would thrive. ” (ACI respondent interview, retiree)

The responses are an indication that the questioning of self during the process of personal stock taking helped to facilitate an adjustment in perception by adjusting the meanings that respondents held about themselves as well as the direction which their lives were taking. For example the reflections led Rita an ACI member, whose internal catalyst had been ill health to conclude that

“Most of the money that I purposed to save was used up in hospitals. My battles with ill health were also taking a big toll on my financial health. I got to the point where I knew that I required a change in my dealings with God. I could see that I would never be a successful woman if I didn’t change direction. I needed to be at a place that would lift me up. That meant changing my faith. ” (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

For respondents such as Rita above where ill-health had been a problem its effects were linked to finances. Indeed the ways in which respondents viewed finance in relation to themselves emerged as the most frequently mentioned perception change. This represented a critical change in religious worldview because up until then wealth had been perceived as antithetical to their religious beliefs. For example Paul of ICGC came to the realization that *“As a Christian I am to live a Christ-like life but that does not mean I am to live in poverty, debt and suffering.”* Similarly Mary, a private business owner and ACI member said *“I realised that I had to change the way that I was acting concerning my finances. Separating my religious life from my finances had not helped me so I purposed to no longer do that.”*

Complementing the revisions in perceptions were changes in faith practice a transitional

period during which would-be members undertook a series of different faith-related activities in a bid to explore as well as confirm their emerging understandings. An ACI respondent made a submission that I found to encompass the views of the adherents in general:

“I decided that I would attend the church services from time to time. Sunday, mid-week, Jericho hour, midnight cry. I went as and when I could. The difference was that this time around I was serious about it. I even went to the meeting organised for those of us who were new. There they gave me a contact to help me with any questions I might have concerning the church. She is one of the best friends I have had! I also got access to pamphlets written for newcomers and other materials. I wanted to be sure that I wanted to be here so in the meantime I was still an Anglican. After about six months or so I was convinced that this is where I wanted to be. I have no regrets at all.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

We find that becoming charismatic is a process and not a point event as evidenced in the submissions of the respondents. The personal stock-taking, adjustments in perception and faith practice are extended and reinforced in the phase of consolidation to which we next turn our attention.

7.1.6 Consolidation of Meaning

By further assimilating the adjustments in perception and practice adherents found that the value of engaging with Neo-charismatic Christianity was a new found “confidence”, “motivation” and “enlightenment” with how they approached their personal quest for wealth. This was consistent with their newly discovered perception of wealth. Rita points to the importance of this:

“More than any other change that I have made in my life this changed me the most. Because everything about my life changed when I decided to come here. Even before I formalised my

membership I became more confident and more focussed to take the bull by the horns and make it.” (ACI respondent, dual career)

Similar comments were made by Angela who intimated thus

“I felt that I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. It was a feeling of empowerment because I felt motivated to do more for myself. To think that I could do that by serving God was a great motivation for me.” (ICGC respondent, teacher)

Words such as confidence, empowerment and motivation are but a few of the descriptions that adherents used in explaining the influence that a deeper engagement with church doctrine had on them. This relates to the extant literature where we find that the PG has been observed as a source of hope for those who find themselves in difficult situations, particularly as relates the financial (Akron, 2000; Hunt, 2000). What this study reveals is that would-be adherents harbour these positive sentiments about the doctrine even before they become full-fledged members. This relates to both those who are wealthy and seemingly thriving economically harbouring positive sentiments relating to comfort through legitimization of wealth and those who are sinking economically as captured in this section. This lends credence to Spinks’ (2003) observation that the African PG in particular appeals to people from all walks of life and challenges the views of Akron (2000) and Hunt (2000) who state that the financially weak are the exclusive group by whom this doctrine is accepted.

7.1.7 Stabilization of Meaning

This phase which is where ‘actual’ meaning is made follows the assimilation of the interpretation of wealth as divinely created, owned and given, thus framing it as sacred and not profane. For all adherents the attainment of full membership status which was marked by

a ceremony superintended by the founders of their respective churches was the most important external signifier of assimilation of the new perspective.

Wealth and what it represents to the religious is not well understood (Keister & Borelli, 2014) because it is a relatively unexplored topic. In the section that follows I discuss the meanings that adherents give to the acquiescence and accumulation of money which in adherent-speak is wealth as it relates to their religious beliefs. Analysis of the data revealed that meanings were quasi-theological because although respondents cast the meanings in terms of church doctrine (stewardship) its enactment also involved secular elements.

7.2 The Symbolic Dimensions of the Meaning of Money

As has already been established the overriding interpretation was that money was the symbol of wealth. It was understood to be a creation of God which He had entrusted to His children for His glory. Samuel, a journalist and ICGC member averred thus:

“God in His infinite wisdom has given us money. He is the source from which money springs forth. If you look around is there anything that you cannot do if you have money? Having money makes all things possible. It is the wealth that we all aspire to have. It sets you apart as a person whom God has favored.” (ICGC respondent interview, journalist)

Money was the ultimate representation of wealth because *“God has created money as the topmost way in which our level in the world is evidenced.”* (ACI respondent interview, lecturer), *“...it is what we use to acquire everything in this world. Properties, education, basic needs and the like. God in his own wisdom allowed money to come into being so that prosperity can be made manifest.”* (ICGC respondent interview, student).

Thus, money was symbolic of something owned by God and given to humankind as the means to an end: for the acquisition of material and immaterial possessions. An ACI financial

analyst aptly represented the views of the whole when he stated that money was “... a reward for us as believers for keeping the faith and to show the world that we believers are making it to the glory of God.” (ACI respondent interview, financial analyst). In this way the possession of money was evidence of an individual’s good relationship with God which I think further solidifies the position of money as sacred. Another element that cast money in sacred terms was that respondents viewed money within the space of stewardship of which Samuel’s submission in the opening paragraph of this sub-section is a good example. An ACI member explained stewardship as follows:

“God owns money and we are the managers. So after giving my tithe whatever is left is still His even though I have to decide how to use it. For this reason whether I am making money, saving money, spending money or investing money I ask myself is that right with God? I also consult Him by studying the word and through prayer.” (ACI respondent interview, retiree)

Here again the sacred nature of money is evident. It is sacred in and of itself primarily because it is owned by a sacred being who has sublet it to His creation. I have chosen the above submission first because it indicates that wealth is constructed in a number of different layers which can be described as generation, accumulation and utilization. Second, it is a good example of a quote that channels the theme of stewardship. Stewardship represents the global meaning within which adherents understand money and wealth. Wealth was generally understood within three frames: the stewardship of earning, the stewardship of spending and the stewardship of possession. This is well articulated by Georgina an ICGC member who was a lawyer by profession and owner of a boutique “*Wealth has many meanings. If you want to look at it without considering it in detail you would miss the point. Wealth means doing, using wisely and having*” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career). With the exception of member networks we will find in the forthcoming discussions that these were enacted with the application of all the other symbolic categories presented in Chapter Six (see

table two on page 122). The omission of member networks was because it was understood by adherents as a purpose symbol and not as a performative symbol as was the case of the other categories (page 147 explains what this means).

7.3 Enacting Stewardship

“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.”

Deuteronomy 8:18 (King James Bible)

7.3.1 The Stewardship of Earning

Under this theme the actions that adherents expressed symbolized not only ways of accumulating wealth but defined what it meant to have wealth. We explore these in more detail in the sections below.

7.3.1.1 Work Ethic

Respondents often used Biblical references and symbolic categories of the transcendent, automatic, pragmatic and founding father (Table 2 on page 122 displays these) to buttress their points concerning work. For example an ACI respondent who owned a private construction equipment rental company stated thus:

“Wealth means work I have heard many things from papa concerning this. I go through every teaching from papa because I take notes. I must say there is one particular verse that I consider to be number one. There is a scripture from Colossians 3:23-25 which says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” That is my mantra. God expects us to honor him through work by working

diligently. He would reward us with wealth. I take that very seriously because if I don't I am neither glorifying God through my work nor acknowledging God as the source of my income. Even papa who can afford to take a break is working hard, how much more me? Here I pray with all my employees at the start of the day. I also anoint the shop and myself. I don't play with those things because as I said one needs the covering to realize the fullness of the promise of wealth.” (ACI respondent interview, private business owner)

Similarly Mabel a retired teacher stated thus:

“Having money means that you work hard. It would not fall from the heavens into our bank accounts. Papa would say it so many times that it will stick in your mind. Many people say that we Charismatics think that you would be rich because we decree, declare and all that. You declare because you know what is yours. It is like a reminder to yourself and to God. That puts you in the position to unlock your prosperity because it plants the seeds of confidence in you to go out there and do exploits that would make you prosperous. The first of these is work. You work so that God himself would say “this is my child in whom I am well pleased” and you pray to keep the devil from interfering with your rise.” (ACI respondent interview, retiree)

Here we find an extended explanation concerning the automatic symbolic category which is based on faith. Declaration is a mode of psychologically boosting adherents to believing in the promise of prosperity and to work towards it. This was a point which was also made by a student member of ACI:

“Declaration is sowing a seed of faith which reminds God of His promise to us. We then have to work so that what we have planted gets the needed fertilizer to grow. God is a just God. He would be unfair to reward laziness with wealth. When I see people who are rich I'm like you have worked hard to get this far because wealth equals work. Papa always reminds us that

faith without works is dead. But at the same time while making hay you have to balance your spiritual life. You must not forget to pray, pay tithes and all that because if you store money for yourself and are not giving to God trust me, the devourer will make you lose what you have gathered.” (ACI respondent interview, student)

Once again we find that the supernatural worldview where a believer must continuously ward off evil dominates the thinking of ACI adherents and directs their actions.

An ICGC respondent said thus:

“I always refer to Proverbs. Specifically Proverbs 14:23 which says, “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.” My interpretation of this is three-fold: You have to identify and embrace your God-given abilities and talents, work utilizing these abilities in honor of God and continuously work to improve your productivity. If you can do all these you would earn well and be well off but of course you must pay your tithes. I see all these qualities in my pastor.” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career)

The warding off of evil spirits which are detrimental to the progress of ACI adherents was the outstanding difference between the two churches. This can be attributed to how prayer is constructed and enacted in ACI dealings with evil of the supernatural kind. In Chapter Six (pages 130-132) we find that the overriding reason why prayer is a construction is because it is the only tool that is effective against evil, a prominent concept in ACI. This is why prayer is the only construction that can be found in two symbolic categories (see Table 2 on page 122). The place of work as wealth is the same for both sets of adherents. Work is the physical way by which God places money into the hands of the faithful and so expects that His people apply themselves to work so that this transfer can happen.

7.3.1.2 Financial Responsibility

Adherents expressed that through investment wealth could be accumulated. Here the symbolic categories represented were the transcendent, pragmatic and founding father (see Table 2 on page 122). For ICGC adherents investment constituted monetary investments which include tithing, diversification of career and education. The following ICGC member channels all three of these concisely:

“What is wealth? It is investing your money wisely. I always invest in giving my first fruits. I work in a bank but I also own a graphics design company. I don’t know graphics but I know some young graphics guys. I had the financial and managerial ability and they had the design expertise. Having thought through I decided that like Dr Otabil I too could diversify my investments beyond financial instruments. Since then I have invested in short courses in design so to enable me have a better appreciation of the business. I know that I am climbing up steadily. ” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career)

In a similar way another ICGC responded thus:

“Invest in seven ventures or in eight; for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land” Ecclesiastes 11:2.proverbs 21. That is how I understand wealth. You work, earn money but that is not all. Putting your money into different investments is wealth. Pastor Otabil often uses the term “multiple streams of income” to illustrate this. I own a jewelry business and I have put money into some things at data bank. In addition to this I am adding value to myself by investing in enhancing my educational profile which I am doing now. It will put me in a position for promotion where I work so I would earn more. Then I would have more money to invest for the future.” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career)

Here again the accounts of adherents of both churches are similar. The differences I found were with the place of evil supernatural influences which has consistently represented a major point of difference between adherents of the two churches (also seen under the theme work ethic on pages 164-165). For example this ACI respondent stated:

“If you look in the Bible it talks about investing to build wealth. The verses are many but right now I can remember Proverbs 21:20 which says that “the wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down.” Every month I put some money aside at one of the financial companies. I can see that over the last fifteen years I have got good dividends. I also put some money into animal husbandry, specifically cattle. I started with three ten years ago after I found out that papa was into farming. You know what? That information blew my mind! My papa is a farmer! Currently I own twenty heads of cattle. That is my wealth. So I am comfortable and prepared for the time when I would be retired. But I must add that I don’t miss my tithes and I am also a member of the intercessors so I literally pray without ceasing. Not only for myself but for all believers. You must dedicate time to consistently pray over your investments because the enemy can cause it to fail.” (ACI respondent interview, lecturer)

This submission is significant because of the omission of education in discussing wealth. Together with only two other ACI adherents this lecturer had referenced education in his discussions about pragmatism. Contrary to expectations the other two one a student and the other the owner of a private business also did not mention education in the enactment of wealth accumulation. This implies that education was not as influential or as meaningful in the meaning system of ACI adherents as it was for ICGC adherents which is not surprising given the watering-down of education in the symbolic world of adherents of ACI which we find in Chapter Six (pages 134-136). Another ACI respondent stated thus:

“In the book of Matthew 25 where Jesus talked about the talents we are reminded that God expects us to act in ways through which we would grow our incomes regardless of how much we earn. These investments are your wealth. Papa talks to us about it often. Even he has many investments. He is industrious, a value that I have picked from being around him. He also invests in different things. At the moment I put some of the money that I earn into mutual funds. I have also got savings in the church welfare fund. In the next year or so I and a friend who is also in Action would formally begin our catering business. Currently we are doing it on the small from our homes. Then there is the seeds that I sow at church and prayer. These protect my investments, real and potential from the devourer. Since I came to Action I am more aggressive to make it because my father is the owner of wealth so there is no excuse for me to disgrace him by being poor.” (ACI respondent interview, Administrator)

The actions that adherents perform under the stewardship of earning reflect the ways in which adherents process the messages or the teachings that the founding pastors deliver to them as well as the ways in which they as followers perceive to be the status attainment behaviors of their pastors. Because the founder embodies all of the symbolic categories (pages 140 to 141 and 144-148 of Chapter Six explain this in detail) they are integral to how adherent goals and behaviors are structured. This may explain why adherents ‘justify’ their actions by expressing that the motivation for an action stems from similar actions that are being committed by the leader.

