

**RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES OF  
LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS IN CHICAGO:  
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM FIELD RESEARCH**

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**Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

In the United States today, Latin Americans (mainly Mexicans) constitute the largest group of immigrants and this majority puts them at the center of debates regarding integration into U.S. civil society. Some parties to these debates regard immigrants' religions as an impediment to their integration,<sup>2</sup> yet there are very few studies that cover recent immigration from a religious perspective. The role of religion and religious institutions for immigrants in the past is, by contrast, well documented. Research on immigration from Europe, for instance, underscores the fact that religious institutions have been among the most important resources for meeting the challenges immigrants face in a demanding and often threatening new environment.<sup>3</sup> It is also manifestly the case that immigrant religions contribute to a pluralism that alters the American religious landscape.

The following essay addresses and links two major issues that are embedded in the above-described dynamic. One is the analysis of the changing patterns of immigration in the United States, while the second is concerned with the flourishing of Pentecostalism among the Latino community. The central question that links both developments is: what is the functional role of religion within the new patterns of recent immigration? This essay presents preliminary results of a broader comparative research project that focuses on the Latino Pentecostal movement and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. For the purposes of this essay, I will present data that mainly characterizes Latino Pentecostalism.

After this short introduction, a review is provided that deals with the nature and magnitude of Latin American immigration. The main part of the essay includes a closer look at the religious profile of Latin American religion, using a demographic approach and a typology of Latino Pentecostalism to explore its internal diversity. One of the major findings of my research indicates that conversion of Latin American immigrants to Latino Pentecostalism is a phenomenon that takes place primarily in the United States, rather than in their countries of origin. This aspect supports my hypothesis that immigration does in fact add to the attraction of converting to a Pentecostal church in the United States. To understand why people convert and to grasp the underlying implications with regard to immigration, I offer several possible explanations for high conversion rates among Latin American immigrants. The analysis of conversion includes also findings that explain why Latino Pentecostal congregations attract especially immigrant women. The last part of the essay analyzes the content of the religious discourse of a particular Latino Pentecostal congregation that has a foreign-born, multinational Latino constituency.

### **The Debate: The Nature of Latin American Immigration**

The argument that Latin Americans do not integrate into the United States society and, therefore, pose a threat to the social and economic fabric of the United States is without doubt fueled by high immigration numbers and by high birth rates exceeding that of the general population. According to the United States census from 2004, the number of Latinos in the United States is 40,425,000 million.<sup>4</sup> Mexicans constitute by far the largest group among Latin Americans who immigrate. The census from the same year estimates their presence at 26,630,000 million.<sup>5</sup>

In Chicago, Latinos constitute 20% of the city's population. In a recent study, Rob Paral and Michael Norkewicz provide a closer look at immigration to the city. According to their data from 2000, the number of foreign born Latinos is 680,416 (8.3% of the total

metropolitan area population of 8,091,720). Mexicans number 573,627 (7.0% of the total metropolitan area population). Immigration continues in high numbers. In Chicago alone, every year 20,000 new Latino immigrants arrive, primarily from Mexico.<sup>6</sup>

Are these Latin Americans immigrants? Technically, the term “immigration” suggests that an immigrant is someone who intends to reside permanently in another country which is not his or her country of birth. That cannot be applied either to Puerto Ricans<sup>7</sup> or to Mexicans. Mexican immigration clearly has a circular, transnational dimension, related to the geographical proximity of Mexico and the United States. It is thus important to distinguish Mexican immigration from earlier, European immigrant groups, because the “... rapidity, frequency and relative ease with which family members come and go between various points of residence” is part of the Mexican experience.<sup>8</sup>

The bonds to the home country are, nevertheless, no argument that integration into U.S. society does not take place. About two-thirds of the 1.6 million Chicago-area Latinos are citizens.<sup>9</sup> The historic and contemporary influence of immigration from Latin America and the immigrants’ contribution to cultural pluralism in the United States is also evident in general terms; the city has become a major Latino metropolis with both the third largest Latino population and the second largest Mexican community in the U.S.<sup>10</sup>

*The Religious Profile of Latinos in the U.S.  
and in Chicago: A Demographic Portrait*

The huge influx of Latin Americans into the United States has not led to many studies that cover this phenomenon from a religious perspective.<sup>11</sup> The data that became accessible in recent years offer, nevertheless, some interesting findings. One of these findings indicates that there is a major trend in conversion<sup>12</sup> from Catholicism towards Protestant Evangelical<sup>13</sup> and especially Pentecostal congregations.<sup>14</sup> This trend clearly shows that although Catholicism is still the predominant religion among Latin American immigrants, it no longer holds a

religious monopoly. The following figures describe in more detail the changing contours of the religious profile of Latinos in the United States and in Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

According to Andrew M. Greeley, who used data from the General Social Survey (G.S.S.), the Catholic population in the United States among those of Spanish origin in the early 1970's was 78%. By the mid-1990s that percentage had dropped to 67%. In numbers he estimates that the defection rate is approximately 60,000 people per year.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the G.S.S. does not include large Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God or the category "Pentecostal" as a Christian faith tradition in general. Another group that has not been effectively included is the undocumented and poor Latino population. This omission, combined with the fact that the literature available reports a major trend in conversion of former Catholics now worshipping in Pentecostal congregations which have been described as being composed of the poor,<sup>17</sup> lead me conclude that the number of defections is indeed even higher.

In another report from the Latino Institute, which is located at the University of Notre Dame, the national Latino population in 2002 was divided into 70% Catholic, 23% Protestant, 6% without a religious preference/other, and 1% identified as practicing a world religion other than Christianity. Within Protestantism, the report found that Pentecostals and Evangelicals constitute a vast majority (88% or 6.2 million). The report also counts different currents within the Catholic Church, e.g., Catholics who have had a born-again experience and profess a charismatic type of Christianity. This data is especially interesting because the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Latin America is often viewed as a stepping-stone for converts on their way to a Protestant-Pentecostal church.<sup>18</sup> The reasons for this assumption cannot be explained here fully, but I want to point to the similarities in doctrine (an emphasis on the Holy Spirit) and type of worship and liturgy between the Catholic Charismatic and Pentecostal traditions that contributed to this hypothesis. About 5.4 million Latino Catholics reported in

the mentioned study were Catholic Charismatic, or “born-again,” Pentecostal, Charismatic, or “Spirit-filled.” In national perspective these findings show that in total, there are 12.2 million Latino “born-again” Christians in the United States, of whom 9.2 million are Pentecostal or Charismatic. “In short, 28 percent of all Latinos are Pentecostal or Charismatic.”<sup>19</sup>

In the Chicago area the data on the presence of Latino Pentecostalism and Catholic Charismatic Renewal groups is even more pronounced. The Archdiocese of Chicago published a report in 2005 that estimates the percentage of Protestants at 33% (1,996,000) and Catholic at 39% (2,363,000) of the total population (6,059,000). Except for Islam (10.8%), all other religions do not reach ten percent.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, there is no official data from the Archdiocese about the different currents and movements within Catholicism, such as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Focolare movement, Neocatechumenate Way, Cursillo Movement and others.<sup>21</sup> However, in an interview for this article, Father Richard Simon, the liaison for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Chicago, said that the movement is “roaring” within the Latino community and there are 85 documented prayer groups composed of thirty to forty and sometimes several hundred participants.<sup>22</sup>

The Chicago Latino Congregation Study (CLCS)<sup>23</sup> provides a detailed religious topography of the different Protestant currents within the Latino community, showing the overwhelming presence of Pentecostal churches in Chicago. The data includes a survey of thirty-six Chicago ZIP Codes.<sup>24</sup> Within the thirty-six ZIP codes, churches were documented street by street by walking those sections of the city. According to the researchers, the largest number – 41% – of Latino Protestant congregations belong to Pentecostal faith traditions. Adding 8% for the evangelical population that was counted separately, the “born-again,” Charismatic, “Spirit-filled,” and Pentecostal population reaches almost 50%.

