Middle Class Pentecostalism in Argentina

Inappropriate Spirits

LEVANTO MIS MANOS
AUNQUE NO TENGA FUERZA
LEVANTO MIS MANOS
AUNQUE TENGA MIL PROBLEMAS

CUANDO LEVANTO MIS MANOS
COMIENZO A SENTIR
UNA UNCIÓN QUE ME HACE
CANTAR
CUANDO LEVANTO MIS MANOS
COMIENZO A SENTIR EL FUEGO.

Dios es Amor

By JENS KOEHRSEN

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Religion in the Americas Series

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Cover Illustration: Church service at the Assembly Of Christ, in Buenos Aires City on 19 April 2009. The church band is playing worship songs. Photograph by Jens Köhrsen. Reproduced with kind permission.

To Marcia

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Acknowledgements

Particularly enriching was Adrián's and Adriana's hospitality with the *tortillas* and *frijoles* that I enjoyed so much. Moreover, working together with Adrián, Heinrich, and Leif on sociological theory and methods nourished my desire to work in academia.

In Paris, I benefited from the indispensable help of Nathalie Luca and her research seminar – the "*Groupe d'enseignement mutuelle*" – at the *Centre d'Etudes Interdisciplinaires des Faits Religieux*. The comments I received in this context enabled me to fundamentally rethink my approach. In the context of my stays in Paris, the friendship, hospitality and humor of Ingrid Bejarano, Pablo Corral, Cantaura La Cruz, Katerina Kerestetzi, Carole Saint-Germain, and Claire Salabelle have enriched my life and filled me with great joy at traveling to Paris.

Back in my hometown of Oldenburg, Jannika Mattes and Martin Heidenreich gave me the opportunity to work in a fantastic research environment in the social sciences department of the *University of Oldenburg*. Although working on a different topic – the sociology of innovation and the energy transition – I thoroughly enjoyed the novel academic environment which spurred my academic interest in other research fields. In particular, I want to thank Klaus Baier, Frederic Falkenhagen, Jannika Mattes, and Susanne Lemke for their constant support.

Within the context of my studies at Oldenburg, I would also like to go back to the roots of my studies and thank Reinhard Schulz, Alexander Krafft, Stefan Müller-Dohm, Günther Ulrich, and Thomas Alkemeyer for having encouraged my academic development. Moreover, a group of students who became the study circle "Denkräume" played a great role in this development. The pleasure that I experienced when exchanging ideas with others such as Roman Eichler, Michael Jäger, Ronald Langer, Timo Luks, Annette Schlimm, Henning Thies, and Jens Wonke stimulated me to go on and write this project. Gathering ideas and writing a proposal for this research project, exchanges with Kerstin Schulte, Heinrich Schäfer, and Hartmann Tyrell helped me to improve my project.

Also of great help were the comments I received from numerous researchers when presenting my research at conferences. At these conferences I had the pleasure of meeting many inspiring researchers such as François-Xavier Bauduin, Christopher L. Chiappari, Henri Gooren, Titus Hjelm, Sean McCloud, Kornelia Sammet, David Schneider, Pablo Semán, Alexander Yendel, and Michał Jan Żebrowski. These and many other researchers contributed with their ideas and comments to my research. In particular, I would like to thank Anne Sophie Lamine, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, and the two anonymous peer reviewers who commented on the manuscript and provided helpful remarks for its improvement.

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List of Acronyms

AC	Assembly of Christ (Asamblea Cristiana)
ACIERA	Alianza de Iglesias Evangélicas de la República Argentina (Evangelical umbrella organization)
AD	Asambleas de Dios
BsAs	Buenos Aires
Consejo	Consejo de Pastores de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires
Conicet	Ceil-Piette Conicet (National research institute)
Cumbia	Popular Latin American style of music
Diezmos	Tithe
Demonios	Demons
El Espíritu	The Spirit
El Puente	Evangelical newspaper
Evangélistas/ Evangélicos	Evangelicals
FAIE	Federación Argentina de Iglesias Evangélicas (Protestant umbrella organization)
FECEP	Federación Confraternidad Evangélica Pentecostal (Pentecostal umbrella organization)
FIPA	Federación de Iglesias Pentecostales Argentina (Pentecostal umbrella organization)
La Corriente	La Corriente del Espíritu (Pentecostal newspaper)
GBA	Gran Buenos Aires (Greater Buenos Aires)
GIL	God Is Love (Dios es Amor)
Hermanos Libres	Plymouth Brethren
INDEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National statitic institute)
ISEDET	Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos (Faculty for Protestant theology in Buenos Aires)
IURD	Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios
Registro	Registro Nacional de Culto (National register of non-Catholic religious groups)
Ofrenda	Offerings
Obreros	Ushers
UAD	Unión de las Asambleas de Dios