7.3.2 The Stewardship of Spending

As we have already established, the cardinal principle of the ‘stewardship school’ was that money belonged to God and flowing from that the utilization of money was done with reference to Him. Respondents relied on the symbolic categories of the transcendent and founding father in enacting spending. The responses pointed to the fact that as custodians of

God's money how it was used was a reflection of the meaning that money held. Under the theme of obligation and generosity two sub-themes; giving to God and giving to others were gleaned from adherent responses.

7.3.2.1 Obligation and Generosity

Under this theme the actions that adherents expressed symbolized not only ways of using wealth but defined what it meant to have wealth. This was because even though these actions were about spending they were integral in adherent understandings about what it means to be wealthy. We explore these in more detail in the sections below.

7.3.2.2 Giving to God

Money 'spent' through tithing characterized this theme. The significance of tithing as symbolic of wealth was in its dual capacity as a tool for both accumulation and maintenance of wealth. This may be distilled from the submissions that adherents made in the stewardship of earning where tithing was often described in terms connoting investment. The pervasiveness of tithing to both sets of adherents across different overarching themes elevates it to the category of a sedimented symbol (see page 86 for the discussion of sedimentation). Some illustrative quotes are presented below:

"Paying my tithe is the first thing that I do at the end of every month. When I first came to ICGC it was pastor Otabil's testimonies that made me fully understand the importance of giving God his due. I have come to understand that when God sees that he can trust you to tithe on smaller amounts of money he knows that when you have it in abundance you would still tithe. That is why I say wealth is tithing. The tithe is God testing you to see if you would give back a little of what He has given you for a bigger return. I am now a graduate teacher, the first graduate from my family. It would have been difficult to do but the intervention of a

fellow member who paid my university tuition made it possible. She is a member of the counselling department of which I too am a member. I had the admission but not the money. I know that God led her to take care of my needs. I say this because going back to school was something that was on my heart but I couldn't afford to. So you see all the three years I was in school I didn't have to pay a pesewa. I was on study leave with pay so I saved up at least 80% of that money over three years. Imagine that! By the time I finished school I had bought two plots of land. You see how tithing is wealth?" (ICGC respondent interview, teacher)

In a similar vein Ruby of ACI a medical doctor who also owned a pharmacy expressed the following:

"I always tell people that if you tithe you are wealthy because that has been my experience. I must add that even papa would tell you the same. In fact I admire his frankness when he speaks about how he understands the difficulty in tithing when you look at your earnings and it is just enough to get you to the end of the month or not at all. Even he has been tempted not to pay at some difficult moments but stood his ground against the devourer. And God showed himself strong every time. His experiences really pushed me not to miss it. So for me I personally do not compromise on paying my tithe. It is the first thing I spend on before anything else. I give at least ten percent which is a small portion of what God has blessed me with and I keep appreciating. I know that paying tithes works. Tithing fulfills the promise of wealth so I would never compromise on it." (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

Adherents indicate that they (founders) not only follow the instructions that they give to their congregants but like their congregants they have also experienced some of the difficulties that come with having to part with money. These founder testimonies have a big impression on adherents and inform the behavior of followers towards tithing because founder experiences confirm that God keeps the promises that He has made to His children. This serves as a major

driving force for many of the actions of adherents and shows the power that leaders wield as far as their followers are concerned. This finding conforms with similar findings established in the works of Bass (1985), Burns (1978), Conger & Kanungo (1998) and House (1977) which are discussed as part of the theoretical framework on page 83.

The use of the word paying is instructive because it connotes a transaction in which something is expected in return. Tithing is understood as an act of giving that yields a positive balance for the tither and a negative balance for the one who withholds it. Common to both sets of adherents were testimonies which included successful business ventures, education, unexpected returns on investments and acquisition of property all attributed to the enactment of tithing. And some adherents also told stories about instances where they had experienced losses because they did not tithe. This explains how the act of tithing becomes synonymous to wealth. All adherents expressed that tithing bettered their fortunes and enhanced their wealth but not because it had led to changes in the economic attitudes of adherents a case put forward by Garner (2000) and Marshall (1993). Rather tithing is understood as a means through which God intervenes supernaturally to reward the faithful for meeting their obligation to him.

7.3.2.3 Giving to Others

The person of the founder is the key inspiration for the act, which adherents overwhelmingly vocalized as “*blessing others*”. The use of this phrase follows from the worldview that God blesses his children with money. This idea is extended in how adherents construct the way that they themselves affect the fortunes of those they consider to be less privileged: they too bless with money as expressed by an ICGC respondent:

“I love to bless those who are less fortunate. It is something that I have seen in Dr Otabil. He has been generous ever since I’ve known him, and even those days he did not have a whole

lot. There is wealth in giving, I tell you. When you read Proverbs 11:24-25 we are told that when you give freely you gain more. That means that giving is wealth because when you give you get. God has given me wealth and expects that through me someone too may benefit. Whenever it touches my heart to give to someone in need I do not hesitate because I know that I would receive even more blessings.” (ICGC respondent interview, retiree)

Channeling similar ideas an ACI respondent stated thus:

“Papa is a giver through and through. He takes care of orphans, widows and other underprivileged people. Many of them are not even in this church. I draw a lot of inspiration from that. I also give without worrying about that reducing my wealth because over the years I have noticed that my success is partly because of that. Let me give you an example. I blessed someone by giving them money for fees. That day I sold all the five car batteries in my shop that I was desperate to sell so I could go for new stock. Two months ago one of the ladies in my ministry called Ama approached me because she needed a loan of one thousand five hundred cedis to pay for land for her container. I gave it to her as my contribution but not to pay back. Last week I found out that Thaddeus, a friend and brother in Christ is sponsoring me for the Israel pilgrimage. Think about the cost of going to Israel compared to what I gave Ama. There are other examples too of unqualified blessings.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

Far from altruism however, the underlying motivation for giving to the less privileged is that it serves to enhance the fortunes of the giver.

7.3.3 The Stewardship of Possessing

According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2011) wealth is “*an abundance of valuable possessions or money*” or “*the state of being rich*”. This theme was unique because

it was the only theme where adherents presented wealth in alignment with the traditional definitions of wealth. This follows from adherent ideas around the stewardship of earning which is on how wealth is accumulated. The expected and preferred outcome (goal) of accumulation would be wealth. References to these ‘mainstream’ ideas around wealth were made by Norma and Henry (both students and members of ICGC and ACI respectively) who used the phrase “*To be wealthy is to have enough money such that you do not lack anything that you need to buy*”, an idea which was dominant in the opening statements of an overwhelming number of adherent responses that towed the mainstream line. It is important to note that this was always made within the frame of the adherent as a steward managing Gods money and whose possession of wealth was a direct consequence of the stewardships of earning and spending. In other words good or faithful stewards are either wealthy or become wealthy as Norma explained:

“... I cannot reap where I have not sown. I do not think that I am rich just because I am an ICGC member. I am rich because I acknowledge the source as God and I act in the ways which exhibit this by being productive, paying my tithes and the like. So the end result would be me being a rich woman like Dr Otabil with no worries about money all to the glory of God.” (ICGC respondent interview, student)

Henry also went on further to explain thus:

“...Papa is the epitome of someone who has possessed their inheritance by being a man after Gods own heart. He never takes credit for his station in life. He has everything and that is because he lives as a servant, a servant of God doing Gods will. I know that wealth is mine to have but it is conditioned upon my attitude towards God as I work, pray, save tithe and sow seeds because I do not own it.” (ICGC respondent interview, student)

In this way the symbolic categories of transcendent, pragmatic and founding father were all incorporated into the meaning of the possession of wealth. For five respondents, three from ACI and two from ICGC abundance was defined as a present situation as expressed below:

“I can afford anything that I want to have. By God’s grace I have made it. Like pastor Otabil I remain humble. You may know maybe because of the way I dress, the cars I own or when you come home as you have done. I am blessed beyond measure. I still don’t play with my tithes though. I know the value of tithing” (ICGC respondent, private business owner)

Apart from abundance security was the other meaning given to wealth. This theme was only applicable to the five wealthy respondents. I have included these accounts because they represent what wealth means to the constituency of adherents for whom the meaning of wealth was based on their perception that they have attained the social mobility goal of wealth.

7.3.3.1 Financial Security

Wealth was synonymous with financial security because it demonstrated that an individual had reached a stage where they neither worried about money nor had to pursue it in earnest. One of the respondents, an ACI member who owned businesses but was a human resource practitioner by profession stated thus:

“The Financial resources are what drives our lives these days, because there is very little you can achieve when you lack finances. I am a wealthy woman. I am at the point where I am confident that the wealth that I have is more than enough for me to live very comfortably without having to hassle so I can relax and enjoy as the writer of Ecclesiastes in 5:19 says I am to rejoice in the fruits which God has gifted me through my labour. Ever since I became a member of action I was inspired by Archbishop to very diligently work on all the aspects of

prosperity. From tithing, sowing seeds, giving to the needy, investments, putting in the hours at work and prayer too. I have done all that and achieved what God desires for all His children. God has entrusted wealth to me so I continue to tithe, give to the needy and of course pray. All of these insure my wealth.” (ACI Respondent interview, dual career)

The four other respondents who also considered themselves to have attained wealth expressed similar views to those found in the above quote. These can be interpreted to mean that being members of the church had helped them attain their wealth through the enactment of the symbolic categories. Being financially well off they could afford to scale back on some aspects of earning but not on religious commitments which they were adamant were critical to maintaining the status quo.

7.3.3.2 Health as Wealth

In Chapter Six it emerged that health was seen as a marker of social mobility by respondents above fifty years of age because ill-health could lead to the erosion of wealth. It was therefore placed in the mainstream category.

Younger respondents whilst not identifying with this train of thought understood health in terms of its consequences for their ability to acquire wealth and thus many of them located health in the construction of monetary success. The symbolic categories of founding father, pragmatic and transcendent were the reference points. This is exemplified in the quotes below:

“Wealth is also good health. It means that I am able to run my businesses effectively and efficiently because I am present. If I fall ill I would lose money so I would not be able to make the investments that are needed to make me a wealthy man. The general overseer is a model

of health here. He encourages us to eat right, go for checkups and we have the annual health walk.” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career)

“Let me put it this way, you cannot be wealthy without health but you can be healthy without wealth. That is the meaning that I live by. Papa is a strong advocate for health. I would say that health is one of the topmost priorities in our prayer life. We banish all those diseases and declare ourselves exempt. I have seen people who are in the gym all the time go down with stroke. The difference is in prayer because as a mere mortal you cannot stand alone. My brain is my tool. If it goes off that’s it, I cannot work and so definitely I would be handicapped financially. But supposing God forbid I lost a limb I could still work and be wealthy.” (ACI respondent interview, financial analyst)

The attitudes of respondents towards health lies in its conceptualization as a vehicle for the acquisition of wealth for those who are in their economically productive years and for the maintenance of wealth for those who are no longer able to add to their wealth because they have retired. This interpretation of health informs how adherents approach its maintenance as evidenced in the quotations above. The ICGC construction of health is more mainstream whilst that of ACI adherents has a significant supernatural leaning. For example ACI respondents tended to make statements suggestive of supernatural causation like *“I do not go to hospital when I feel unwell. I pray and anoint myself with oil”, “Whatever manifests in the physical is from the spiritual. I confront ill-health by prayer. I call it combative prayer because it is a battle” and “God is the master physician. In faith go to him and I am healed.”* These contrast with statements made by ICGC adherents: *“God has given the knowledge to doctors so I do not play with checkups or my medications”, “When I feel unwell I speak to a doctor friend. She is very helpful” and “Here we believe that as you seek medical treatment you also pray but not that you only pray. If that was enough God would not give us doctors.”*

There was thus an obvious difference in the way that health was constructed and understood

by members of the two churches. The syncretic worldview of ACI which places the evil supernatural front and center in contrast to the ICGC worldview which nullifies the potency of same may explain this. These views lend credence to the findings within the scholarship on religion and the meaning of health (see page 92 of the theoretical framework) which discusses how religious beliefs influence how believers understand, construct and enact health.

7.4 Symbols and Outcomes

The extant literature that speaks to how religious affiliation has an influence on the status attainment path of practitioners is sparse. Adherents incorporate religious doctrine in the form of the symbolic categories of the mainstream, transcendent, automatic and pragmatic (pages 144 to 148) but neither in equal measure nor across all their 'thinkings' concerning wealth. These 'thinkings' result in a formulation of meaning which explains how the above categories are understood.

In Chapter Six symbolic constructions were considered in the frame of their role as pathways to social mobility but in interrogating meaning which is the primary aim of this Chapter generally adherents present them as being both pathways as well as being coterminous with wealth. This can be explained by the SI position that explains how meanings are modified (as examined on page 78-79). This means that the abstraction is borne from adherent internal conversations with self. This may be the case because a majority of respondents express that they are acting in ways that would lead to their attaining wealth. They are journeying towards the goal and so for these adherents their association with wealth for the moment resides in their enactment of the symbols. This is evidenced in the responses of some adherents who made meaning within the 'stewardship of possession'. Under the sub-themes of 'the stewardship of possessing' and 'financial security' (as discussed on pages 173-175 of this

Chapter) five adherents drawn from both churches perceived themselves as wealthy. They constructed their definition of wealth in terms of both abundance and possession by dint of having been enabled by the employment of the various symbolic categories. In the prevailing circumstances of these five wealthy adherents the ‘new’ meanings of the symbols was that they were enactments that would ensure the maintenance of wealth. This is an example that fits in with the reasoning that how a thing (wealth in this case) is defined is subject to change through construction and re-constructions of meaning within various contexts including the economic position suggested by Hall (1994) and Denzin (1990).