To understand why people convert and to grasp the underlying implications with regard to immigration, it is imperative to consider *where* conversion takes place.<sup>25</sup> While some

immigrants bring their faith with them from their home countries, a lively proselytism is taking place in the United States by and among immigrants. Indeed, empirical evidence drawn from my own research in Chicago indicates that the number of immigrants who *arrive* as Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics is small in comparison to those who *convert* once in the United States.<sup>26</sup> This is surprising, due to the fact that in Latin America, Protestant-Pentecostalism and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal made major inroads into the religious landscape.<sup>27</sup> One would therefore expect a higher number of Latin Americans who bring their Pentecostal affiliation into the United States.<sup>28</sup> This aspect contributes to my hypothesis that immigration adds to the attraction of converting to a Pentecostal church in the United States. Before exploring the relationship between immigration and religion and the reasons for conversion, a closer look at the diversity of Latino Pentecostalism is offered.

### **Typology of Latino Pentecostals: Connecting the Local and the Global**

There are many ways to characterize Latino Pentecostal congregations in the United States. The preferred model here is to look at the origins of the congregations, while at the same time recognizing their structural framework. The reason for choosing historic and organizational patterns over doctrinal issues is that by taking into account the background of the movements, both domestically and internationally, certain relevant factors can be highlighted. Therefore global issues, such as the flow of transnational migration, enable us to look more closely at how the religious landscape is changed by factors from the outside, e.g., by religious institutions whose origins are not within the United States. The domestic factor, on the other hand, relates more to the interaction between religious organization of immigrants and the religious institutions of the host society, that is, from inside the United States.

Another reason why this typology was developed is to explore the internal diversity of Latino Pentecostalism and to analyze if there are major organizational patterns within Latino

Pentecostalism in the United States that might explain why a certain type of Latino Pentecostalism is more successful within the Latino immigrant community than others. Theological differences have not been included at this point, because a comparative categorization within Pentecostalism requires a finely grained study that incorporates doctrinal discourse and religious practices. I have not been able to complete such a categorization due to a lack of time and material to provide a sound basis for comparison.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Four Groups of Latino Pentecostals*

The first group is composed of Latin American immigrants who join classical Pentecostal denominations<sup>30</sup> in the United States. Usually these Latin American immigrants establish their own congregations within the broader institutional body. Examples for these denominations are: Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland, TN),<sup>31</sup> the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Church of God of Prophecy, and the United Pentecostals. It is important to note that within the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), Latino congregations “function autonomously, although they work under the same organizational structure as the Anglo churches. Contributions are directed exclusively for use within the administrative territory of the Hispanic churches.”<sup>32</sup> According to Everett Wilson and Jesse Miranda in their entry “Hispanic Pentecostalism” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements*, the rapid growth of the Church of God makes it the second-largest Hispanic Pentecostal group in the United States.<sup>33</sup> It seems, however, that they overestimate the presence of Latino Pentecostals in U.S. denominations. This is most likely to be related to the source, e.g., the fact that Jesse Miranda is a member and religious leader of the Assemblies of God. Therefore, the data given by the Latino Congregation project differs substantially. They estimate that only 19 percent of the congregations in the city of Chicago are related to U.S.-based denominations.<sup>34</sup> Independently from the low estimates, it is argued here that the attraction for Latino immigrants can nevertheless be explained by the fact that immigrants

become integrated in a religious body of their host country, even though the congregations often function autonomously.

The second group consists of exclusively ethnic denominations without denominational ties to classical U.S. Pentecostal churches. The *Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús* (Apostolic Church of the Faith in Jesus Christ) and the Spanish Christian Churches are examples of these. The first operates predominantly in the Southwest and the latter on the East Coast. According to Wilson and Miranda, these denominations account for the vast majority of the Puerto Rican Pentecostals. The two scholars also conclude that they are among the largest Latino Pentecostal groups and make up about a third of the membership of the Hispanic Pentecostals in the U.S.<sup>35</sup> But here as well, the Latino Congregation Project differs in their findings. They estimate independent, Latino-run denominations in the city of Chicago at only 12% of the 490 Latino Protestant churches found in Chicago.<sup>36</sup>

The third group comprises denominations that exemplify the growing presence of missionary activities, now taking place from south to north. These denominations have roots in Latin America, function as autonomous indigenous denominations in their home countries and were brought to the United States via missionary efforts. These denominations maintain close ties with their home countries, as frequent visits of the pastors to the homeland and ministerial exchanges demonstrate.<sup>37</sup> The numerical presence of these denominations is hard to estimate due to few available statistical data and the variety of national origins. Included in this group are smaller storefront congregations that appear at a first glance to be independent often affiliate in so-called *Concilios*. Councils can best be described as a religious “franchise-model,”<sup>38</sup> which means that the singular congregation affiliates with a larger denomination of Latin American or U.S. origin. For Chicago, the Latino Congregation Project estimates that 26% of all Pentecostal churches are related to Latin American-based denominations, making it the second-largest group within Latino Pentecostalism in the city. Well-known examples of

these denominations that now operate worldwide are the Mexican *Luz del Mundo* (with its origin in Guadalajara, Jalisco<sup>39</sup>), and the Brazilian *Iglesia Universal do Reino de Deus*.

From the standpoint of integration and creating ties within the broader society, it could be argued that these denominations are most likely to be the ones that establish religious-ethnic enclaves because of having close connections to the home countries. However, research among a Guatemalan-based Pentecostal denomination in Chicago has shown that this is not the case. To the contrary, the congregation studied was transnational and multiethnic and thus provided a religious home for a diverse group of foreign born Latin American immigrants.<sup>40</sup> In this particular denomination, immigrants from different religious groups have created new religious identities that were able to merge the unique religious identities of people from very diverse national backgrounds. By addressing different immigrant groups, this denomination is able to incorporate the faithful into a larger Latino Christian “family in Christ,” offering both an ethnic community and religious identity within the U.S. society.<sup>41</sup> The subsequent result is that the religious community is also very successful in providing a network and establishing bonds into the broader spheres of society.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, independent, non-denominational Latino congregations have to be mentioned. The numerical presence of these congregations can only be guessed at on a national scale, because these congregations are usually small in size and are characterized by insecure organizational structures. The Latino Congregation Project Study nevertheless projects data for Chicago: in their preliminary findings, these churches form the vast majority of the Latino religious presence in the city. Of the Pentecostal congregations they counted, 43% were independent in origin, without ties to U.S.- or Latin American-based denominations.<sup>43</sup> The insecure nature of these non-denominational, independent Latino Pentecostal congregations is also influenced by gentrification, making it difficult for these small churches to retain space when rent and property taxes increase.<sup>44</sup> Most of these congregations operate as storefront

churches, composed of family members. Miranda and Wilson describe the constituency as mainly foreign-born and first-generation immigrants that belong to marginal industrial and service sectors.<sup>45</sup>