Introduction

When I, a European researcher of religion, met Javier for the first time, he presented himself as a self-confident member of the Argentinean middle class: in his early thirties, he held a university degree in business administration and earned a good salary. During the interview, he stressed extensively the European family background of himself and his wife, as well as their attachment to the European culture. Having grown up in a lower middle class Pentecostal family, Javier believed in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and its gifts, and was still affiliated with the Pentecostal church of his family. Although he believed firmly in the Pentecostal faith, he told me that he disliked the style of Pentecostalism practiced in his church. He described his church as a church for "negros" and "villeros" – pejorative descriptions for people from the lower class – and communicated a picture of a noisy and uncivilized Pentecostalism, inadequate for middle class Argentineans with European backgrounds. Also, his wife – who was raised in historical Protestantism – disliked their Pentecostal church to which they felt bound due to the congregational involvement of Javier's parents. At the end of our first encounter, we agreed to visit their church together. Yet, after the interview I did not hear from Javier for some time. Despite sending him several messages where I asked him about our plans to visit his church, he would not answer me. Months later I finally managed to contact his wife and we arranged to visit one of their church services. From the beginning of our visit, it appeared to me as if Javier did not feel very comfortable with my presence and wanted us to leave the church as early as possible. In fact, in order not to attract the attention of their fellow members when leaving the church service earlier, Javier and his wife chose their places close to the rear end of the church hall. While the general atmosphere was highly expressive, Javier and his wife showed barely any form of emotional involvement. During the church service, the preachers asked the audience to stand up and repeat movements and phrases. Javier's wife refused to carry out any of these practices: she remained in her seat, looked ashamed, and left the church service early. Javier behaved differently. He looked uncomfortable and appeared to be torn between showing and denying his attachment to the congregation and its practices. Thus, he sometimes stood up, raised his arms unconvincingly and repeated the phrases in a quiet voice. He marked a difference with his behavior: although he performed the practices,

> *he looked barely attached to them. At the end of the church service, the*
> *moment of exorcisms and dancing in the Holy Spirit, Javier encouraged*
> *me to leave his church along with him. With his fellow members dancing in*
> *the Spirit, crying and shouting in front of the pulpit, he could no longer bear*
> *my eyes on his church.*

A religious movement that is frequently portrayed as emotional, ignorant, poor, and superstitious does not fit well with an educated middle class that imagines itself as European, rational, and secular.[1] Highly educated middle class individuals are not expected to participate in emotional and loud church services or to speak in tongues. Nevertheless, there exists a rising group of middle class Pentecostals in Argentina. How do middle class Pentecostals deal with their religious belonging? What type of Pentecostalism do middle class Pentecostals in Latin America develop?

The story of middle class Pentecostalism in Latin America remains largely untold. Despite a high academic interest in Latin American Pentecostalism and a rising community of middle class Pentecostals, the relationship between the middle class and Pentecostalism has been barely researched. This study endeavors to fill this void by exploring middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. The main argument of this study is that Pentecostalism stands to some degree in opposition to the standards of appropriate middle class behavior. Middle class Pentecostals are torn between the world of Pentecostalism and the world of the educated, "European" middle class. In order to decrease this tension, middle class Pentecostals tend toward specific tastes and styles of Pentecostalism that draw boundaries in opposition to the "inappropriate" characteristics of Pentecostalism. They distance themselves from the "inappropriate" spirits of Pentecostalism.

The study of middle class Pentecostals contributes to an understanding of how individuals from different social backgrounds mark their status by drawing symbolic boundaries within the same religious community. Therefore, it adds to the research on class and religion, a topic that has received little attention in the sociology of religion during the last decades.

The following sections of the introduction will point to the general lack of studies regarding middle class religiosity and discuss the few existing insights concerning middle class Pentecostalism in Latin America.