In this study which conveys an emic perspective it becomes increasingly obvious that a significant reason why wealth assumes its symbolic status is because of the founder. The founding father category represents the single ubiquitous symbol to which adherents of both churches refer to in relation to all themes that coalesce around the construct of wealth. For this reason both Archbishop Duncan Williams (Papa) and Dr Mensa Otabil (Pastor Otabil) assume the status of super-sedimented symbols. As organic embodiments of the religious culture the constructions that adherents ascribe to the founding fathers: symbols of authority about the theology of prosperity and a principal motivation to attain prosperity they are evidently present through the ways in which adherents refer to them as they enact their moves towards wealth. Their influence therefore goes beyond the authorship of their brand of prosperity doctrine as they are etched into the sub-consciousness of adherents and assume a permanent reference point in adherent thought and action.

The symbolic category of the transcendent also assumes sedimentation but not to the levels of the founding father which I suggest is akin to a super-symbol, a term that I have used to describe the founders on page 146 of Chapter Six. This is because with the exception of tithing and prayer the remaining symbolic constructions in transcendence are rarely, if at all, mentioned in adherent views on the subject.

Tithing, which permeates all aspects of wealth in both churches, is sedimented into the adherent meaning system. This can be understood within the context of its obligatory status within the context of the religious form. I might add that it appears that no other symbol is as evocative as the tithe for three main reasons. First, the tithe symbolizes gatekeeper to prosperity in the sense that no believer will ever attain wealth if they fail to honor their tithe. Second, the tithe symbolizes wealth enhancer because it is a way in which the divine intervenes to ‘grow’ wealth. Third, it symbolizes wealth maintainer serving to secure the wealth that has been attained or achieved. The symbol of tithing is also unique because it is representative of wealth that is tied to divine supernatural intervention which is positive for those who obey and negative for those who chose to disobey. In this way tithing becomes an avenue for interaction with the divine.

The symbol of prayer is pervasive in all ACI constructions of wealth, and represents sedimentation which is limited to the ACI worldview. Because of the foregrounding of evil supernatural forces which are ever ready to negatively affect the prosperity of ACI respondents this worldview permeates all their interactions with and interpretations of wealth and can be explained by historical and cultural forces. Aptly explained by Atiemo (2013) is the observation that the Ghanaian worldview is situated within a symbolic universe of the supernatural where good and bad are found and interact with human beings. ACI promotes a syncretic worldview which promotes the idea that “*Whatever manifests in the physical is from the spiritual*”. This link is particularly dominant in respect of bad or unwanted happenings. Prayer symbolizes the countervailing tool which when employed serves the purpose of keeping evil away or at the very least at bay.

This Chapter establishes that adherents consciously consider religion in the decisions that they take through the incorporation of various religiously abstracted symbolic categories in their quest to achieve social mobility and in their quest to maintain their social status having

attained social mobility. This interactive thought culminates in the formation of meaning and since meaning determines action this has implications for the ways in which wealth is attained. This may offer some explanation for the results of survey-based research conducted by Sherkat & Ellison (1999), Chiswick (1988), Ellison & Bartowski (2002), Lehrer (2008), and Keister (2003) all of which point to religion being a significant determinant of life outcomes like wealth. The argument advanced here is that the religious effect is as a result of SI which produces meaning which then determines action. In this work the actions are directed to wealth because of the ways in which adherents interpret wealth.

Under the banners of stewardship and health all the symbolic categories, except member networks, are considered as adherents engage in the exercise of making meaning and the actions thereof. I contend that the omission of member networks was because it was understood by adherents as a purpose symbol and not as a performative symbol as was the case of the other categories. Thus it did not have direct consequences for earning, spending and possessing. We also find that there are no marked differences between the ways in which women and men interpret wealth and so as expected since meaning determines action they enact the attainment of wealth in the same ways. As a participant observer of the church services this does not come as a surprise because to my hearing the leaders were often quick to state that they were providing guidance for the prosperity of both women and men. Further, in the groups which were organized according to gender like the Women in Action (ACI) or the Mothers of Zion (ICGC) discussions on wealth were not about how women could achieve it but on how people both men and women could acquire wealth. It was not uncommon for women particularly those who were married to pick up resource material from these meetings for their spouses.

7.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has presented a contextualized discussion of the meaning-making process and the multiple meanings that adherents attribute to wealth. Given that over two-thirds of adherents were introduced to and converted to the religion during their adult years they symbolically engaged with the religion-wealth intersection which is central in prosperity theology because they chose to. It emerged that the sense-making process was triggered by internal and external forces that led to adherents relating the message of the gospel to their own prevailing circumstances, whether positive or negative. In this way the chapter highlights how potential adherents acted with agency in their decision to switch from denomination of origin, and also explains the cultural process by which wealth becomes sedimented into the psyche of adherents even before they assumed formal membership. It also showed that there were different types of sedimentation: Intra-church sedimentation of prayer associated with adherents of ACI, inter-church sedimentation of tithing which was identified by adherents of both ICGC and ACI and super-sedimentation⁹.

Adherents locate wealth within the frames of stewardship and health. As stewards they think of themselves as custodians and not owners of money or wealth and this informs the way that they employ the tools of religion, the symbolic categories in enacting the earning, spending, possession of wealth and health. I might add that the because the worldview of adherents is directly borne from their interpretation of religious doctrine in tandem with this the ways in which wealth is constructed is directly borne from adherent interactions with the doctrinally-based symbolic categories that they interact with and which they perceive as enabling social

⁹ Super-sedimentation is borne from the sole super-symbol which is represented by the founder who embodies all the symbolic categories.

mobility. Adherent accounts indicate that wealth occupies a powerful and immovable position in PG culture. Since meaning is synonymous with action the meanings that adherents give to wealth have implications for the ways in which they enact social mobility. It is bounded within symbolic frames that reflect transcendent, pragmatic and founding father categories.

The successful attainment of social mobility (wealth) is contingent upon the enactment of religious symbols. Generally speaking, the meanings pertaining to wealth are self-oriented. Even though there is a tendency to make resources available to individuals who are less well-off this is not a major concern for followers. This may further explain why member networks are not considered. Arguably this finding of wealth as a self-oriented construct challenges Hunt's (2000) assertion that in these types of churches prosperity is viewed in collective, congregational terms and not at the individual level.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Reflected Appraisals, Adherent Self-concept and Social mobility

"If you want to study yourself - look into the hearts of other people. If you want to study other people - look into your own heart." **Friedrich von Schiller**

8.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the interactionist interest in the self-concept which is the subject of the third research question which seeks to explore how adherent self-concept(s) arise from reflected appraisals within the context of their association with the symbolism that arises from PG and the implications that this may have for social mobility. It explores two dimensions of the self-concept: self-esteem and self-efficacy within the context of Neo-charismatic Christianity as it pertains to the followers of ACI and ICGC. Self-esteem refers to “people’s evaluations of their own self-worth...” (Aronson *et al*, 2001:19) and self-efficacy is “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994:1). These dimensions arise from the internalization of reflected appraisals (RAs) of generalized and particularized others over the course of interactions. RAs, a central concept in SI describes an individual’s perception of how others see and evaluate them (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934).

The discussions in this Chapter are grounded on the symbolic categories and constructions which were highlighted in Chapter Six on page 122. In the current Chapter they are examined with respect to how adherents perceive their role in the process of self-concept formation that arises as a result of religious participation.

The chapter is structured in two main parts, each of which examines one aspect of the self-concept. Integrated into these discussions are the resultant experiences that relate to the self-concept and the implications that these may have on member enactments of social mobility as established in Chapters Six and Seven where meaning-making relative to wealth is examined.

8.1 The Symbolic Categories that Relate to Self-concept

With the exception of the mainstream category¹⁰ all the remaining five categories (automatic, transcendent, pragmatic, founding father and member networks) were referred to as having a bearing (either directly or in association with another symbol) on the formation of the self-concept. Specifically, all five categories were of relevance to ACI respondents. In the case of ICGC respondents the automatic category was not part of their considerations which is not surprising given the fact that it is not a recognized category in ICGC symbolization as highlighted on page 126).

The symbolic categories can be distinguished into two groups. The first group constitutes the categories of particularized and generalized significant others represented by the founding father and member networks who symbolize ‘material’ agents of socialization in their capacity as producers of RAs. The second group is made up of automatic, transcendent and pragmatic categories whose enactments are associated with supernatural ‘immaterial’ particularized significant others capable of RAs. Both groups are represented in the formation of the two dimensions of the self-concept.

¹⁰ The mainstream category represents what social mobility is (see pages 126-129 of chapter six). Thus it is the end-point of the actions that lead to social mobility. This explains its absence as a category relevant to self-concept formation.

8.2 Symbolic Constructions and Reflected Appraisals before Membership

In Chapter Seven (page 150) I highlighted the fact that upwards of eighty percent of respondents had converted to Charismatic Christianity from other Christian denominations and that the process of meaning-making had begun as part of the process of conversion. Similarly, RAs were also experienced by potential adherents before conversion. RAs were generated from particularized significant others represented by the founding father and a specific member of the church who was mandated to follow up on the would-be-convert. This was reported by both ACI and ICGC adherents. An ACI member during a focus group discussion expressed what I deem to be a view that is representative of the ACI experience and is congruent with the accounts of ICGC members. She gave a detailed account which is presented below:

“The first thing is that a warm welcome was conveyed to me on behalf of papa and his wife. That made me feel that my presence there was important to them. It was a personal touch which I really appreciated. When papa left his seat and came to the altar to preach he was saying things that were unfamiliar and sometimes a little unsettling but the way he was saying them was so genuine and down to earth. I felt he was speaking to me and that I mattered. That my life was of consequence and that I mattered. He also said something to the effect that God had given me everything that I needed to make it in this life. Then when they asked about first-timers I stood up and immediately a temple minister came to me, welcomed me and gave me a pass to attend a reception at the end of the service. I noted these gestures to mean that they were trying to embrace me or accept me into their fold. At the reception upstairs I was attended to by a member of the church. She wanted to know more about me. She was very easy going. We exchanged numbers and true to her word she would call from time to time to find out how I was faring. Because of that she and I have remained good

friends. What I am trying to say is that the way that they handled me that day gave me a boost. I felt important. It was a good feeling.” (ACI focus group discussion)

My inclusion of this quote in the discussion is not to imply that this experience produced positive self-concept but to draw our attention to the fact that its formation from RAs located within the religious environment was a process that began from the initial interaction on day one. As discussed on page ninety-seven (97) of the theoretical framework one of the cardinal requirements for RAs to be consequential is frequency of contact (Bergner, 2001). This condition is far from being met at this inaugural stage, but four important things stand out from the quote above: 1) that the welcome made her feel acknowledged, 2) that she felt the founder was speaking to her personally, 3) that the founder expressed his belief that she was capable of succeeding in life and 4) that she was important to the church and deserving of a personal contact. The significance of these acts lies in the fact that they were meaningful to the extent that they triggered positive sentiments in the psyche of would-be adherents which they recognized as such.

We next turn our attention to explore the experience of the self-concepts of members of ACI and ICGC.

8.3 Reflected Appraisals of Particularized Significant Others and Self-esteem

The symbolic categories represented in this theme are the founding father, the transcendent and the automatic. ACI and ICGC respondent accounts converge along the constructions that are common to both of them. I discuss the commonalities and distinctions between the two churches pertaining to interactions that produce feelings related to self-esteem.

8.3.1 Material, Particularized Significant Other

In Chapter Six (on pages 140-142), I discuss the constructions of the founder as authority and motivator. It is these qualities that place him in the appraiser zone. Adherent interactions with the founder were fondly talked about with reference to the way that he spoke that made them feel that he was concerned about their welfare. For adherents the utterances that he made in his preaching or teachings are a reflection of founder perceptions about them. For instance an ICGC respondent stated thus:

“Every time I leave the church premises I have a renewed sense that I am great, I am chosen, that I am on top and all those other positive vibes that only pastor Otabil can give. He is my life coach. When I have missed church due to one or two things I have not missed any of his teachings as I buy them from the Altar media team¹¹. Over the last fifteen years and I can tell you that my confidence has gone up and up through my association with him.... Before I came here I was not a go-getter like I have become. He made me knowing that I am deserving of the good things that life has to offer. That is something that has given me the confidence to branch out. Starting my business for example. I am a trained teacher but I also own a sachet water company. That is something that I am almost certain I would not have had the confidence to take on if I had not come to ICGC” (ICGC respondent interview, dual career).

Similarly an ACI respondent stated thus:

“Papa to me is like a good brew of coffee. I drink and digest the vibes that he sends my way. When he is up there on the altar it is all about positivity. Speaking, thinking, acting positively. That is what he wants for us. He is concerned that every member of his church should prosper and one of the ways he does this is to encourage us by letting us know how fantastic

¹¹ The media production department of the church. They produce and compile all the print and electronic material that is available to members of the church as well as to the general public.

we are. He will say things like “look, you are Gods marvelous creation. Let no body tell you otherwise.” For someone like me those kinds of things are affirming as I have had much negativity from my family. I sincerely believe that because of papa’s assurance that I am somebody has meant that over time I have become more tenacious and bold. These qualities have furthered my career as well as my pocket.” (ACI respondent interview, investment analyst)

In both these statements we gather that the founders through their speech-acts interact with adherents and engage with them in repeated processes of appraisal that span over time. The appraisals of founders are processed by the objects (adherents) to which the perceived appraisals are directed over and over again through continual interactions with the appraiser. Through positive affirmations self-limiting beliefs are dealt with or altogether eliminated. It appears that the affirmations have a compounding effect which produces enhanced adherent self-esteem. By imploring followers to hold positive self-attitudes founders seem to put adherents in a ‘can do’ frame of mind (mindset) inspiring in them a feeling of self-worth which gives them a feeling of enhanced confidence to act in ways that will make them attain social mobility.