### **Possible Explanations for High Conversion Rates among Latin American Immigrants**

The first possible explanation I will offer addresses primarily the Catholic Church: the Catholic Church is not able to meet the Latin American immigrant needs of worship in a new cultural environment, contributing to high defection rates. Father Charles W. Dahm, a priest from the heavily Mexican parish of Pilsen in Chicago, reports that "... rather than offering the safe haven Hispanics expect, some priests resist incorporating them into their parishes."<sup>46</sup> He is referring to his own experiences but also quotes a national study that notes, "Hispanics are twice as likely as other Catholics to worship in "separate and unequal settings."<sup>47</sup> The clergy, Father Dahm explained, defend themselves by declaring that the Hispanic worshipers should learn English first, and therefore he argues, the clergy not only miss the difficulty of learning English for newly-arrived immigrants, but also fail to appreciate the relationship between language and faith and, consequently, are not able to address the importance of celebrating liturgies and offering religious education in Spanish.<sup>48</sup>

Besides the language aspect, it seems that cultural aspects also matter in terms of religious affiliation and spiritual needs. This hypothesis is confirmed by the Catholic Church's own data. The Archdiocese of Chicago documents a huge gap between the racial/ethnic composition of the Catholic population of the Archdiocese on one hand, and the racial/ethnic background of active diocesan priests on the other. In 2004 the Archdiocese counted a Catholic presence of 939,000 Hispanics (39.8%) out of a total Catholic population of 2,363,000.<sup>49</sup> This high percentage is, however, not reflected in a high presence of Hispanic priests. Almost all the active diocesan priests are white non-Hispanic (91.9%) and only 3.9% have a Latino background.<sup>50</sup> Those figures do not mean that the Catholic Church makes no

effort to serve the Hispanic population better, for instance in offering worship in Spanish,<sup>51</sup> but these efforts have been recent in nature. The data also indicates that it is not only language that counts, but the combination of a religious environment that is free of discrimination, pastoral ministries in Spanish, indigenous clergy, and a specific type of worship that addresses both the cultural background and the immigrants' situation in the host society, such as a communal space where solidarity and mutual support can be expressed. This conclusion is confirmed by another study conducted by the Religion in Urban America Program that compared the Catholic Church and Emmanuel, a Presbyterian church in Pilsen: "For several lay leaders we spoke with, it was not the tenets of Presbyterianism per se that attracted them to Emmanuel but rather a union of spiritual and interpersonal qualities that they had found lacking in their specific parish or in Catholicism more generally." A member of this Presbyterian church, which has an unusual evangelically-oriented makeup, adds that "... she preferred Emmanuel's more fundamentalist approach to scripture and the greater emphasis on reading and studying the Bible in its entirety."<sup>52</sup>

This statement leads to a second possible explanation for high conversion rates, which is tied to the congregational and worship style of Pentecostal congregations. Pentecostal organizational models differ substantially from those of the traditional Catholic Church parish, and that these structural differences place them in an advantageous position for attracting former Catholics.<sup>53</sup> Many Pentecostal congregations, such as storefront churches but also Catholic Charismatic prayer groups, share their flexible, decentralized character with their Latin American counterparts. As in Latin America, it seems that these smaller congregations can serve spiritual and social needs better than the Catholic Church. For instance, the Catholic Church and mainline Protestant churches have mainly outsourced social aid by delegating it to programs that, in many cases, are run by volunteers who do not belong to the original parishes or congregations.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, the spiritual and social aspects of faith have been

disconnected. In contrast, smaller Pentecostal congregations have preserved the close connection of the spiritual and social.

Combining this observation with Robert Putnam's concept of bonding and bridging social capital, it means that Protestant Pentecostals do more for their immediate membership than the Catholic Church does with its localized and geographically-based model of parishes. However, the latter reaches out into the neighborhood and goes beyond the membership with a minor focus on a combination of the social and spiritual commitment of those in need.<sup>55</sup> The close connection of the spiritual and social in Pentecostal congregations is nevertheless crucial to the situation of immigrants: the smaller congregational size makes the flow of information, central to immigration, easier. This factor works hand in hand with the fact that Pentecostal congregations usually have an intense, interactive schedule that demands a much greater personal commitment from their members than does the Catholic Church, but this reality also reinforces intergroup bonds. Solidarity, support, and the flow of information are at the same time further strengthened by family ties and social networks, but also by a set of shared moral values. This last point invites us to take a closer look at Pentecostal discourse and to focus on the religious content of that discourse. I will argue that it is not only the communal aspect within Pentecostalism that attracts many immigrants, but also the spiritual and religious dimensions.

### **Latino Pentecostalism and Immigration: History Comes Back**

Latino Pentecostalism shares many characteristics with Christian faith traditions in the United States. Therefore Latin American immigrants, especially Protestant Pentecostals, revitalize the religious landscape in the U.S. in a very different way than European immigrants did before. One of the differences has to do with the religious-historical relationship between Latin America and North America. Pentecostalism as a movement is usually traced back to a

revival that took place on Azusa Street in Los Angeles in April 1906. The centennial celebrations of 2006 document the origin of the movement and the extraordinary magnitude and impact on church history throughout the world. Pentecostalism is considered today the fastest growing branch of Christianity.<sup>56</sup> After the spread from the United States into Latin America and other parts of the globe, the former missionary organizations and denominations mostly developed into autonomous, southern, indigenous institutions. They did so very successfully and replaced the former north-south direction in which the Christian mission originally took place with missionary approaches that now come predominantly from Latin America into the U.S. However, I argue that the general spiritual, doctrinal, and theological content to a large extent remained the same.<sup>57</sup> An emphasis on individual salvation (especially conversion) and a spirituality that focuses on a personal relationship with God are features that underline that Latino Pentecostals share many characteristics with the North American evangelical and Pentecostal subculture.

That said, what about the cultural aspects of religion and religious organizing? Do they serve as a dividing line between Latinos and others? Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad points to one cultural common denominator of Latino Pentecostalism and North American culture. In the introduction of the volume *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States*, she states that "... individualism is probably the single most important aspect of American religious culture." She contrasts American individualism with the "more communal orientation of the traditional societies from which many immigrants come." From this perspective, it seems that Pentecostal congregations fill a central gap. They create continuity for the worshippers that is important for personal and collective identity, while at the same time providing a norm and value system similar to the host society.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the religious-cultural aspects, the style of worship in Latino Pentecostal churches is often similar to evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the U.S. Usually, the

liturgy and worship is very expressive, including rock-style music, healing, speaking in tongues, and other “gifts of the Spirit.” Moreover, Latino Pentecostals use the same organizational patterns in creating religious congregations as do their North American Christian fellows. Therefore, Latino Pentecostalism has much in common with dominant religious currents in the United States not only in terms of doctrine and spiritual practices, but also regarding religious forms of organizing.

### *The Discourse on Conversion and Immigration*

The following paragraphs focus on conversion, because it is seen as a key to analyzing the rapid growth of Pentecostalism both in Latin America and in the United States. At this point I want to emphasize what was said earlier, that although there are high rates of growth among Protestants, especially Pentecostal groups, in Latin America, many immigrants convert once in the United States.

Conversion enables us to take a deeper look at the process of change in religious affiliation and to understand how immigration contributes to the attraction of converting to a Pentecostal congregation. Conversion also offers deeper insights into the role Pentecostal congregations play in the life of the converts. Therefore the term relates three dimensions: the social, the cultural, and the ecclesiastical. Conversion marks the start of a process by which the church socializes its new members. At the same time, it can be seen as a strategy adopted by both churches and church members with regard to the local cultural and social environment.<sup>59</sup> In what follows, I want to illustrate first the specific doctrinal background of conversion, then relate the doctrinal aspects to lived experiences of converts.