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1   For the public imaginary of Pentecostalism in Argentina, see Algranti 2010: 49; Frigerio 1993b;
     Frigerio 1998; Wynarczyk 2009a: 194–197; Semán 2004: 17; Semán 2006a: 217. For the
     Argentinean middle class, see Adamovsky 2009; Cueto 2007; Svampa 2005; Tevik 2006.

1.1   Class and Religion: A Rather Understudied Topic

In the last few decades, the topic of social class and religion has played only a very marginal role within the scientific agenda. The academic debates in the scientific study of religion have been mainly dominated by (de-)secularization debates and rational choice theory. (De-)secularization debates tackled a wide variety of subjects around the vitality of religion in (late) modernity, such as public religion, religious fundamentalism, new religious movements, the supposed resurgence of religion, new (barely visible) manifestations of religion, and the pluralization and individualization of religion.[2] Meanwhile, the rational choice theory of religion endeavored to create a comprehensive social theory of religious behavior.[3] In this context, rational choice theorists described social class – against their previous studies – as a minor factor for explaining religious practice:[4]

> (…) although class does somewhat influence religious behavior, the effects are very modest, and most religious organizations are remarkably heterogeneous in terms of social status.
>
> STARK AND FINKE 2000:198

In contrast to this position, there are various studies that point to the relevancy of social class in religion. In North America, studies indicate a strong relationship between social class and religious affiliation. It has been often claimed that denominational lines move along social class differences.[5] Individuals

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2 See for the (de-)secularization debate, for instance, Bruce 1989, 1996, 2001, 2003, 2010; Campiche 1993; Casanova 1994, 2006; Davie 1994, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Dobbelaere 2002; Franzmann et al. 2006; Gabriel 1993; Garbriel et al. 2012; Gorski 2000; Hervieu-Léger 1986, 1990, 2000, 2003a, 2003b, 2008; Knoblauch 2009; Köhrsen 2012; Krech 2011; Luckmann 1991; Martin 1978; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Pickel and Sammet 2012; Pollack 2006; Pollack and Pickel 1999, 2000; Roof 1993, 1999; 2007; Sammet 2012; Tyrell 1996; Warner 1993; Willaime 1995/2005, Wohlrab-Sahr and Krüggeler 2000. The debate about Pentecostalism can be regarded as a subfield of this strand since the expansion of Pentecostalism has been described as an evidence for the vitality of religion in the modern world and a counter-evidence against secularization theory.

3 See for rational choice theory of religion, for instance, Bankston 2003; Jensen and Luther 2003; Finke 1997; Finke and Iannacone 1993; Iannaccone 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994; Iannaccone et al. 1995; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Stark and Iannaccone 1994; Stark and Finke 2000; Stolz 2009; Warner 1993; Young 1997.

4 Interestingly, this position contradicts Stark's and Bainbridge's positions in their earlier works where they referred strongly to deprivation approaches. See, for instance, Stark and Bainbridge 1980, 1985.

5 Newport 1979; Pyle 2006; Smith and Faris 2005; Waters et al. 1995.

tend to affiliate with religious groups that correspond to their social class. Higher socioeconomic status groups lean more toward theologically liberal religious congregations, while they avoid fundamental and/or sectarian movements. Lower socioeconomic status groups, instead, are more receptive to theologically more conservative and sectarian movements.[6] However, also on the emerging Latin American "religious markets" there are class differences in religious "consumption". These class differences are, for instance, illustrated by the lower class appeal of specific religious movements, such as Pentecostalism and Afrobrazilian cults. If religious belonging becomes more and more a subject of religious choice in modern societies – which seems to be the case[7] – then the relevancy of social class for explaining the participation in particular religious groups equally rises. In the emerging "religious markets", religious choices seem to be less and less determined by the "inherited religion" of the parental household, while other factors, such as class-related religious preferences, gain importance. In this context, social class may become a central element for explaining religious practice.

Despite the relevancy of social class, the relationship between class and religion is an understudied subject and has played only a marginal role during the last decades.[8] Nonetheless, social class has formed an early topic in the sociology of religion. Weber, for instance, argued that the social position of individuals had an impact on their religious tendencies. He supposed that the "popular masses" have a need for deliverance from daily suffering, while the privileged want to enhance their grandeur and legitimate their social position.[9] The peasant whose fate depended strongly on nature was thought to be inclined towards magic.[10]

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6   Iannacone 1988; McCloud 2007a; Roof and Hadaway 1979; Sherkat and Wilson 1995; Waters et al. 1995. Moreover, social mobility is conceived by many scholars of as a factor that motivates religious switching (Nelsen and Snizek 1976; Newport 1979; Waters et al. 1995). Individuals experiencing upward social mobility are believed to switch to religious groups that are located in a higher social position and will tend to be theologically more liberal than their previous religious group (cf. Roof and Hadaway 1979, Stark and Glock 1968).