8.3.2 Distinct Founder Reflected Appraisals at ACI

ACI respondents reported that the founders’ actions of “standing in the gap”¹² and praying for them as well as inviting people who are burdened to approach the altar during prayer sessions for ‘special attention’ to them had implications for their self-esteem. Prayer has been highlighted in previous chapters as an integral symbol in the ACI adherent worldview, and so this link to self-esteem was unremarkable. In the context of RAs bordering on self-esteem it was not the content or the enactment of prayer but rather the action of the founder in offering

¹² A popular phrase which is used to describe a space in the spiritual realm that is permeable to evil supernatural forces.

to ‘intercede’ on behalf of adherents that constituted a positive RA. Adherents spoke about the fact that the gestures made them feel that their welfare was of importance to the founder. For example Rita observed the following:

“Papa cares about us like his own children. He stands in the gap for us which means that he is willing to sacrifice his own comfort for us. He also often announces that anyone who feels that they would want him to pray for them should come forward to the altar. These are testament that we matter to him. That is of great value to me. It makes me feel that my life is worth much in his eyes and so I feel that I matter. This is something that I continually remind myself about as I go about my daily work. I am encouraged to think like an achiever and act to be an achiever because my papa and mentor sees me as such. ” (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

Rita’s comments are representative of the whole with respect to this sub-theme. The feelings of significance and worthiness that the founders’ actions inspire can be equated to self-esteem, and the consequences of this are not markedly different to those discussed in this Chapter under subsection 8.3.1 (pages 186-188).

8.3.3 Immaterial, Particularized Significant Other

The constructions represented here is declaration which is from the automatic category, sowing seeds (tithing) from the transcendent and prayer which is a construct in both transcendent and pragmatic categories. The enactment of the constructions was expressed as the conduits through which the divine supernatural significant other interacted with members and assumed the role of appraiser. In other words, adherents experienced appraisals from God or Jesus Christ through their performance of the symbolic constructions. The results indicated that the integration of the various constructions into adherent narratives of RAs was more

prominent in the submissions of members of ACI because ICGC respondents identified RAs only through tithing.

The relationship with God as the sole immaterial, particularized significant ‘divine other’ is a salient source of self-esteem for members of both ACI and ICGC. The primary difference between the two is that there are more avenues through which God appraises ACI members than He does ICGC members. This is because ACI adherents identify God-appraisals in more constructions (prayer, declarations and seed sowing) as compared to ICGC adherents who are appraised only through seed sowing. Focus group discussions with ACI respondents yielded the following views:

“Because of how we worship as Actionites¹³ we have a very close bond with the Lord. When I pray at church, at work, home and everywhere it is not a one-way thing, I feel the presence of God come into my midst. The atmosphere changes when I pray. I feel that a higher power that has given me life is manifested. It is the same way that declaration of success or whatever it is that I desire to be manifested in my life brings God into my immediate surroundings. Our God is a loving God who cares for His children. I know that even though I am not deserving of this love God being who He is gives it to me freely. That is a massive boost for me. I keep these moments in remembrance as I go about my daily activities and I am pushed to succeed because God expects no less of me.” (ACI focus group discussion)

Another participant expressed the following view:

“When we sow seeds through tithes and offerings God is pleased with us. Papa says God smiles and nods at us as he acknowledges our sacrifice. For me this is an affirmation that He is on my side and that he sees me as a faithful steward. In honoring his commandments I feel confident in my abilities and I also feel energized. There is something about sowing that

¹³ People who are members of ACI

propels me to strive for more and I think that it is because I feel that I am in good standing with God.” (ACI focus group discussion)

All ACI members spoke about prayer and how the interactions that were produced from it boosted their morale. But not all of them expressed that they cultivated a relationship with the divine in the act of sowing seeds. Again the salience of prayer in ACI doctrine explains why it assumes such a prominent position in the formation of the self-concept.

The association between self-esteem and sowing seeds was important in ICGC experiences of divine RAs as well. A member stated thus:

“In the Old Testament times God would let His people know where they stand with him through the prophets but the sacrifice of Jesus changed that. I know that I am not a perfect person. But I also know that God looks upon me with favor when I honor my tithes and pledges. I know that because when I honor my tithes I feel really great about myself. It is as if I have achieved something and I think that it is because of the positive vibes that God directs towards me for honoring Him. These feelings of greatness push me to attain higher heights because I feel confident about my capabilities.” (ICGC focus group discussion)

The performance of sowing seed and prayer are rituals which adherents perform on a regular basis. According to Ellison (1991), Idler (1987) and a host of other researchers who are active in the scholarship of religion and RAs the sacred nature of these interaction rituals are what makes them effective in self-concept formation.

8.4 Reflected Appraisals of Generalized Significant Others and Self-esteem

The symbolic category represented in this theme is member networks and the construction is support. The RAs resulting from member networks were relevant to those members who had

joined the churches' voluntary groups. ACI and ICGC respondent accounts converged along similar understandings.

The first point which was often made by respondents was that within the groups different levels of friendships were forged between members. David, an ICGC member, explained thus:

"I am a member of the hosts and hostesses. I know that some of those in my group are not my friends. I don't mean that they are my enemies but I am not close with everyone. I think that within the group there are sub-groups of friends who are always together. I also have those that I relate with more closely. We help one another in various ways like advice or financial and stuff. But generally in the group I know that people appreciate and respect me a lot. I am not so bothered about what people think of me though so long as I am doing right in the eyes of God." (ICGC respondent interview, student)

David's response speaks to a hierarchy of RAs. He is essentially saying that not all RAs are of equal relevance or effect. His closing words "...as long as I am doing right in the eyes of God" demonstrate this. He did not place much premium on generalized RAs and so these were effectively rendered inconsequential to his self-concept. David's views were not uncommon in adherent responses. The extent to which other group members evaluated them either negatively or positively was overshadowed by the RAs attributed to the divine particularized significant other. In a similar vein Henry also a student but an ACI member, averred thus:

"I command a lot of respect from those who are not in my group more than those in my group because temple ministers coordinate the various aspects of the service. People really admire and appreciate what we do. That makes me feel proud to be a member of this group. Perhaps because we are always together those in my group do not really see anything special

about me. But I am not in the ministry because I want my ego to be fed. I am there to serve God. Period. I do not feed off what others think of me. I am more concerned about where I stand with He who has placed me here. That is what affects how I feel about myself." (ACI respondent interview, student).

Henry's comments also draw our attention to the element of prestige that envelopes the group. This accordingly drives members who do not belong to act in ways that show that they respect him. I juxtapose this with a sentiment held by an ICGC member who belonged to the traffic team. He stated thus:

"I love being in this group, don't get me wrong but people don't respect us. I think that it is because we are out in the sun and not dressed as smartly as say the ushers for example, and so people tend to look down on us. Although I am aware of it this does not bother me in the least because it is not about what people think but how God sees you. We really care about one another in this group. We prop one another up, share advice and also support one another especially financially." (ICGC respondent interview, dual career).

The relationships between members of this group fostered a sense of belonging and solidarity between actors. Within these groups friendships are forged with those who are perceived to channel or direct positive sentiments towards the object, an observation that confirms the opinion advanced by Swan and Read (1981). Negative RAs are deflected and this is seen in adherent statements to the effect that they do not matter. But beyond this it is plausible to assume that going by the articulations of adherents, the support that they derive from being part of a group (for example financial support) is not related to RAs. This goes contrary to Maton (1987) and Maton & Rappaport (1984) who find that such support serves to boost self-esteem.

8.5 Reflected Appraisals of Particularized Significant Others and Self-efficacy

The symbolic categories represented in this theme are the founding father, the transcendent, pragmatic and the automatic. Generally, where ACI and ICGC respondent accounts are based on common constructions their ideas on the output, self-efficacy, converge. The approach adopted is an integration of the views of both sets of adherents where commonalities emerge and separate discussions where there are distinctions.

8.5.1 Material, Particularized Significant Others and Self-efficacy

The symbolic category of the founders represents this theme. Respondents interact with the founders through the teachings that the founders deliver at various church events. Adherents form their judgements of what the founders think of them from what the founders say. In this way they come to know, accept and believe that they possess adequate skills that would propel them to attain wealth (social mobility). I proceed to explore this aspect of the self-concept with the sub-headings of dealing with self-limiting beliefs and surrendering to the divine other.

8.5.1.1 Dealing with Self-limiting Beliefs

Many adherents expressed that they had been “*inspired*” to trust in their abilities and to eschew self-doubt in their interactions with the founders. These sentiments are well articulated by an ICGC member in the quotation below:

“The way that Dr. Otabil teaches is amazing. He has absolute confidence in the ability of each of us who sits at his feet to make it. I love the way that he is plain about what he expects of us as members of his church. He implores us to be bold, daring and never to doubt our

ability to bring about desired outcomes by utilizing the skills that we possess. I consider myself to be well educated but that was not enough to inspire me to believe in myself and so I was just average. I have excelled professionally and as a result of the acquired self-belief I have had the confidence to branch and diversify my income-earning portfolio.” (ACI respondent interview, lecturer)

An ACI member channels similar views in her submissions:

“I will be starting a catering business with a friend very soon. This has come about because of papa. I know how to cook and bake because my mother was a caterer and I was often engaged in helping with orders. But it is papa’s persistence that I should conquer self-doubt that has led me to finally take the steps to start. I have worked as an administrator for over ten years now. I have been coming to Action for seven of those years. You see how much work papa has done on me to get to this point where I am confident enough to take that step? Once it is up and running of course my earnings would go up. I would be wealthier faster. Amen! (ACI respondent interview, administrator)

Adherent accounts show that they engaged with the words of affirmation regarding ability or mastery that the founder articulated. It appears that a key focus of founders was to eliminate any semblance of hesitation in the performance of social mobility-enhancing acts. In the case of the administrator and many other respondents across both churches a ‘reflexive internal dialogue’ (Mead, 1934) based on the ‘information’ provided by the founder was constantly engaged in. This spanned over many years of frequent contact with the founder and reflects the processual nature of self-concept formation.

8.5.1.2 Surrendering to the Divine Other

The title of this sub-theme reflects the speech acts of founders of both churches that border on adherents allowing God to take control of aspects of efficacy that they felt they were not

competent in. It served to encourage adherents to take ‘risks’ as Ruby, an ACI member and medical doctor elaborated:

“I am making great strides in climbing up to the top of the social ladder. You could say I am a doctor and so it is a given. But it is not so. When I first came here I had just finished my housemanship. Over the course of my life I had always been the type who would easily give up at even when I was doing well and a challenge surfaced. Papa’s constant admonishment that I am a unique being for whom God has a unique plan has led me to focus on the things that I have control over and to leave the rest to Him. It was not easy at first but now it is second nature to me. When I had the idea of a pharmacy I took it step by step. By ceding the challenges that I felt were beyond me to God I remained calm and felt in control because I knew that God was with me and working for me. My business is thriving, I have plans of adding on a mini-mart to it soon.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career).

This interaction with the divine other (borne out of the RA of the founder) shows that the appraisal of a ‘referent’ (Cooley, 1902) represented here by the founder can court a RA that may lead the object of the appraisal (adherent) to court feelings that influence the self-concept in ways that may be associated with another ‘referent’ (God). This process was also evidenced in the experiences of ICGC respondents. For example Norma, a student, made the following submission:

“Dr. Otabil offers many pieces of advice to us about letting God lead. He reminds us that though God has instilled in each of us the ability to be successful in our various fields of endeavor as human as we are we have limitations. That is where God comes in to make up for our shortcomings. In my case this has meant that I do not worry or panic in situations where I am powerless. I have learned to put my trust in God because he is a partner I can trust as I make my way through the motions of climbing up the social ladder. Because of this

assurance I am confident that the abilities that He, in His own wisdom has endowed me with is enough to see me to my destination.” (ICGC respondent interview, student)

In this way self-efficacy from divine interaction could be located indirectly through the founder-adherent interactions. This connection adds up to four conduits of divine appraisal for ACI members and two for ICGC members.

8.5.2 Immaterial Particularized Significant others and Self-efficacy

Interactions with the divine significant other were made through the enactment of the transcendent and pragmatic categories. These were represented by the constructions of prayer and sowing seeds.

8.5.2.1 Interactions with the divine significant other: prayer and declaration

This theme relates to ACI members only because prayer and declaration were not part of the constructions of ICGC adherents. Through these the divine other projected His ‘thoughts’ about how He viewed the mastery (efficacy) ability of the adherent as far as social mobility was concerned. The RAs acquired particularly through prayer had a powerful effect on the adherent’s self-concept. All respondents located self-efficacy in the experience of feeling capable by enacting prayer. This was expressed in two ways: A sense of assurance borne from the actions of God vanquishing evil and projecting victory onto adherents and empowerment through frequency of prayer. Many adherents started off by mentioning one type and then the other would surface as the conversation went on. A significant number of ACI adherents are in this group but because of the lengthiness of the quotes, I present the views in their separated form under the themes of empowerment through frequency and intensity of prayer and assurance through projections of victory.

8.5.2.2 Empowerment through Frequency and Intensity of Prayer

This theme channeled the relevance of contact time with the divine other to producing feelings of empowerment that enhanced adherent self-efficacy. These sentiments are expressed by two respondents, Kofi and Monica in the quotations below beginning with Monica:

“Our prayer life counts for everything here. That is how we build up our relationship with God. It is a step by step process. When He said that he wants us to prosper it is because he has given us dominion over the things of this world. That means that we have the ability to make it in this world and to be successful. When you are a baby Christian you cannot really pray for long but as you mature you will see that your prayer life intensifies and that makes you experience the God-effect more. My personal experience is that as I mature in Christ the feelings that I have about what God thinks of me are also maturing. Because I invest in building my relationship by praying without ceasing God speaks to me. That communication with Him gave me the insight that He has given me unrivalled business acumen. This led me to start businesses in areas where others wouldn’t dare. I know that God has given me dominion. I am a general merchant. I run businesses in three regional capitals, so I move around a lot. So for me my personal prayer life is paramount as I am not always able to be at the cathedral.” (ACI respondent interview, private business owner).

Kofi in a similar frame expressed thus:

“It is a feeling that you will understand only when you are a staunch prayerful believer. In His presence I have an overwhelming sense of empowerment because I have engaged with God to the level where I am able to understand what he is projecting onto me. This is priceless and has led me to take territories that I would not have taken if He (God) was not on my side. He sees me as worthy of being empowered so I am empowered with the ability to

be successful in everything that I do and at every place that I find myself. Prayer has been a great asset to me. I am bold and resolute in my financial decisions but that was not always the case until I got myself attuned to God through prayer. ” (ACI respondent interview, lecturer).