From a theological perspective, Pentecostals emphasize a post conversion experience. This is known as “the baptism in the Holy Spirit.” The unique teaching of the Pentecostals is that the gifts of the Spirit (or charismata) should normally accompany this baptism experience and continue to be manifested in the life of the believer and in the church thereafter. That

means that conversion is viewed not only as an individual religious experience; the experience has to be passed on for the benefit of the religious community. The gifts most often singled out by Pentecostals were and are speaking in tongues<sup>60</sup> and divine healing.<sup>61</sup>

There are at least two central aspects related to conversion in the light of immigration: one is the already mentioned aspect of healing through the community and the other is the aspect of breaking with the past through forgiveness. In a course on leadership provided for women one of the themes taught focused on Gal. 5:16-21. By jumping off from this quotation and the concerns expressed in the course lectures, I will try to unveil how immigration, biographical experiences, and religious content are intertwined:

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>62</sup>

The biblical quote appears not to be related to immigration. However the interactions that were taking place between the lecturer and the participants proved the opposite. Some of the women participating had, as it turned out, had traumatic experiences, such as becoming pregnant without being married or able to sustain their children. Failed abortion attempts and being forced to come to the United States due to economic constraints were also part of some women's biographical experiences. For some, that meant leaving their small children in Latin America, sometimes for a period of years. The statements from the participants made clear, that not only men are forced to go to the United States to make a better living for themselves and their families, but also many women have to abandon their families and come alone. The concerns that were expressed followed by testimonies that were given showed that feelings of guilt, isolation, and abandonment were common and a collective experience among the group.

In applying the biblical quotation, the pregnancies were seen as the product of not living God's will. However, the lecturer said, because they have converted, God has forgiven them. It turned out then that the preoccupations of the participants were not so much related to the rational aspect of forgiveness, but of being left alone with the problems in their families and the emotional distress they created. Therefore, it was rather a question of not being able to solve current problems that emerged from acts of the past (especially the intergenerational component of having left young children in Latin America) and the inability of feeling the relief of forgiveness in their belief. This central aspect was put into words by the lecturer by pointing out to several other aspects of forgiveness and in counseling the women on their current problems: "Forgiveness does not only include a forgiveness from God, we have to forgive also ourselves for what we did and we have to forgive others for their behavior. When we convert and do not feel the forgiveness that is because the demons are preventing you from feeling of being pardoned."

By asking the whole group for mutual support through prayers and laying on hands, the lecturer was able to create a strong sense of community. By extending the prayer request and asking for prayers at home it became clear that the protected religious space was not only important because emotions and experiences could be expressed and shared in form of a "spontaneous combustion," e.g., having the chance to live a short process of catharsis, expressing sorrow and grief for a moment. This religious group, a group that differs from the family, enabled the participants to share dramatic immigrant experiences and their consequences by functioning in a therapeutic sense, offering reflection, analysis and support. Moreover, the testimonies that were given served as a demonstration that forgiveness and healing were possible, because they were experienced by other women. In this sense they served as a healing narrative and added to the creation of a new religious collective and individual identity. The gender based group within the congregation provided a protected

space where these narratives could be expressed, but it also paved the way for healing. The retreat into a gender- and language-based religious enclave, combined with the doctrine of conversion and specific individual and collective religious rituals (e.g., prayers that include laying on hands, Bible reading and if considered necessary the casting out of demons), offers tools for mastering specific immigrant problems and difficulties. It also explains in part the appeal these congregations have, especially for women.

From this example it remains clear, that it is not always material aid that matters most in the context of immigration. However, the emphasis of Pentecostals on spiritual discourse has led to harsh criticism. At the very center of this criticism is often conversion. Particularly in Latin America, conversion and the related emphasis on salvation rather than social action has often led to statements that Pentecostal movements impede social engagement and political action. They are seen as agents that neutralize social protest and political opposition, an argument that has found its most direct expression in the “Conspiracy Theory.”<sup>63</sup> In particular, the discourse of conversion has been equated with a lack of commitment to fighting poverty, social inequality, etc., domains mostly attributed to adherents and activists of Liberation Theology. In countries with large portions of indigenous population such as Guatemala or Ecuador, Pentecostal churches have also been accused of taking away the cultural identities of the indigenous people through the process of conversion. A change in belief was interpreted by some scholars as a dynamic of leaving behind indigenous identities.<sup>64</sup> This argument was often fostered by academics who regard Pentecostal congregations as part of fundamentalist movements by arguing that they proclaim a symbolic retreat from the world. However, numerous publications show that Pentecostals are much more this-worldly than one would expect. Their engagement includes often both religious and social-political activism, even though their overall orientation is clearly marked by spiritual goals rather than political intervention.

*Politics, Immigration, and Religion*

The current wave of immigrant marches throughout the country makes one wonder if Latino Pentecostals join Catholics, their historic rivals, on this issue. I try to answer that question by exploring some general norms and values of Latino Pentecostals and how those characteristics relate to politics. Later on, the involvement of Latino Pentecostals in the marches in Chicago in particular is described.

Latino Pentecostals and Evangelicals in the United States are political in the sense that they focus on conservative values. The quotation from Gal. 5:16-21 makes many of their values explicit. What can be found in the discourse of Pentecostals is an emphasis on the family (from their perspective a central Christian God-blessed entity), a distribution of roles within the church according to gender<sup>65</sup> (usually women are not allowed to preach, even though there are notable exceptions<sup>66</sup>), and a fierce anti-homosexual stand. But what stand do Pentecostals and Pentecostal congregations take on the issue of immigration? Do they ignore the fact that parts of their constituency are in the United States illegally? Or do they join or support the political agenda of other groups that are working towards the legalization of undocumented immigrants in the United States?

The importance of immigration legislation and its close connection to religious institutions was brought to immediate public attention when the first huge immigrant rally took place on Friday, March 10, 2006 in Chicago, when an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 people took to the streets of the city, making the event the biggest pro-immigrant rally in the history of the United States.<sup>67</sup> At this and the following march on May 1, Latinos were without doubt in the overwhelming majority. The aim of both marches was to oppose a controversial federal bill (H.R. 4437) that would severely punish those who aid illegal immigrants. The controversial bill passed the House of Representatives in December 2005. The ongoing debates in the Senate and in the Congress led to the May 1 rally to press for a

pro-immigrant bill and to make the presence of immigrants in the country visible by calling for a national work boycott by immigrants.