7   See Berger 1990/1967: 133, 1979: 28; Casanova 2006: 18; Davie 2006a: 27–29; 2010: 172; Gabriel 1993: 31; Hervieu-Léger 1990; 2008; Luckmann 1991/1960: 140–141, 148; Luhmann 1977: 232–223; 242; Pollack and Pickel 1999: 473; Warner 1993: 1077; Wohlrab-Sahr and Krüggeler 2000: 243.

8   See McCloud 2007a: 9; 2007b: 844; Smith and Faris 2005: 103. For other studies on religion and class, see, for instance, Bienfait 2011; Hill 2011; Ecklund and Scheitle 2007; Flere and Klanjsek 2009; Neslon 2009; McCloud and Mirola 2009; Reimer 2007; Schiemann 2010; Schwadel et al. 2009; Stolz 2004.

9   Weber 1921/72: 296, 298–299. Weber's approach was later taken up by Bourdieu (1971a; 1971b).

10 Weber 1921/72: 286. The intellectual, instead, is thought to seek deliverance from his/her inner suffering searching for a sense in the world and trying to free it from the irrational. See Weber 1921/72: 307–308.

The question of social class was also prominently discussed by Richard Niebuhr. His book *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) contributed to the debate about deprivation and religion. Here, he argues that sects form a haven for the deprived who compensate their lack of worldly power through religious activity. The contributions from Weber and Niebuhr – as well as those from Karl Marx and Ernst Troeltsch – nourished deprivation and social strain theories which dominated the scientific debate about social class and religion.[11] Deprivation approaches assume that the experience of poverty and social strain causes individuals to be more inclined towards religious coping strategies. These approaches posit that the religious activity of underprivileged or deprived groups relates to their deprivation. Deprivation is believed to render individuals receptive to specific, mostly sectarian, religious options.[12] These approaches were often applied to the Pentecostal movement. Here, scholars related the rise of Pentecostalism among lower classes to the experience of deprivation. Thus, Pentecostalism was frequently portrayed as a strategy to cope with deprivation and states of anomie.[13]

The predominance of deprivation approaches has led to several flaws in the study of the relationship of social class and religion. First, religion is reduced to a problem coping strategy. Its cultural dimensions – for instance, the cultural affinities of different social classes that may stand behind the differences in their religious practices – are disregarded.[14] Second, deprivation theories have associated lower classes religiosity with a sect type of religion that creates high tension in regard to its wider social environment and is inclined towards magical practices and a high emotionality.[15] This association has contributed to the stabilization of an imaginary of lower class religiosity: emotionality, magic, and sectarianism tend to be regarded as religious tendencies peculiar to lower classes and alien to middle classes. Third, deprivation approaches focus generally on individuals who are embedded in the lower class, while they disregard

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11   See McCloud 2007a: 33–101.

12   Charles Y. Glock (1958) enhanced the debate about deprivation by introducing the concept of relative deprivation into the study of religion.Later, Lofland and Stark (1965) referred in their famous article to deprivation theories by stating that a religious search is generally motivated by an experience of tension.

13   Hunt (2002a, 2002b) provides a comprehensive overview of the deprivation approaches in the scientific study of Pentecostalism.

14   Smilde (2005: 761) criticizes, for instance, that deprivation approaches cannot explain why, when facing the same problems, some individuals convert to Pentecostalism, others not. He, therefore, adds the factor "social networks" to his explanation of Pentecostal conversion. For a more comprehensive critique of deprivation approaches, see also Hunt 2002b.