The sentiments of the respondents above accord with some of the ideas of ‘frequency scholars’ like Ellison (1991), Black (1999) and others¹⁴ because as per adherent narratives it is the regularity of the activity of prayer that produces positive feelings of self-efficacy. But it is at this point that my results diverge from those of the ‘frequency scholars’ who it appears have focused their investigations on the effects of frequency of prayer as it manifests in conditions of difficulty and found that it results in diminished self-efficacy. The adherent narratives presented here therefore validate the views of Schieman *et al.* (2003) that content and or context are considerations that ought to be factored into the determination of what interactions with the divine through prayer do as far as self-efficacy is concerned. Thus we find credence in both sides of the debate (frequency versus content/context) and suggest that rather than choose one over the other it might be better to consider both in our explorations of self-concept as it relates to the divine.

8.5.2.3 Assurance through Projections of Victory

Here the RAs that adherents associated with the divine were borne from His stepping in during times where adherent efforts towards social mobility were being thwarted by evil supernatural forces. As has been discussed in many instances in this thesis the place of evil supernatural forces is a strong fixture in the ACI worldview. In this context the divine other is petitioned and activated through the enactment of prayer to wage war against these evil invisible forces. By engaging in role-taking (Pollner, 1980; Schieman *et al.*, 2005) the victory

¹⁴ For a detailed list and discussion of the work of scholars see Chapter Four pages 97-98.

that is won is projected onto the adherent and this gives adherents a feeling of being empowered. Having vanquished evil spiritual forces adherents are in the position to be able to enact social mobility successfully. For example Monica averred thus:

“My background is fraught with shrines, priestesses and all those black magic things. Breaking free from that is not an easy thing. My early years in this church were challenging for me. I had to go through many sessions of prayers in order to break free. I think that I went through so much because although God was winning my battles I had doubts about my capacity to be able to stay rid of them. Over time I came to appreciate that He would never give up on me as my freedom was a concern for him. That insight made me believe in myself that I had the capacity to be free as long as I believed that my spiritual battles had been taken care of. I am a prayer fanatic. For me prayer is what keeps me in the frame where I believe in myself and in my capabilities through engaging with my maker.” (ACI respondent interview, business owner).

Again the frequency of interactions can be used to explain the respondents enhanced capability achieved as a result of repeated interactions with the divine. But that does not tell the entire story as we find that this was necessitated by the adherents' background. This brings to mind the importance of context. I opine that my observations further the case for merging frequency of contact with context when investigating RAs and self-concept formation generally. I have advocated this approach in subsection 8.5.2.2 (page 199) of this Chapter.

8.5.3 Interactions with the Divine Significant Other: Sowing Seeds

Members of both churches located the divine other in enacting the transcendent category through sowing seeds. The importance of acquiring divine favor, cooperation and affirmation in their enactment of fulfilling their obligations of tithing was woven into their psyche. There

was a tendency to associate the ‘power’ of seed sowing with times where adherents felt dispossessed of their ‘own power’ as is evidenced in the quote below:

“The times when sowing seeds has really brought me into conference with God have been those times of self-doubt. When I have felt that I being knocked down. I have sown to seek the face of God to get back to normal. There is something that happens to me when the seed goes. I mean once I drop it at the altar and He knows what is on my heart. In that moment He affirms my position as His child. It is an amazing feeling that helps me to take charge of my life. That sense of being in control has made me very successful in life.” (ACI respondent interview, retiree).

Echoing a similar train of thought an ICGC respondent stated thus:

“For me the tithe is something that brings me into full communion with God. I cast all my burdens onto the tithe. If I sow other seeds I do the same with those too. It serves to focus Gods attention to be on me and to meet me at my point of need. Sometimes in life some things happen or sometimes things do not happen as anticipated. That can put you down in the dumps. As a child of God I do not stay in that mode. I sow a seed. This action alone turns everything around to be in my favor because God is activated to put me in consideration. That makes me to re-focus on what it is that I can also do to ameliorate the situation.”(ICGC respondent interview, dual career).

Rather than diminishing self-efficacy as suggested by Ellison, 1991,1993; Spilka & Schmidt, 1983 and Wikström, 1987 employing the RAs of the divine other in situations of adversity do not detract from personal efforts at solving the problem but rather appear to encourage it and in so doing enhance self-efficacy.

8.6 Reflected Appraisals of Generalized Significant Others

The symbolic category represented in this theme is member networks and the construction is support. This construction was relevant to those adherents who were members of groups within the church. ACI and ICGC respondent accounts converged along similar lines. Like self-esteem which appeared not to be much influenced by the RAs of other members the same held true here.

This was despite the fact that generally, adherents said that they felt that their skill-set was acknowledged by other members of the group. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

“People in the group know that I am an effective member of the group. I am not just there to make up the numbers. I feel good about that but in the final analysis I am not so concerned about that. I am there to serve God and not because I am looking for something. That being said because I am a lawyer they do come to me for help with legal matters. I offer them a rate that they would not find on the market. But what happens is that they refer other members of the church who are not in the group and sometimes some who aren’t even at Action to me. So for me I get more business because people know my capabilities. It is not just me. We all support one another in that regard.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career).

“Here at church I am seen as a good problem solver. I know that my group members value the advice that I give them when they come to me. In this way I am a provider of support-services. It is just something that I am good at and I feel really good about that. I feel that I am more effective in control of my own life because of the recognition of my colleague group members.” (ICGC respondent interview, journalist).

“I am a member of altar media. Other members of my group think highly of the quality of work that I do. That is great; I think I may even be inspiring others to excellence. Some of them come to me for help on some techniques; I don’t mind showing them after all knowledge

should be shared. But I do not dwell on that. For me the affirmation I crave is from Christ. So I give of my best in service to him." (ICGC respondent interview, retired).

Members of groups are more likely to extend a helping hand to other members and to give referrals or recommendations for business. These actions speak to the 'network-driven' nature of religious groups that Paris (1982) and other scholars write about, but this lies outside the remit of the current study. Interactions between members suggest that whilst there is recognition of appraisals of others this does not appear to be constructed in the frame of RAs that are important. This may account for why member-member interactions do not appear to have a 'direct' bearing on member perceptions of their own self-efficacy.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with how adherents of ACI and ICGC come to construct RAs via SIs with the symbolic categories and constructions that flow from their religious orientation. Adherents although bombarded by multiple evaluations from particularized and generalized significant others, appear to navigate between the two without difficulty.

Though conceptually separate, it is analytically difficult to draw a fine line of separation between the self-concept dimensions of self-esteem and self-efficacy. This is because self-esteem and self-efficacy intersect rendering any distinctions or separations between them blurry. This may explain why the majority of scholarship reviewed on this subject has towed the line of making one (self-efficacy) a component of the other (self-esteem)¹⁵. I have attempted to keep them separate in my thesis because I wanted to be able to explore as fully as possible the two dimensions as they relate to the diversity of the symbolic constructions. I felt that conflating the two would lead to a less nuanced discussion. I hope that my attempt at keeping them as separate dimensions has been successful.

¹⁵ For a more nuanced examination see pages 95-96 of Chapter Four.

The sentiments that adherents have expressed as relates self-esteem and self-efficacy arising from RAs are positive. They serve to motivate adherents to explore their full potential, to persist and to continually strive towards the fulfilment of their goals and aspirations of being socially mobile which is equated to being wealthy.

The discussions in this chapter have also highlighted the fact that not all RAs are salient to self-concept formation. A case in point is how adherents acknowledge but ‘dismiss’ the RAs of other adherents. We also find that adherents actively seek out RAs from the divine other through their enactments of prayer and seed sowing. This shows that as far as the constructions of prayer and seed sowing are concerned adherents ‘control’ the process.

In light of the exploration of RAs in PG circles I would like to conclude by suggesting that religion influences social mobility by being a cultural form in which RAs can and do take place. In the context of my work participation in the PG exposes the actors (adherents) to a tool in the form of RAs which may be employed in the formation of self-concept. The self-concept is constituted by the self-esteem and self-efficacy of adherents. When these are positive, as has been found to be the case in this work, the implications for social mobility are also positive because people believe that they are deserving or worthy of social mobility (self-esteem) and possess the skills, ability or mastery to attain it (self-efficacy).

CHAPTER NINE

Summary and Conclusions

9.0 Introduction

This Chapter presents the conclusions for this study. The first section comments on various components of the thesis including the research questions, methodology and the theoretical framework. I then summarise the main empirical findings of my work which lead me to state the features that make an original contribution to the research base. Finally I take cognisance of the limitations of my study, reflect on the PhD process and suggest potential future directions for research in this field of scholarship.

9.1 Overview of the study

The PG is a religious ideology that takes on various names including ‘health and wealth’, ‘faith gospel’ and ‘name it claim it’ gospel because of its message that God’s will is for believers be rich, healthy and successful. It promises believers physical health and material wealth on earth (Beckford 2001; Coleman, 2000; 2000b; Phiri & Maxwell 2007, Ukah, 2007).

This study sought to offer an emic perspective of the social mobility paths of adherents of two of Ghana’s pioneering INCs (ACI and ICGC) by exploring the multiple symbolism around the PG doctrine espoused by these churches as expressed by its adherents. I adopted SI theory which I found to best fit my vision for the work because interaction is a core element of religion and religious expression. SI also afforded me the added advantage of examining both subjective and inter-subjective perceptions that arise out of participation in religion.

My choice of the churches was based on two arms of information. The first was the information gleaned from the extant literature with respect to how the PG emerged in Ghana (Chapter Two) with the formation of INCs. One of the discoveries from this exercise was that the two churches were the first PG-type churches in Ghana. The second is scholarly works which suggested that there were stark differences in the way that PG was disseminated by the founders of the two churches (Gifford, 1998; Wariboko, 2012). With these in mind the study set out to compare and contrast adherent interpretations.

Methodologically this study adopted a subjectivist approach guided by nominalist ontology, anti-positivist epistemology and idiographic methodology (Burrell and Morgan 1979).

Locating the study in an interpretive paradigm enabled me to carry out this study relying upon the inter-subjectivities of both myself as the researcher and the research participants taking the context of the study and meanings made by actors of the research into consideration (Angen, 2000). In line with this research orientation, I employed the methods of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions as the key methods for data collection. I also engaged in long periods of participant observation but this was not to generate data but rather to enhance my own understanding of the subject as well as to offer a detailed and true description of the churches and the activities that characterize it.

9.2 Bridging the Gap

Although the scholarship on religion and social mobility is vast most of them are surveys based on data collected in North American, specifically the USA. Religion is found to influence a host of social mobility affecting activities including education, work ethic, saving and investment behaviors (Chiswick, 1988; Ellison & Bartowski, 2002; Keister, 2003; Lehrer, 2008; Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). Only a handful of studies pertain to the African

continent and examine educational outcomes (Doctor, 2005; Heaton et al, 2009; Takyi & Addai, 2002) and wealth (Heaton *et al*, 2009).

Scholarship that specifically examines how the PG influences social mobility is sparse. Changes to consumption with abstention from alcohol, tobacco, drugs and gambling are noted in Brazil (Lehmann, 1996; Martin B, 1998; Martin D, 1996; 1990). The message of prosperity is also found to be empowering (Harrison 2005; Marti 2012) for those of the lower classes. In Africa the few studies that touch on this are generally agreed that PG has positive consequences for social mobility (Garner, 2000; Gifford, 1998; Marshall, 1993; Maxwell, 1998; Spinks, 2003). Bonsu & Belk (2010) present the sole attempt at analyzing the nexus between PG and social mobility. They report findings of monetary support and church networks but they offer very little analysis as to how these enhance social mobility.

It was established that PG and adherent social mobility remains under researched in African in particular and worldwide more generally. For a religious doctrine whose fundamental basis is prosperity it is strange that there hasn't been more interest in this area. As a result this doctoral thesis sought to generate new insights by addressing the following research questions:

1. From a neo-charismatic Christianity perspective what are the symbols adherents associate with social mobility?
 - Are these symbolisms shared by adherents of both churches?
2. What are the local interpretations (meanings) of these symbolic constructions and what influences the sedimentation of these meanings?
3. How do adherent self-concept(s) arise from reflected appraisals within the context of their association with the symbolism that arises from the PG?

- What implications may this have for social mobility?

I next present a summary of the findings from the exploration of these questions.

9.3 Main Empirical Findings

The findings were presented in three substantive Chapters: multiple symbols of prosperity, local interpretations of wealth and actions towards social mobility and reflected appraisals, adherent self-concept and social mobility. Each Chapter addressed a specific research question. I present summaries of each of the Chapters.

9.3.1 Multiple Symbols of Prosperity

The main aim of Chapter Six was to explore the multiple symbols that adherents identified as associated with social mobility from a religious point of view. There was also an interest in examining the similarities and differences in the symbolisms of the two churches.

The findings indicated that there was a constellation of shared symbols identified by adherents. Six symbolic categories the mainstream, automatic, transcendent, pragmatic, founding father and member networks plus fifteen symbolic constructions arising from the categories were identified.

The mainstream category represented what adherents perceived social mobility to be. Wealth emerged as the dominant construction of social mobility or prosperity. Health on the other hand emerged as a more significant symbol for respondents of both churches who were above fifty years of age. These findings give credence to Hunt's (2000) observation that PG churches had the tendency of projecting one theme over the other. In this study wealth was the favoured theme.

Intra-church differences did not manifest in the symbolisms that were indicated by adherents but there were obvious points of difference between adherents of the two churches. Birth-right and declaration in the automatic category did not exist in the symbolic world of ICGC adherents. Prayer, anointing oil and holy water, three of the four elements in the transcendent category did not feature in ICGC expressions. Prayer was also indicated as a construction of the pragmatic category by ACI adherents. The analysis suggested that the fundamental reason for these differences was that at ACI there is an amalgamation of beliefs which are consistent with African traditional religious beliefs with modern-day Neo-charismatic Christian doctrine. I argued that this exhibition of syncretism suggested that the *glocalized* doctrine of ACI is quasi-modern in the sense that it not only acknowledges what Atiemo, (2013:99) calls the "...common underlying worldview" of Ghanaians which is steeped in deep-seated and long-standing traditional beliefs ascribing physical happenings, particularly misfortunes to evil spirits but perpetuates it.