Along with other institutions, churches, denominations, and religious organizations and their staffs would also without doubt be at the forefront of those punished. Although there are no numbers that describe the composition of the crowd in terms of religious affiliation, the sheer turnout of at least 400,000 marchers (organizers speak of 700,000 people) made clear that concern on immigrant issues cuts across the religious lines of progressive and conservative Christianity. Three references describe the synergetic effect of the topic of immigration: first, a small article in *The New York Times*, published a week before the March 10 rally, was titled “Religious Leaders Take a Stand on Immigration.” The article quoted Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington, D.C.; the Rev. Robert Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches; and other Christian and Jewish religious leaders in their effort to support legislation to legalize illegal workers, to institute a program for temporary workers and to reunite families separated by immigration laws. They made it clear that they were opposing H.R. bill 4437, the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Act of 2005, which would stiffen enforcement and restrict immigration.<sup>68</sup> The second reference concerns Latino civic activism among Catholics and Protestants. The Report on Hispanic Churches in American Public Life from the University of Notre Dame’s Institute for Latino Studies found that “74 percent of Latinos want their churches or religious organizations to aid undocumented immigrants even when providing such help is illegal,<sup>69</sup> and 61 percent believe that immigrants who arrive in the United States illegally should be eligible for government assistance such as Medicaid or Welfare.”<sup>70</sup> The third reference comes from my own observations of how Latino Pentecostal churches and their congregants dealt with the marches. The second march was included in the Sunday service prayer in one Pentecostal church. In the prayer request, God was asked for a peaceful outcome of the marches and for a

miracle in favor for the immigrants in the United States. There were also Pentecostal congregants attending both marches to support pro-immigrant reform. A newspaper article on a blackboard at one of the churches, dated 7 November 2005, about the ongoing deportations that separate families, also indicates the importance and the identification with this cause in that particular congregation. This is especially striking because the pastor informed me that he doesn't know of any deportations among his own congregants. In summary, the data indicates that Latino Catholics and Pentecostals, historical rivals, are much more involved in political and social issues, and much more ideologically independent, than one would expect from a conservative discourse on religious issues.

### **Language Enclaves or Ethnic-Religious Enclaves**

The majority of Pentecostal congregations are, as indicated through interviews with representatives of the Catholic and Protestant movement and also scholars of the field, established along language boundaries.<sup>71</sup> But what about the question of whether Latino Pentecostals are ethnically or nationally homogenous? I am not able to answer this question from a quantitative perspective; however, it seems that a huge variety in terms of ethnic and national composition can be found. What I found striking in ethnically and nationally mixed congregations was that the ethnic and cultural background of congregants was still important. Stereotypes between congregants exist, for instance between Mexicans and Guatemalans,<sup>72</sup> but church doctrine and the universal Christian message clearly trump the diverse national and ethnic backgrounds. From the perspective of the immigrants and the church discourse, the language boundary is not operating as an ethnic boundary in the religious organizing of some of the Latino Pentecostal congregations. There is of course an empirical question to this, e.g., to what extent are Latino Pentecostal churches ethnically mixed. What can be shown is that in terms of leadership, Puerto Ricans, followed by Guatemalans and Mexicans, establish the majority of Pentecostal churches,<sup>73</sup> but that does not say anything about their internal

diversity. One Pentecostal church where I was able to collect data demonstrates clearly that some Latino Pentecostal congregations are internally extremely diverse and complex, composed of congregants from a variety of national and ethnic backgrounds, e.g., indigenous Guatemalan-Mayans worshipping together with non-indigenous Puerto Ricans and Mexicans.<sup>74</sup>

Interviews with other scholars indicate that this diversity might be a characteristic of the Chicago area and underlined that the composition of Latino Pentecostal congregations is different in cities like Los Angeles.<sup>75</sup> That said, I want point out to two other factors: (1) the broader American society without cultural ties to Latin America does not perceive the Latin American immigrants and their religious congregations in their diversity, but rather actively constructs a single racial category which is “Hispanic” or “Latino.” The government takes part in creating a common “Latino” identity by asking the citizens even after generations of living in the United States if they identify as being “Hispanic” or “Latino.” Even though the U.S. government classifies this group as being trans-ethnic, it is operating in practice as a racial category. Federal policies, social networks, people’s perceptions and religious life therefore actively perpetuate the Latino category as a single racial or ethnic group.<sup>76</sup> (2) Coming back to the religious congregations and their social impact, that means that among those congregations that are language-based and that merge people of diverse Latin American backgrounds into one religious group, churches are also actively involved in creating a common Latino identity. These congregations operate as transethnic and transnational agencies that create new religious identities by using the universal Christian message of being “Brothers in the Lord.” The orientation in the discourse is therefore not towards the strengthening of a former Catholic identity but towards a common Christian identity that unites the background of people who come from different countries.

In this sense Latino Pentecostal congregations vary substantially from earlier European immigrant churches, like those established by Irish or Polish immigrants. In comparing the

Latino Pentecostals with the European immigration from Ireland and Poland other characteristics become apparent: Polish and Irish Catholic immigrants left their cultural imprint on the religious institutions they founded in the United States, particularly in urban areas such as Chicago, Boston, and New York, by having a religious orientation and identification focused on the countries where immigrants came from. The aim was to imitate what was thought authentically Polish or Irish, instead of creating a new religious identity. Latino Pentecostals are instead composed to a large extent by converts who leave their former Catholic identity after arriving in the United States. Their conversions include the creation of a new religious identity that merges their situation of being an immigrant with a new faith. This process of religious identification is marked by an orientation towards the United States. How the vast numbers of Mexicans who are mainly nominal Catholics merge with the American Catholic church that is profoundly characterized by the European immigrants' religious heritage remains an open question. The small number of Latinos that entered the Catholic ministry and became priests indicates that the influence on the institutional level has been minimal.

This orientation towards the United States and the incorporation of immigrant experiences can also be found in the very sermons of Latino Pentecostal congregations. An analysis of sermons of one ethnically mixed Latino Pentecostal church reveals interesting findings in this respect. It demonstrates how the application of religious content gives meaning to the situation of the immigrants, because it explains the immigrants' situation from a religious perspective and offers other than merely social or political means to cope with it. The sermons provide, therefore, a message of empowerment through translating the biblical content into the daily matters of the worshippers. The titles of the sermons illustrate the above mentioned application: "*Debemos ser Vencedores*" ("We Have to Be Victors") and another one "*Somos Peregrinos*" ("We Are Pilgrims"). Some biblical quotations from the latter

sermon make the power of the biblical words applied to the immigrant context evident. The sermon starts with Heb. 11:8, continuing with Gen. 12:1:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance: and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.” All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Without explicitly addressing the immigrants’ personal situations, the pastor could reach the audience as a whole, regardless of their diverse national backgrounds. In the light of immigration, the problem they face is the same: finding their place as strangers in a foreign country. The sermon also makes it explicit that the United States entails a promise, and even though they might not benefit from it, their children will. The religious message is thus able to interweave multiple meanings and to address a multi-ethnic audience of immigrants: it is God’s will that brought you here and if you have faith he will empower you and your children to become successful in this new country. That promise is the very same promise of the “American dream”; in the United States you can pursue this dream and redeem the promise<sup>77</sup>.

What about the promise that Latino Pentecostals are not only able to bridge diverse national backgrounds but also various racial groups? In a not yet published nationwide study about multiracial congregations in the United States, Michael O. Emerson comes to an astonishing conclusion: “Within each religious tradition (Catholic, Protestant) U.S.-born Hispanics and Asians are much more likely to be in interracial congregations than are their

foreign-born counterparts.”<sup>78</sup> Dramatic changes occur, according to Emerson, especially among the second and third generation of Hispanic immigrants. This dramatic change suggests that rapid assimilation, acculturation, or a strong desire to avoid ethnic congregations for the second and subsequent generations of Hispanics, make it seem that multiracial congregations will become more common, and that their growth is driven by immigrants, and especially by their children and future generations.<sup>79</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This article focused on Latino Pentecostalism, a movement that has not yet gained scholarly or public attention, even though it is among the most dynamic religious forces in the United States. In describing the origin and doctrines of Latino Pentecostalism, it has been shown that its appeal for the constituency is closely related to their immigrant background, regardless of generational ties. The process of how the immigrants’ situation is addressed through religious doctrine, practice and community is central in explaining why conversion takes place to a large extent in the United States and not primarily in the home countries of the immigrants. In bringing together data on the religious content of the discourse with biographical aspects of participants this contextualized version of Latino Pentecostal faith in the light of immigration becomes visible. The analysis of the content of the sermons showed also that by concentrating on the Latin American immigrants, these congregations provide a strong discourse of empowerment, by strengthening the identity of their constituency in a foreign environment and by creating a new Latino Pentecostal identity.

The fact that Latino Pentecostal congregations have much in common with their Christian counterparts in the U.S. seems to further contribute to their success. Similarities hold true especially for their socially conservative discourse and doctrine (e.g., their spiritual emphasis on conversion). Latino Pentecostal churches also provide a protected space that stabilizes identity because dramatic immigrant experiences can be expressed, important for

personal and collective identity (especially for women), while at the same time providing a norm and value system similar to the host society.

Interviews with spokespeople of Protestant Pentecostal congregations and other scholars demonstrate that the Latino Pentecostal movement has a life of its own, even when the local congregations operate within the framework of a predominantly Anglo religious body, be it the Catholic Church (and subordinated Catholic Charismatic Renewal groups) or within an already existing U.S.-based Pentecostal denomination. Important to note here is that precisely where there is Latino control, congregations within larger institutional frameworks flourish.<sup>80</sup> Discrimination within larger religious institutions towards Latinos adds to this dynamic and often propels Latinos to establish their own religious subgroups. The existence of these religious subgroups is therefore the result of the initiative of the Latin American immigrants who were able to bring in and negotiate their specific religious needs within the broader religious landscape of the United States.

There is also evidence that although differences in national origin are often important among Latinos, and sometimes aggravate relationships even within the church, Pentecostal congregations are able to bridge and level diverse national backgrounds with the strong universalistic notion of Pentecostal Christian faith. By describing and analyzing religious activities and self-understandings of immigrant congregations, it is possible to point out to the potential they have for spanning diverse national backgrounds and even diverse racial groups, an aspect often missed in the current discussion about religion and immigration.

<sup>1</sup> Many people collaborated and provided help for my research project, “Religious Identities of Latin American Immigrants and Social Cohesion.” My thanks are directed especially to R. Stephen Warner and Fred Kniss. Fred Kniss from Loyola University invited me to present the project at the Chicago Area Group for the Study of Religious Communities (CAGSR) meeting on February 11th, 2006. The comments from the participants and respondents were extremely helpful to sharp arguments and to think things through. R. Stephen Warner and Martin Riesebrodt offered critical comments during different stages of the project. Also beneficial were conversations I had with Rebecca Burwell (coordinator of the Latino Congregation Project) and her team. I am especially indebted to Elfriede Wedam, the former coordinator of the Public Religion and Urban Transformation Project, not only for providing access to their extensive files but also for opening the doors to make research in the Guatemalan-based denomination possible. I want to mention also the pastor from Misión Cristiana Elim, Oscar Arevalo, for discussing the final draft of this essay. Without his approval the research in his congregation would have been impossible. Thanks also to all the other informants from congregations as well as religious and administrative institutions who shared knowledge and pragmatic critique. Finally, my thanks go to Daniel Reynolds, who offered editorial assistance for the first draft of the manuscript, and Debra Erickson from the Religion and Culture Web Forum, who edited the many versions of the final draft.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? America's Great Debate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh, “Transformations in New Immigrant Religions and Their Global Implications,” *American Sociological Review* 66 (April 2001): 69-288.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hispanic/ASEC2004/2>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hispanic/ASEC2004/2>. Wilson and Miranda estimate that at least half of all Hispanics in the United States are third-generation American citizens [Everett A. Wilson and Jesse Miranda, “Hispanic Pentecostalism,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 715].

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Ready and Allert Brown-Gort, *The State of Latino Chicago* (Notre Dame: Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2005), 1.

<sup>7</sup> This article does not focus on Puerto Ricans, because they are (technically speaking) United States citizens and therefore not immigrants, even though they often confront the same problems as other immigrants coming from Latin America, and they also compose a large group within Latino Pentecostal congregations (Andrea Althoff, presentation at CAGSR, 11 February 2006 (Chicago: Loyola University); Father Richard Simon, interview by author, 31 January 2006, Chicago; R. Stephen Warner, Comments on Althoff at CAGSR, 11 February 2006 (Chicago: Loyola University), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Janise D. Hurtig, “Hispanic Immigrant Churches and the Construction of Ethnicity,” in *Public Religion and Urban Transformation: Faith in the City*, ed. Lowell W. Livezey (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 34. See also Wade Clark and Christel Manning, “Cultural Conflicts and Identity: Second-Generation Hispanic Catholics in the United States,” *Social Compass* 41, no. 1 (1994): 175.

<sup>9</sup> Ready and Brown-Gort, 1.

<sup>10</sup> American Community Survey (2003), quoted by Ready and Brown-Gort, 4.

<sup>11</sup> The following publications address in part or entirely Latino religion and immigration in the US: Hector Avalos, ed., *Introduction to the U.S. Latina and Latino Religious Experience* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2004); Randall Balmer, “Crossing the Borders: Evangelicalism and Migration,” in *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith, and John L. Esposito (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 53-60; Ken R. Crane, *Faith, Family, and Ethnicity in the Second Generation* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2003); Charles W. Dahm, *Parish Ministry in a Hispanic Community* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2004); Ana María Díaz-Stevens, “Colonization versus Immigration in the Integration and Identification of Hispanics in the United States” in Yazbeck Haddad, Smith, and Esposito, 61-84; Ana Díaz-Stevens and Anthony Stevens-Arroyo, *Recognizing the Latino Resurgence in U.S. Religion: The Emmaus Paradigm* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, eds., *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptions in Immigrant Congregations* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000); Michael O. Emerson, *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006, forthcoming); Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, “Hispanic Churches in American Public Life: Summary of Findings” in *Interim Reports* (Notre Dame: Institute for Latino Studies, 2003), no. 2; Id., eds., *Latino Religious and Civic Activism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Hurtig; Livezey; David Maldonado, Jr., *Protestantes/Protestants: Hispanic Christianity Within Mainline Traditions* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999); Mary Jo Neitz, *Charisma and Community: A Study of Religious Commitment within the Charismatic Renewal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987); Daniel R. Rodríguez-Díaz, David Cortés Fuentes, eds., *Hidden Stories: Unveiling the History of the Latino Church* (Decatur, GA:

Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana, 1994); Roof and Manning; Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Moisés Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990); Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and Gilbert R. Cadena, eds., *Old Masks, New Faces: Religion and Latino Identities* (New York: Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, 1995); R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, eds., *Gathering in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1998); R. Stephen Warner, "Religion and New (Post-1965) Immigrants: Some Principles Drawn from Field Research," *American Studies* (Summer/Fall 2000): 267-286; Id., *A Church of Our Own: Disestablishment And Diversity in American Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 145-182; Nancy J. Wellmeier, "Santa Eulalia's People in Exile: Maya Religion, Culture, and Identity in Los Angeles" in Warner and Wittner, 97-122; Raymond Brady Williams, "Religion and Recent Immigrants: New Ferment in American Civic Life" in *Religion and Public Life in the Midwest: America's Common Denominator?* ed. Philip Barlow and Mark Silk (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004), 135-158; Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith, and John L. Esposito, *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> The term "conversion" is used here in a technical sense and describes the change of religious affiliation from Catholicism to Protestantism. Conversion that takes place from Catholicism to Pentecostal Protestantism is most likely to be accompanied by changes in religious attitudes, e.g., by having a "born-again" experience. That experience also happens also within Catholicism, a fact that is often dismissed. An example would be a person who was formerly nominally Catholic, receives a calling, commits his life to Jesus and decides to become an active Christian by becoming a member of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

<sup>13</sup> Balmer, 54. Wellmeier, as well as Roof and Manning, also include the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in their judgment.