The analysis also revealed that Bowler's (2013) themes of health and wealth were represented in the mainstream category and the remaining five symbolic categories could be located within her themes of faith and victory. Based on my assessment of the findings I suggest that Neo-charismatic Christianity is a subculture which presents its followers three sets of symbols: performative symbols (symbolic constructions) that lead to the attainment of purpose symbols (themes of faith, victory, pragmatism¹⁶ and networks) and the representative symbol of wealth which defines what social mobility is.

The Chapter concludes by asserting that the founders of the two churches are the repository of all the symbols that adherents identify and that they use language as the mode of making these available to adherents. As a consequence adherents locate the founders in all their

¹⁶ Pragmatism here is not to be confused with the pragmatic symbolic construction which is performative.

submissions and for this reason I contend that the founders are super-symbols that embody all the symbolic categories.

9.3.2 Local Interpretations of Wealth and Actions Towards Social Mobility

Chapter Seven explored meanings as relates to wealth which had been established as the dominant representation of social mobility in Chapter Six. It also explored the social mobility actions that resulted from these meanings.

From the outset even though nearly ninety percent of respondents were converts to Neo-charismatic Christianity, I had not considered that the process of meaning-making begun following the first encounter with the PG when their friends who were members of the church had invited them to church. Five stages of this process were gleaned from adherent responses. These were explored under initial reactions to the ‘philosophy’ of wealth, catalytic intermediaries, reflections on the ‘philosophy’ of wealth, consolidation of meaning and stabilization of meaning. Beyond the findings highlighting how potential members make meaning that lead to conversion it also served to strengthen the rationale for the methodological approach adopted as this was what had given room for these processes to come to the fore.

The analysis showed that wealth was constructed quasi-theologically in the frame of the stewardships of earning, spending and possession. I argued that the use of quasi-theological was apt because it showed that respondents incorporated both theological and secular symbols in their articulation of what the meaning of wealth is. All the symbolic categories except member networks were represented in respondent statements. I argued that the omission of member networks was because it was understood by adherents as a purpose symbol and not as a performative symbol as was the case of the other categories. There were also more points of convergence in the narratives of the respondents of the two churches than

there were points of divergence. Here again just as was found in Chapter Six the supernatural worldview of ACI respondents with respect to warding off evil was the outstanding difference between the two churches. Another difference was that consistent with the symbolic constructions explored in Chapter Six education was integral in ICGC narratives but not in those of ACI adherents.

Stepping outside stewardship and into health adherents of both churches conceptualized health as a vehicle for the acquisition of wealth for those who were in their economically productive years and a vehicle for the maintenance of wealth for those no longer able to add to their wealth because they were retired. There was one obvious difference in the way that health was constructed and understood by members of the two churches. The syncretic worldview of ACI meant that they tended to make statements suggestive of supernatural causation.

A number of symbols were deemed to have attained the status of sedimentation, which implies permanency of a concept in a culture with agency giving way to structure (Fine, 1992). These are

1. The founding father which I argued is a super-sedimented symbol because it represents the single ubiquitous symbol to which adherents of both churches refer to in relation to all the themes that coalesce around the construct of wealth.
2. Tithing which I contended was because of its obligatory status within the PG as an action that is tied to divine supernatural intervention which is positive for those who obey and negative for those who chose to disobey.
3. Prayer a pervasive symbol in all ACI constructions of wealth was limited to the ACI worldview. Because of the foregrounding of evil supernatural forces which are ever ready to

negatively affect the prosperity of ACI respondents this worldview permeates all their interactions with and interpretations of wealth and can be explained by historical and cultural forces. Aptly explained by Atiemo (2013) is the observation that the Ghanaian worldview is situated within a symbolic universe of the supernatural where good and bad are found and interact with human beings. ACI promoted a syncretic worldview.

The chapter established that adherents consciously consider religion in the decisions that they take through the incorporation of various religiously abstracted symbolic categories in their quest to achieve social mobility and in their quest to maintain their social status having attained social mobility. This interactive thought is what culminates in the formation of meaning and since meaning determines action this has implications for the ways in which wealth is attained.

9.3.3 Reflected Appraisals, Adherent Self-concept and Social Mobility

Chapter Eight, the third and final empirical chapter explored how adherent self-concept(s) arise from reflected appraisals within the context of their association with the PG. The implications that this may have for social mobility were also explored. In order to achieve these objectives the study examined two dimensions of the self-concept: self-esteem and self-efficacy, both of which arise from the internalization of reflected appraisals of generalized and particularized others over the course of interactions.

Five symbolic categories were referred to by adherents as having a bearing on self-esteem and self-efficacy which combine to form the self-concept. These are the automatic (exclusive to ACI respondents), transcendent, pragmatic, founding father and member networks. They were associated with two groups of appraisers. 1)The 'material' or organic agents of socialization represented by the categories of founding father and member networks and 2)

The 'immaterial' supernatural particularized significant others represented by the automatic, transcendent and pragmatic categories.

The study found that the process of self-concept formation from RAs begun following the initial contact that adherents had had with the PG. RAs of material particularized significant others that bordered on self-esteem were associated with the founding father, transcendent and automatic categories. For adherents the utterances that the founder made in his preaching or teachings were a reflection of his perceptions about them. These appraisals, interpreted as positive affirmations were processed by adherents over and over again through continual interactions with the founder with the result being enhanced self-esteem that inspired in adherents the feeling that they are worthy. This enhanced confidence made them to act in ways that had the potential to make them socially mobile. ACI adherents extended the founder RAs in respect of his frequent action of offering to 'intercede' on their behalf through prayer. This gesture it seemed made them feel that their welfare was of importance to the founder, and this also inspired an enhanced self-esteem.

RAs of immaterial, particularized significant others which had a bearing on self-esteem were represented by declaration from the automatic category (ACI members only) and prayer (ACI members only) and sowing seeds (both ACI and ICGC members) from the transcendent category. It was noted that prayer shared a dual categorization occupying both the transcendent and pragmatic. Adherents experienced God-appraisals through their performance of the symbolic constructions. It was found that apart from the fact that there were more avenues for ACI members to experience divine appraisals the relationship with God as the sole immaterial, particularized significant other is a salient source of self-esteem in both sets of adherents. But whilst all ICGC adherents associated sowing seeds with positive RAs many ACI adherents did not. Rather they (ACI members) all placed great emphasis on prayer.

Member networks represented RAs of generalized significant others who had a bearing on the self-esteem of adherents. Existing within the voluntary groups of the respective churches adherents did not place much premium on generalized RAs because adherents articulated sentiments to the effect that the extent to which other members of the group evaluated them either negatively or positively was overshadowed by the RAs attributed to the divine particularized significant other.

Self-efficacy as it relates to the reflected appraisals of particularized significant others was evidenced in the categories of founding father, transcendent, pragmatic and automatic categories. The material particularized other, represented by the founder just as was found in the discussions about self-esteem is contingent on his utterances in the teachings that he delivers to the followers. Adherents expressed that founder speech acts serve to deal with self-limiting beliefs and encourage them to surrender to the divine other. By dealing with self-limiting beliefs adherents eschewed self-doubt and harbored feelings of trust in their ability to succeed. Founders frequently encouraged members to allow God to take control of aspects of efficacy that they felt they were not competent in. In this way self-efficacy from divine interaction was located in founder-adherent interactions and served to spur them on to venture into unknown territory particularly as regards taking on new opportunities like business ventures. This confidence was driven by the assurance that in spite of their shortcomings by ceding control of their lives to the divine they could still be socially mobile.

Represented by the constructions of prayer (transcendent and pragmatic), declaration (automatic) and sowing seeds (transcendent) adherents interacted with the divine significant other. For ACI adherents through prayer and declaration the divine other projected His 'thoughts' concerning His view of adherent efficacy in attaining social mobility. Frequent prayer in particular produces feelings of empowerment and victory which is in itself empowering. These boost adherent self-efficacy because it assures adherents that God is on

their side. Members of both churches located the divine other in the act of sowing seeds because by sowing they acquired divine favor, cooperation and affirmation. They associated the 'power' of seed sowing with times when they felt dispossessed of their 'own power'. The seed served to enhance their feelings of self-efficacy by giving them the confidence to keep working at achieving their (social mobility) targets. This goes against Ellison (1991, 1993), Spilka & Schmidt (1983) and Wikström (1987) who found that employing divine RAs in situations of adversity diminished feelings of self-efficacy.

Member networks were explored as regards their role in self-efficacy from RAs. Like self-esteem, self-efficacy appeared not to be much influenced by the RAs of other members. This is attributed to the fact that members construct member networks as support in terms of assistance, references or referrals that members offer one another and not in terms of RAs.

The major findings were that 1) The sentiments of adherents on matters of self-esteem and self-efficacy from RAs are positive and thus motivate them to explore their full potential, to persist and to continually strive towards the fulfilment of their goals and aspirations of being socially mobile. 2) Not all RAs are salient to self-concept formation, as exemplified by the 'dismissal' of member RAs. 3) Adherents actively seek out RAs from the divine other through their enactments of seed sowing, prayer and declaration which shows that in these cases adherents 'control' the process of RAs.

The Chapter acknowledged the practical difficulty in exploring the two concepts as separate dimensions and explained that the insistence on keeping them separate was in order to provide a more nuanced discussion of self-concept formation.

9.4 A Note on Theory

Each of the three empirical chapters explored a different aspect of SI theory. The first empirical chapter (Chapter Six) examined symbols. The second empirical chapter (Chapter Seven) explored meanings and the third and final empirical chapter (Chapter Eight) focused on reflected appraisals. Through language or speech acts of the founders of the churches objects become symbols to which meanings are attached and actions are directed.

9.4 Research Contribution

This study has explored social mobility as it pertains to adherents of Neo-charismatic churches that propagate the PG. It is original because research projects have tended to overlook the emic or insider perspectives of PG adherents with respect to how their association with the doctrine has implications for their social mobility. It is important to state that the backgrounding of member-voice is not limited to social mobility research but to research on PG in general. This thesis offers a unique contribution both empirically and theoretically evidenced by 1) the empirical findings that suggest that the followers of the PG are influenced by the PG as they enact actions towards attaining social mobility. The genesis of this influence is from interactions that culminate in the construction of shared symbolic categories that are composed of a number of symbolic constructions. These serve as points of reference for meaning making and action.

2. The mainstay of symbolic interactionists interested in religion has been on religions role in the construction of meaning as well as the formation and maintenance of self-identity (Jorgensen, 1984; Straus, 1986; Creelan, 1987; Kaufman, 1989; Bruder, 1998; Wolkomir, 2000; Ajzenstadt & Cavaglion, 2002; Armato & Mardiglio, 2002; Hicks, 2008; Shoffstall,

2008). Maines and McCallion, (2002) examined how religion can play a role in power relations and Shupe (2003) looked at how SI might be used to interpret religious institutions in different societies. In light of these the application of SI to religion and social mobility research is novel.

9.5 Researcher Reflections

As I approach the end of my journey as a postgraduate research student I take a step back to reflect on the processes that have led me up to this point.

My application to the University of Birmingham to pursue doctoral studies was motivated by my desire to be able to teach at the tertiary level (even if on part-time basis) in my alma mater. I had worked on projects with development NGOs and partners such as the Carter Centre and UNICEF, and at the time of applying for the doctorate I was engaged with WATER, as a consultant. When I received the good news that I had been accepted I had mixed feelings because I had been accepted onto the MPhil programme with the possibility of an upgrade after the satisfactory completion of the first year of study. I was concerned about what would happen if I was unable to do well enough to secure the upgrade to PhD. But an even bigger concern for me was funding. Having gained admission I applied to the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) for a scholarship. I received a call sometime in July 2012 to attend an interview which as fate would have it fell on the day after the tragic death of the late President of Ghana H.E. Professor John Evans Fiiifi Atta-Mills. I arrived at the GETFund offices only to be told that they would call me on a later date. Forty minutes later just as I was arriving home I received a call to return immediately for the interview! To my delight I was awarded the scholarship. The then director of the Fund Mr. Sam Garba admonished me to work hard and secure a place on the Doctoral programme and assured me that if I was

successful they would fund that too. How grateful I was. My parents generously offered to take care of my two year old daughter as they felt that I needed to concentrate fully on working towards earning a place on the PhD program.

Once at Birmingham the enormity of the task ahead began to dawn on me. The biggest challenge for me was that I had not done any real academic work in years. My supervisors, Martin and Robert were very supportive (and have been throughout this process) and reassured me that if I put in the hours I could make it. Following the first year review I received the great news that I was on the doctoral program.

By far the most fulfilling period of my studies was during fieldwork. I had approached the enterprise of fieldwork with some trepidation because I had not carried out a research project on this scale before and I was not sure how the pastors would view my interest in their members. The latter concern was because in the past (from my engagement with the extant literature) it was the pastors researchers interviewed and not the church members. There was some hesitation at ACI in granting me access but once they were satisfied that mine was purely an academic exercise they were happy to allow me into their midst. These initial delays meant that I began data collection at ICGC whilst I awaited the decision from ACI. I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in church activities and spending time with respondents. I had a wonderful group of respondents. Many of them still call me up to check on my progress and assure me that they are *“praying with you”*.

One of the most challenging times was trudging through the data, organising it and analysing it. I had attended a training course in NVIVO during my first year of study but I soon came to realise that I needed to have had first-hand experience before I could apply it to my project. I therefore had to do it manually. During this time I realised that I ought to have maintained some connections to academia during the four years that I had ‘gone corporate’. I reckon that

this would have made the process less tasking as I would have been more familiar with doing this kind of work.

Funding for my third year of studies was not forthcoming. Making rent and other expenditures meant that I was digging into my savings in Ghana. This, together with the fact that I was expecting a second child led me to make the decision to return to Ghana to continue with my studies. Once home I requested for a leave of absence which was granted. When my baby was five months old I returned but soon found that childcare was taking up much of the little time I had left to complete the thesis. My parents, particularly my mother was having health challenges and was now unable to support me. I was granted another leave of absence during which time I began to scout for help. A babysitter for the children and a driver to help do the school runs for my then six year old daughter. In January 2018 I returned to work on the PhD. It has not been fraught with challenges but thanks to many helping hands, friends and my dear supervisors somehow I have been able to finish the thesis.