<sup>14</sup> Seen from a broader perspective, conversion takes place on a large scale not only in Latin America but also in other regions. Newer studies on global Pentecostalism indicate that it is now the most important religious movement in the world. See Allen Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2004); André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (London: Hurst & Co., 2001); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Karla Poewe, ed., *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994); David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Statistical data on religious affiliation is poor, due to the fact that official agencies such as the Bureau of the Census, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics are not allowed to ask questions about religion. The statistics used here stem from the General Social Survey (G.S.S.) conducted by the Chicago-based National Opinion Research Center. I also used recent reports, such as Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda, "Hispanic Churches." The report speculates that "aggressive proselytism, indigenous clergy, churches, liturgy, prayer groups, increased pastoral and lay leadership opportunities, church planting, healing, and greater roles for women in ministry have all contributed" to the growth of Latino Pentecostalism (16).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, "Defection Among Hispanics" *America* 159, no. 3 (1988): 61-2; and id., "Defection Among Hispanics (Updated)" *America* 177, no. 8 (1997): 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson and Miranda, 717.

<sup>18</sup> See my Ph.D. dissertation, "Religion im Wandel: Einflüsse von Ethnizität auf die religiöse Ordnung am Beispiel Guatemalas" (Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2005) and R. Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda, "Hispanic Churches," 16.

<sup>20</sup> Archdiocese of Chicago, *Data Composite: Facts and Figures for Year Ending 2004* (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago, June 2005), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Michael A. Hayes, ed., *New Religious Movements in the Catholic Church* (London and New York: Burns and Oates, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Simon, interview.

<sup>23</sup> The Chicago Latino Congregation Study (CLCS) examines the impact of Latino churches within the Chicago metropolitan area. Based at the Center for the Study of Latino Religion at the University of Notre Dame, the research is carried out by a team of scholars lead by Dr. Edwin I. Hernández and Dr. Rebecca Burwell.

<sup>24</sup> Chicago has a total of 60 ZIP codes, which demonstrates not only the magnitude of the survey, but also the preciseness of the estimated faith tradition.

<sup>25</sup> This is especially important because of high conversion rates in Latin America. Conversion in Latin America however, seems to have different origins than in the United States. One example from Guatemala might illustrate the difference. During the eighties, at the height of the civil war, conversion to Protestantism was not merely a religious matter but a matter of being protected against government and military persecution that hit especially agents from the Catholic Church, e.g., catechists.

<sup>26</sup> Pastor Oscar Arevalo of Misión Cristiana Elim, interview by author, 26 January 2006, Chicago. Simon, interview. Presentation of the Chicago Latino Congregation Study (CLCS) at CAGSR, 22 April 2006 (Chicago: Loyola University).

<sup>27</sup> For various takes on this trend, see Andrea Althoff, "Iglesias de fufufufu: neopentecostales y política en Guatemala" *Papeles de Cuestiones Internacionales*, no. 80 (Winter 2002): 83-89; Anderson; Chesnut; Jenkins; Corten and Marshall-Fratani; Martin, *Pentecostalism*; and Stoll.

<sup>28</sup> This is especially the case for Guatemala, where Protestant-Pentecostalism is a vital part of the religious landscape. However the number of Protestant-Pentecostals in this country is also often overestimated. Statistics of evangelical institutions such as Servicio Evangelizador Para America Latina (SEPAL) (but also Gallup opinion polls) show that during the last decade, the percentage of Protestant-Pentecostals has not changed, staying at 25 percent (Henri Gooren, "Reconsidering Protestant Growth in Guatemala, 1900-1995" in *Holy Saints and Fiery Preachers: The Anthropology of Protestantism in Mexico and Central America*, ed. James W. Dow and Alan R. Sandstrom (Westport, CT: Praeger), 167-201; SEPAL (2001).

<sup>29</sup> Interviews with religious leaders offer some hints of what differences can be found in terms of doctrine and religious practices. For instance, the Liaison of the CCR, Father Simon, told me that today the CCR movement is in fact no longer charismatic, but very structured and hierarchical. In his opinion, there are very little speaking in tongues, prophesizing, or general manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He thinks the reason behind it is that the leaders of the CCR try to control the movement, which brakes spontaneous religious expressions like manifestations of the Holy Spirit. He also said that members become afraid of expressing these religious experiences because they fear criticism from their leaders.

<sup>30</sup> There are, of course, also Latin American immigrants present in mainline Protestant denominations, such as Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran and others. This presence is minimal, however, compared to Pentecostal congregations. A nevertheless interesting trend is that the Latino congregations within mainline Protestant churches tend to be evangelical in their doctrinal and liturgical make-up (see Hurtig).

<sup>31</sup> Wilson and Miranda report that the Assemblies of God and the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) are historically white U.S. Pentecostal denominations. This means that Latin American immigrants in these denominations increasingly change former ethnically homogenous religious institutions into ethnically diverse religious bodies.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson and Miranda, 721. See also on this point Sánchez Walsh, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson and Miranda, 721.

<sup>34</sup> Presentation of the CLCS.

<sup>35</sup> Wilson and Miranda, 721.

<sup>36</sup> Presentation of the CLCS; Norman Ruano, "Latino Churches in Chicago: From *Virgen de Guadalupe* to Storefront Churches," presentation at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, November 2005, 2, 6. The name for Latino denominations in the United States is usually *Concilio*. The name provided when the Latino Congregation Project presented their preliminary findings at CAGSR was therefore "U.S. Latino councils."

<sup>37</sup> Participant observation, Misión Cristiana Elim, October 2005-May 2006, *passim*, Chicago.

<sup>38</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous participant of the CAGSR meeting where I presented this project, who suggested this term.

<sup>39</sup> "In Mexico, *Luz del Mundo* is the second-largest religious body after the Roman Catholic Church," reports Patricia Fortuny-Loret de Mola ["The *Santa Cena* of the *Luz del Mundo* Church: A Case of Contemporary Transnationalism" in *Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*, ed. Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000), 23].

<sup>40</sup> Often unnoticed is in this respect is the variety of different ethnic groups within one country. This is a striking factor especially in a small country like Guatemala, because according to different languages, twenty-two different ethnic groups can be counted. How discrimination against the indigenous population within Latin America passes into congregations in United States is difficult to evaluate. In the Guatemalan congregation mentioned, indigenous members can be found together with non-indigenous Guatemalans, Mexicans, and people of other Latin American countries.

<sup>41</sup> Hurtig comes to a similar conclusion.

<sup>42</sup> Due to the fact that the labor market in Chicago is usually ethnically separated, by being a member of a multiethnic congregation the chances of having access to different section of the labor market are increased. I would like to thank Rebecca Burwell for her insights on this point [Meeting at Loyola University, 17 February 2006. See also John P. Koval, "In Search of Economic Parity: The Mexican Labor Force in Chicago" (Notre Dame: Institute for Latino Studies, 2004), no. 1]. The impact of religious institutions on the labor market has

been nevertheless vastly underestimated and has not been subject of academic studies (Presentation of the CLCS).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Displacement due to gentrification is a major issue in the Humboldt Park area in Chicago, a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood, but also in Logan Square and Pilsen (Presentation of the CLCS). Rob Paral reported that gentrification is also taking place in South Lawndale (Little Village) and the Lower West Side (Pilsen) toward other neighborhoods, e.g., Belmont Cragin (North Side) (interview by author, 15 February 2006, Chicago).