9.6 Limitations of the Study

As Patton (2002: 223) notes “...there are no perfect research designs. There are always tradeoffs.” The time-frame for this study was such that the time that could be spent in the field could not exceed twelve calendar months. A longer period of time would have allowed me to conduct additional ‘member checking’ and hold more FGDs. Interviews, a core component of the data to be collected are the most practical data collection tool for eliciting the views of participants. The downside is that these views are reflective of a specific moment in time and not over a longer period. As the sole researcher in this project data was analyzed by me. I recognize the pitfalls associated with being the only ‘eye’, hence the use of reflexivity. There are limitations due to the size and sampling of this study. The sample is not random and thus inevitably is not indicative of the entire population which the churches

serve. Additionally, because I purposively selected the two oldest Neo-charismatic Churches out of many of hundreds of this type in Ghana the views expressed are not representative of the generality of the lay faithful of Neo-charismatic churches in Ghana. The sample is also limited by the ‘respondent exclusion criteria’ which means that I limited the respondents to members with some history (length of time and ‘contact hours’) within the congregations. My analysis is therefore limited to those who are likely to be somewhat more acculturated and have greater facility with the traditions, narrative, and experiences of the selected churches.

9.7 Future Directions for Research

The main objective of this research was to explore the symbolic dimensions of the intersection between religion, specifically the PG as espoused by Neo-charismatic Christianity and the social mobility of its followers.

The present study drew on the perspectives of adherents who had been members for at least five years and involved in at least half of the church’s activities. For a more comprehensive understanding of the nexus between the PG and adherent social mobility the study needs to be broadened to include those who may not fit these highly selective criteria.

The scope of this study was limited to ACI and ICGC. However, broadening the research to include other ‘types’ of Ghana’s Neo-charismatic churches using the groundbreaking work of Wariboko (2012) as source material may yield interesting and more insightful perspectives. Perhaps other symbolic constructions and categories may arise from an exploration of this kind. This would serve to further our understanding of the PG as it pertains to those who practice it.

Additionally, this doctoral thesis like the handful of studies from Ghana that examine PG focus on churches located in the southern part of the country particularly in Accra. Given that

PG churches are ubiquitous in Ghana the 'elimination' of PG churches in the other parts of the country is likely due in part to the convenience and lower costs associated with carrying out work in Accra. Arguably, undertaking cross-country comparisons of PG churches in Ghana may serve to enrich our knowledge and deepen our understanding of the subject.

It is important to note that though there is no disaggregated data on the population of Neo-charismatic Christians in Ghana, some 28.3% of Christians identify themselves as Charismatic (GLSS, 2010). It is plausible to argue that a significant number of Charismatic Christians are adherents of Neo-charismatic churches commonly branded as megachurches. This designation is because of the large auditoriums that house the churches, the teeming numbers of people that attend their services as well as the large numbers of formally registered members on their books. The findings from this piece of research work show that adherents of PG churches symbolically construct categories that they express as arising from their interactions with the PG. Followers make meaning of these constructions which they reckon have a direct influence on their attitudes towards various social mobility enhancers including savings, investments, entrepreneurship, work ethic and education. Adherents also integrate some symbolic constructions as they engage in the process of positive self-concept formation arising from reflected appraisals. Accordingly, a more exhaustive study of the nexus between the PG and social mobility could interrogate how these considerations might inform public policy on savings, investments, enterprise and Ghana's development more generally.

9.6 Concluding Thoughts

Walking through the streets of Accra, Ghana's capital city one is bombarded by glossy, high- definition posters and billboards announcing a myriad of up-coming activities in the Neo-charismatic fraternity with phrases bordering on personal fortune and advancement.

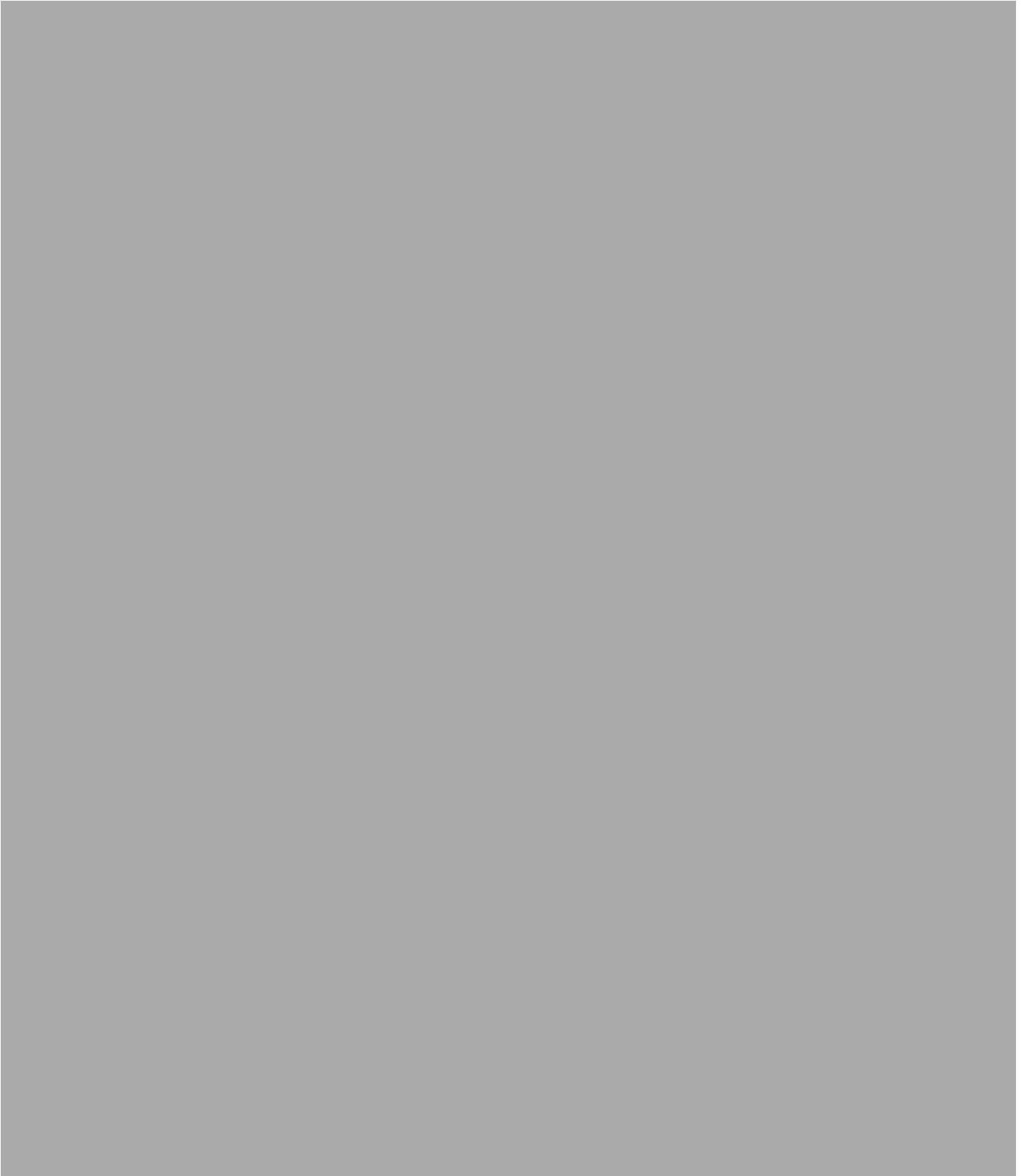
Some of the headlines captured on the billboards are; ‘more than you can carry convention’, ‘provoking God for a divine turnaround’, ‘corporate night of prayer’, ‘exceeding your limits’, and ‘Archbishop declares your year of unstoppable favor’ and ‘going for gold’. Messages such as these, which are now a common occurrence, emerged with the birth of INCs in Ghana nearly four decades ago.

This thesis has explored the concept of social mobility as it pertains to symbolisms expressed by adherents of the PG. It has been established (in three empirical chapters) that the symbolic links are expressed as symbolic categories which are made up of symbolic constructions. In all six symbolic categories: the mainstream, automatic, transcendent, pragmatic, founding father and member networks plus fifteen symbolic constructions arising from these categories have been identified. These symbolic categories and constructions were employed in the meanings that adherents attributed to social mobility, the actions that they engaged in and in the formation of their self-concepts through reflected appraisals. In this way religious symbolism is associated with the secular outcome of social mobility which adherents overwhelmingly expressed to be the acquisition and possession of wealth as succinctly put by one of the respondents:

“My religion is my wealth. I draw on my religion in everything that has to do with me being wealthy because God has mandated that he wants us His children to prosper.” (ACI respondent interview, dual career)

Appendices

Appendix 1 Letter of introduction





Appendix 2- Participant observation checklist to be used when attending church services and associated activities

Date:

Time:

Church Code:

Length of observation:

1. Description of setting
 - Number of attendees
 - Mode of transport
 - Weather
 - Information notices
 - Setting i.e. furniture, lighting etc.
 - Sounds i.e. music, clapping etc.
 - Equipment i.e. microphones, projectors, instruments etc.
 - other

2. Description of participants
 - Demographics i.e. age, gender
 - Arrival times in relation to the time the activity was billed to start/started
 - Physical appearance i.e. style of clothes (traditional or contemporary)
 - Social class/ status
 - other

3. Description of function
 - What function is it?
 - Order of segments and duration
 - other

4. Behaviour of attendees and leaders
 - Interactions between people
 - Level of participation
 - Mood i.e. changes from one segment to the next
 - other

5. Information sharing activities
 - Language
 - Who and what they say
 - Reaction of those receiving the information

- Other

6. Description of sermon/exhortation

- Preacher
- Duration
- Themes
- Reaction of attendees
- other

Appendix 3a Participant information sheet

Research title: PG and adherent social mobility in Ghana

Introduction

You are invited to participate in this research study which is part of my PhD thesis. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please contact me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the research?

The study aims to examine the symbols of your church, how these are understood by the church's members and whether they influence the conduct of members in terms of the actions they take that have a bearing on social mobility outcomes. The interactions between members and how this may influence social mobility will also be examined.

Who will conduct the research?

The study will be carried out by Lamisi Mbillah, a PhD candidate at the International Development Department, University of Birmingham. She will be under the supervision of Drs Martin Rew and Robert Leurs of the International Development Department, University of Birmingham.

Two assistants will be engaged. One assistant may be present during Lamisi's interaction with you. The second assistant will help Lamisi transcribe the interviews. Once engaged both assistants will sign a confidentiality form declaring that the information you have given will not be disclosed to other parties and cannot be used by them in any form whatsoever.

Why have I been chosen?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are in a good position to offer an insider's insight into this topic. As a church member your perspective and views on the teachings and values of your church together with the ways in which they influence social mobility would be invaluable. Further, you are well placed to provide information about ways in which interactions between members of your church may influence social mobility.

What will my participation involve?

Your participation will involve two main phases. The first will involve you being interviewed by Lamisi at a venue and time convenient for you. The interview will be based on a semi-structured interview pattern and will take approximately 1.5 hours. The interview will be audio recorded, and later transcribed into text form for analysis. Following transcription Lamisi may meet with you to discuss the transcript to enable you revisit the views you expressed to ensure you have been correctly represented. She may also use this opportunity to

clarify points you have made which she is unsure about and may probe further into some views you expressed in the interview.

The second phase will involve an informal meeting where Lamisi will interact with you further on issues of social mobility. This interaction will be audio recorded. Your participation will therefore potentially involve three meetings with Lamisi. All these meetings will be at your convenience.

Are there other parts of the research I may participate in?

Lamisi will conduct focus group discussions with members of your church group who agree to participate. This interaction will be audio recorded. You are welcome to participate in that session if you choose.

Please note that in both one-on-one meetings (interviews and informal discussions) and focus group discussions:

- You need not answer questions that you do not wish to.
- It will not be possible to identify you from the outputs from this study; no names of persons will be used. For the interview and informal discussion you will be given a unique code.
- You can choose to withdraw your participation at any time. You will not be required to provide reasons for this.
- In the event that you choose to withdraw from the one-on-one meetings your code will be used to identify your interview and informal discussion data which will then be removed from the study.
- In the event that you withdraw from the focus group discussion it may be difficult to isolate your submissions from those of others. However, with your assistance every effort will be made to do so.

How will the data be used?

The bulk of the data will be presented as part of Lamisi's PhD thesis. Some of the data will be presented in publications in journals.

As part of the presentation of results, your own words may be used in text form. You will not be identifiable from what you said as the code cannot be traced to you.

What will happen to the data upon examination of the thesis?