<sup>45</sup> Wilson and Miranda, 717.

<sup>46</sup> Dahm, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Archdiocese of Chicago, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>51</sup> The make-up of parishes staffed by religious personnel was described in the report as follows: out of a total of fifty-nine parishes, fourteen provide services for Hispanics, ten for Europeans and Hispanics, and five for African-Americans and Hispanics (Ibid., 42).

<sup>52</sup> Hurtig, 51.

<sup>53</sup> The Charismatic Renewal is in this respect an exception, because their organizational structure resembles the congregational model and is therefore similar to Pentecostal congregations (e.g. prayer groups, house meetings). Warner has argued that not only mainline Presbyterians but also Roman Catholics, who officially place authority in “higher” bodies, behave in certain ways much like Congregationalists or Baptists [“The Place of the Congregation in the Contemporary American Religious Configuration (1994)” in *A Church of Our Own*, 145-182]. The CCR is certainly a prime example of such an attitude.

<sup>54</sup> A prime example for this is the *Instituto del Progreso Latino* in Pilsen, where many educational programs are run. Matthew J. Price examines a variety of other churches in Chicago in his essay “Place, Race, and History: The Social Mission of Downtown Churches” in Livezey, ed., 57-82.

<sup>55</sup> My thanks go to R. Stephen Warner who related my own hypotheses on Catholic Charismatics and Latino Pentecostals to the work of Robert Putnam (Comments on Althoff, 4).

<sup>56</sup> See Anderson; Corten and Marshall-Fratani; Jenkins; Martin, *Pentecostalism and Tongues of Fire*; Poewe, ed.; and Stoll.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas E. Bogenschield, “The Roots of Fundamentalism in Liberal Guatemala. Missionary Ideologies and Local Response, 1882 – 1944” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> To understand the importance of continuity in identity formation, classical identity theories that focus on identity construction give constructive insight. See, for example, Erik H. Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968); and George Herbert Mead, *Essays on Social Psychology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001) and id., *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

<sup>59</sup> I am indebted to André Droogers and his team at the Free University of Amsterdam for their insights on conversion. Professor Droogers and his team are currently undertaking research on Pentecostalism on four continents. Analyzing conversion and the importance of conversion is the principal goal of the study.

<sup>60</sup> Classical Pentecostal teaching holds that speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) is the necessary first sign that one has received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This teaching was based on the fact that tongues appeared as the Spirit was poured out on the early church in Acts 2, 10, and 19, and were implicit in Acts 8 and 9 (Harold Vinson Synan, “Fundamentalism,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 553.

<sup>61</sup> Synan explains the effects of the doctrine, which was “to deny the ‘cessation of the charismata’ teaching that had been the standard understanding of the Western churches since the days of Augustine. The cessation view held that the charismata had been withdrawn from the church at the end of the apostolic age” (ibid.).

<sup>62</sup> All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (1994).

<sup>63</sup> J. Samuel Escobar describes the “Conspiracy Theory” as “... the first global interpretation of protestantism in Latin America that has persisted in varied forms ... The term has been applied for this purpose by some contemporary Catholic publications ... This contemporary version emphasizes the reference to the alleged foreign connections of the Protestant movement, linking it to the imperial designs within the Pax Americana” [“Conflict of Interpretations of Popular Protestantism” in *New Face of the Church in Latin America: Between Tradition and Change*, ed. Guillermo Cook (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 117.

<sup>64</sup> For Ecuador, see Elisabeth Rohr, *Die Zerstörung kultureller Symbolgefüge: Über den Einfluss protestantisch-fundamentalistischer Sekten in Lateinamerika und die Zukunft der indianischen Lebenswelt* (Munich: Eberhard, 1990); for Guatemala, see Manuela Cantón Delgado, *Bautizados en fuego: protestantes, discursos de conversión y política en Guatemala (1989-1993)* [Antigua: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA), 1998].

<sup>65</sup> The relationship between a gender-based discourse and social organizing in Pentecostal congregations is complex. Scholars have often commented that within both movements the main constituency is female. The attraction has been in part explained by the fact that women can fill leadership positions within these congregations that are denied to them by the broader society. Nevertheless, because of the conservative values of these churches, they contribute to a status quo in the society that assigns woman the role of the obedient wife and mother. But precisely this conservative and often patriarchal discourse contributes to the success of Pentecostal congregations because men are reminded to be responsible for their families and to fulfill their role as the breadwinners [see Martin Riesebrodt, *Die Rückkehr der Religionen: Fundamentalismus und der "Kampf der Kulturen"* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001); and Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995)].

<sup>66</sup> One of these notable exceptions is Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel and of Angelus Temple in Los Angeles (Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "McPherson, Aimee Semple," in Burgess and Van Der Maas, 856-859). Sánchez Walsh writes about gender and the relationship between Pentecostals and Evangelicals: "Piety, the glue that keeps evangelicalism together, became redefined, under the auspices of Pentecostalism, as submission to a supernatural force that affected both men and women, and risked democratizing the male-dominated offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher," with the effect that men and women work together in their missionary efforts (5).

<sup>67</sup> Mehrdad Azemun of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), interview by author, 31 March 2006, Chicago.

<sup>68</sup> "Religious Leaders Take a Stand on Immigration," *The New York Times*, 2 March 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Only 19 percent disagree with the provision of churches or religious leaders to provide assistance to illegal immigrants (Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda, "Hispanic Churches," 17).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Catholic Charismatic Renewal groups are, according to Father Simon, sometimes composed of only one national group but sometimes they are composed by people of different national backgrounds, e.g. Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Mexicans. In Latino Pentecostal congregations the aforementioned compositions of mixed and homogeneous national congregation can be found as well (Arevalo, interview; Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, telephone interview by author, 4 May 2006; Rebecca Burwell and team (Latino Congregation Project, Meeting at Loyola University, 17 February 2006, Chicago).

<sup>72</sup> Anonymous member of Misión Cristiana Elim, personal communication with author, 29 January 2006, Chicago. In this particular church there are also several couples where spouses have different national backgrounds.

<sup>73</sup> Ruano; and Presentation of the CLCS.

<sup>74</sup> Emmerson also provides evidence that Pentecostal Latinos are among those who have, in comparison to other "racial groups," the highest potential to overcome not only ethnic but also "racial" cleavages because they are among those who are most likely to be found in multi-racial congregations.

<sup>75</sup> Sánchez Walsh, telephone interview.

<sup>76</sup> The big headline of the *Chicago Tribune* on 2 May 2006 to describe the march the day before is a prime example of the creation of ethnic boundaries. "United They March" it said, and this "they" tells as much about the identification or non-identification of the writer with those who marched as about the various perceptions parts of the broader public have towards Latinos. Another enormous headline, "We are America," from the *Chicago Sun-Times* therefore reads entirely differently.

<sup>77</sup> I found also symbolically charged the hanging of a big flag of the United States on a stage in front of the church. The stage serves mainly for the music band to perform.

<sup>78</sup> Emmerson, 87.

<sup>79</sup> Emmerson, *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> On this point, see also Wilson and Miranda.