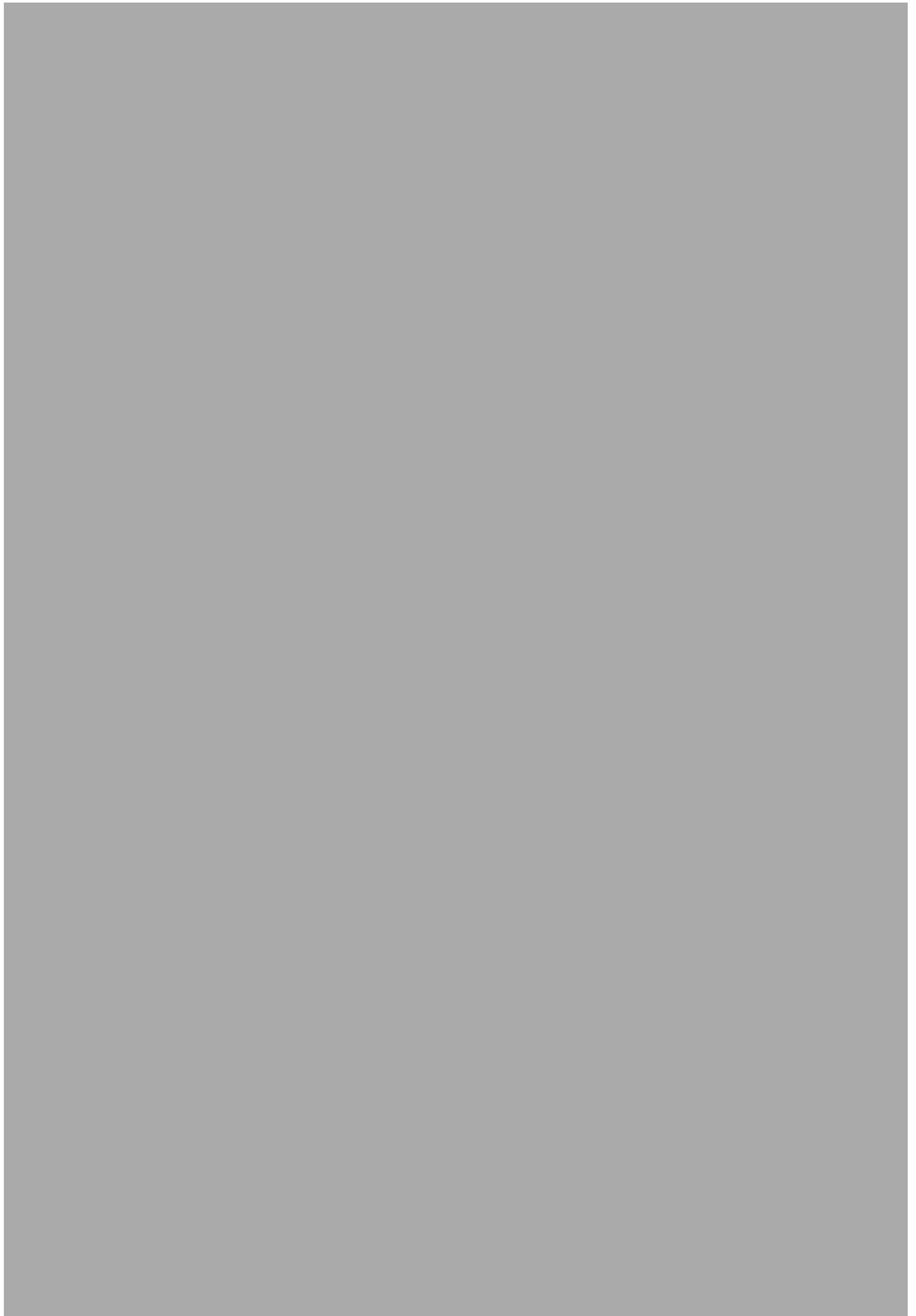
All your data (Recordings and transcript) will be deleted upon examination of the thesis.

Will I be paid for participating?

Allowances will not be paid to participants.

Will I have access to the findings?

Should you request, Lamisi will be happy to share the research findings with you.



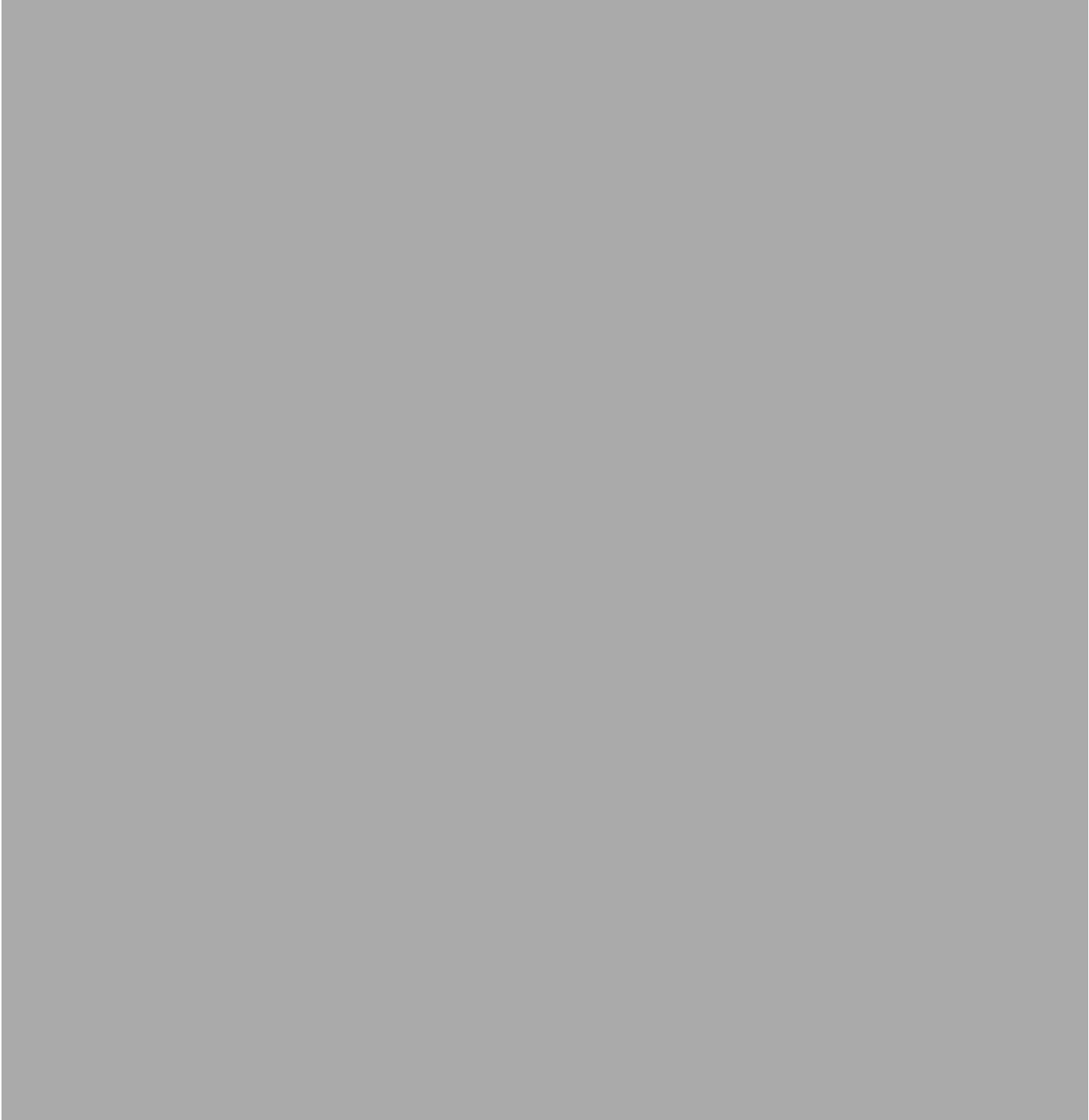


Appendix 3b Consent form

Research title: PG and adherent social mobility in Ghana

consent form

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study tick to confirm and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.





Appendix 4 Interview guide

Note: Additional follow-up questions will be asked, as appropriate, to each respondent.

Section A: Introductory questions

1. Could you tell me about yourself?
(age, hometown, occupation, income, social class/status, gender, education, marital status, number of children)
2. How did you come to know about this church (ICGC or ACI)?
3. When did you become a member of the church?
4. What led to your decision to be a member?
5. How would you describe your life before you became a member of ICGC/ACI?
(religion/ denomination, occupation, social class/status, income, education, marital status, number of children)
6. How did you feel when you first became a member?

How do you feel now?
7. What happened after you became a member?

(social, economic i.e.-income and wealth, wellbeing, occupation, education)
8. How would you describe your position in the church?

(Ordinary member, cell leader, lay reader, lay preacher, counsellor, elder, group leader etc.)
9. Are you a member of a church group?

(name of group, role in group, mandate of group, duration of membership)
10. How often do you attend church services?
 - Which service(s) do you attend?
11. Do you participate in church-related activities?
 - Which activities and how often?
12. Is there anything you wish to add?

Section B: Research question 1

From a neo-charismatic Christianity perspective what are the symbols adherents associate with social mobility?

- **Are these symbolisms shared by adherents of both churches?**

Section 1: symbols

1. What are the symbols of your church that relate to social mobility?
2. How do these symbols relate to social mobility?
3. What is your understanding of these symbols?
4. Is there anything you wish to add about the symbols?

Section B: Research question 2

What are the local interpretations (meanings) of these symbolic constructions and what influences the sedimentation of these meanings?

1. What do these symbols mean?
2. Do the meanings influence your outlook on life?
 - In what ways?
5. How do you apply these meanings to your life?
6. Does your church teach about prosperity?

(Doing business, going to school, networking, investing/saving etc.)

- Which medium is your main source of these teachings?

1. What does your church teach about prosperity?
 - What do these mean to you?
2. Do these meanings influence your actions towards prosperity?
 - In what ways?

(Doing business, going to school, networking, investing/saving etc.)

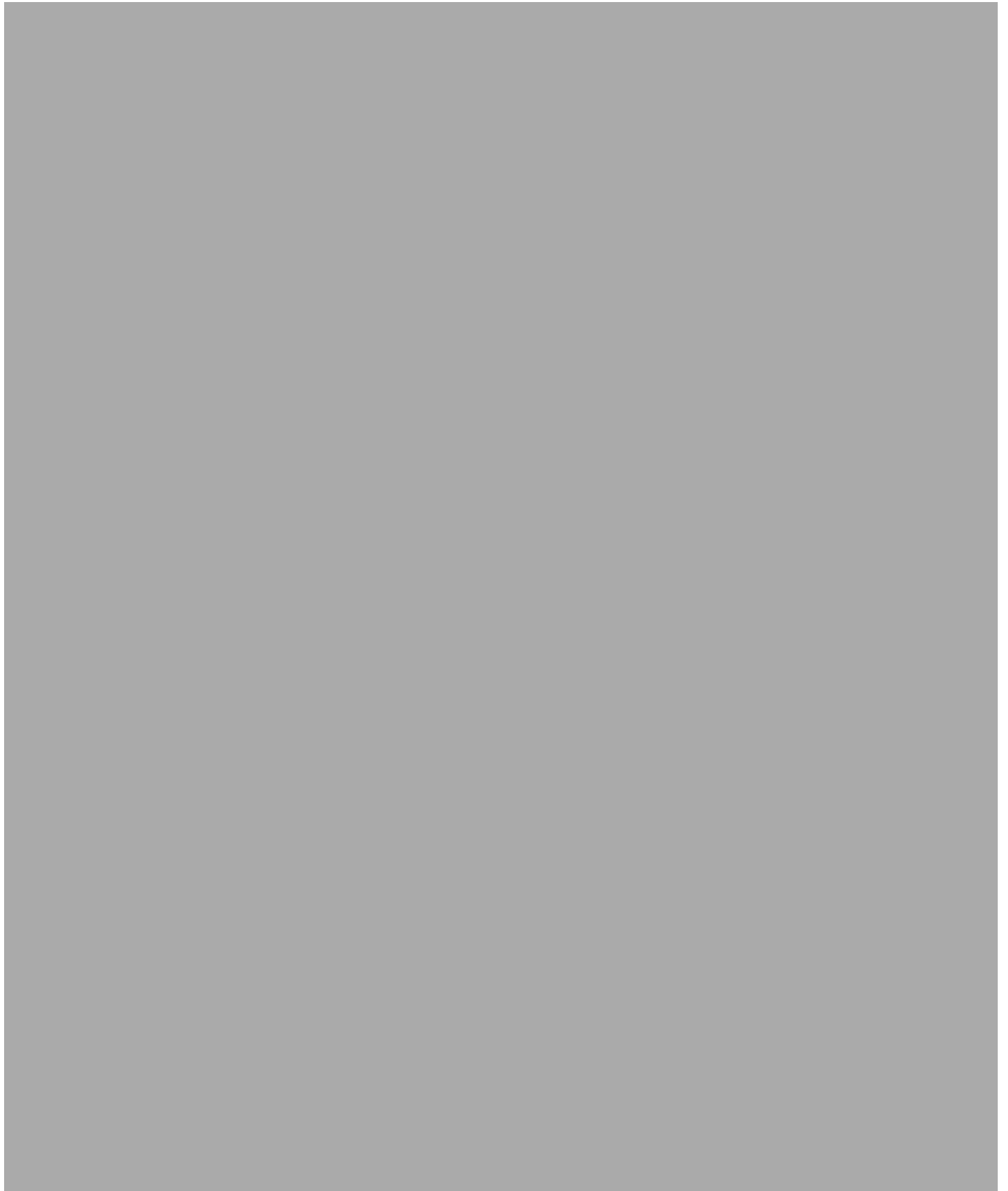
3. Is there anything you wish to add on how the meanings you give to your church's teachings play a role in your actions towards social mobility?

Section C: Research question 3

How do adherent self-concept(s) arise from reflected appraisals within the context of their association with the symbolism that arises from PG?

- **What implications may this have for social mobility?**
 1. Can you tell me about the types of interaction you engage in because of your religious faith?
 2. What gives rise to these interactions?
 3. How do you feel about these interactions?
 4. Are there any interactions that have an influence on how you feel about yourself and your capabilities to be socially mobile?
 5. How would you describe the interactions between yourself and other church members?
 6. Do these interactions have an influence on how you feel about yourself and your capabilities to be socially mobile?
 7. How would you describe the interactions between church members?
 8. Have your interactions/relationship with other members of the church been beneficial to your social mobility?
 9. Have other members benefitted from their interaction/relationship with you?
 10. Do members support other members in ways which may have a bearing on the prosperity of fellow members?
 11. Is there anything you wish to add?

Appendix 5a Focus group discussion consent form



Appendix 5b Ground rules for focus group discussion

1. I would like everyone to participate and may call on you if I don't hear from you.
2. There are no right or wrong answers.
 - Your views, opinions and experiences are invaluable.
3. Speak up whether you agree or disagree with the opinions expressed by others.
 - A range of opinions enriches the discussion.
4. Allow for one person to speak at any given time.
 - Signal me by raising your hand if you wish to make a point
5. Focus on the issues being discussed and do not be offended by the views others express which you do not agree with.
6. Be conscious of your body language and nonverbal responses as they can prevent someone from actively participating in the discussion.
7. The discussion will be audio recorded to enable the capture of every participant's opinion/view.
8. Everything that is said during this session is anonymous and confidential.

Appendix 6 Focus group discussion guide

1. Which segment of church activities do you look forward to the most?
2. Has being a member of this church transformed you and in what ways?
3. Are there theological ideas/Biblical stories/ elements of worship that transform your worldview? How?
4. How do you act on these/implement them in your day to day lives?
5. What comes to mind when you think about social mobility/ moving up the social ladder?
6. Are there theological ideas/Biblical stories that influence your actions towards social mobility moving up the social ladder?
7. Are there religious sacraments/objects which enable social mobility?
8. Is there anything you wish to add concerning what we have discussed?

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