15   See McCloud 2007a: 17.

the religious practice of the middle and upper class. The prevalence of deprivation approaches has orientated the academic attention towards lower class religiosity. Little attention has been placed on the religiosity of middle classes. For this reason, middle class religiosity remains today a widely understudied topic.[16]

Beyond deprivation approaches, most of the research studying the relationship between social class and religion has a quantitative focus. These studies are based on large quantitative data samples but present only few qualitative insights on the micro and meso level. Qualitative studies on the micro and meso level, by contrast, could present detailed accounts on class differences in religious practices, beliefs, preferences, and styles and improve our understanding of how social class and religion interact with each other. Despite the relevancy of social class, there is a lack of qualitative studies exploring the role of social class in religion exists.[17] With respect to the lack of qualitative research, McCloud states:

> Finally, those searching for connections between class and religion need more than archival research, theoretical musings, national phone surveys, and quantitative analysis of the General Social Survey. The interdisciplinary study of religion and class demands fieldwork attuned to differences within denominations and among individuals inside single congregations. It also leads to new kinds of questions. Do middle-class Pentecostals speak in tongues and dance in the spirit differently than working-class Pentecostals?
>
> MCCLOUD 2007B: 855

This study addresses this issue and contributes to the qualitative study of middle class religiosity. The emphasis will be on middle class Pentecostals in Latin America. Middle class Pentecostals have an exceptional status among Pentecostals since Pentecostalism in Latin America is mainly a lower class movement. Focusing on the middle class in a religious movement dominated by the lower class allows for studying how middle class members deal with their exceptional status and mark their social position within the movement. Although Pentecostalism forms today by far the most successful strand of Christianity in Latin America, there exists so far no comprehensive research about its relationsship to the middle class.

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16   See also McCloud 2007b: 845–846; one exception is perhaps Altglas 2011.

17   Smith and Faris 2005: 103–104.

1.2   Latin American Pentecostalism: Towards a Middle Class Movement?

Pentecostalism emerged as a Christian renewal movement at the beginning of the 20th century within Protestantism[18] and experienced a vast expansion around the world, counting at the beginning of the 21st century between 250 and 523 million devotees worldwide.[19] Its success is, among other factors, due to its ability to adapt to local cultures and its steady innovation, which lead to the emergence of diverse forms of Pentecostalism.

The term "Pentecostalism" describes today a variety of manifestations of charismatic Christianity. Therefore, "Pentecostalism" is often perceived as a rather vague and imprecise term.[20] As Robbins notes, there is little standardization in the use of the term among scholars.[21] Pentecostalism appears to be a catchall expression that lumps together different strands of charismatic Christianity.[22] Despite its all-embracing character the term has not lost its semantic content and is usually associated with some specific attributes.

Pentecostalism can be best described with regard to its basic beliefs: most importantly the belief in the Holy Spirit and its gifts. Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit can become present in the daily reality of the devotee and award him/her with specific gifts. Prominent gifts are the gifts of tongues (glossolalia), healing, prophecy, and wisdom. The belief in the Holy Spirit and its gifts is linked to the general belief in the intervention of the supernatural in

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18   The roots of the Pentecostal movement can be traced back to the Anglo-American revival movement, the "Great awakening", and particularly to the Holiness movement. The starting point is often identified with Azusa street movement which was founded by William Seymour (Anderson 2004: 19–45; Aubrée 2010: 875–876; Cox 2001: 45–78; Hollenweger 1976: 7–14; Robbins 2004: 119–121; Schäfer 1992a: 47–57; 1992b: 58–61; 2009b: 556; Willaime 1999: 6–7). However, similar Christian renewal movements emerged almost at the time in different parts of the world (Anderson 2004: 35; Baier 2014: 25; Willaime 1999: 6). For this reason, Lehmann (2003) speaks with reference to the Azusa street movement of a Pentecostal myth of origin.

19   The number of Pentecostals varies according to the statistics and definitions and is estimated to be between 250 and 523 million adherents at the beginning of the 21st century (Anderson 2004: 11–13; Barrett 2001; Robbins 2004: 117–118). The estimation of 523 million Pentecostals worldwide embraces different types of charismatic Christianity and entails also Charismatic Catholics.

20   See Anderson 2004: 10; Willaime 1999: 5.

21   See Robbins 2004: 119.

22   See Schäfer 2009b: 555. Anderson proposes to speak of Pentecostalisms and to describe with this term movements and congregations that emphasize the action of the Holy Spirit. See Anderson 2004: 10, 13.

daily life: supernatural forces – which entail the Holy Spirit but also evil spirits such as demons – are supposed to intervene constantly in the daily world.[23] These basic beliefs manifest themselves in different ways: speaking in tongues, trance and ecstasy, faith healing, strong prayers seeking divine miracles, as well as prophecy and exorcisms.[24] A salient element of Pentecostalism is its emphasis on physical experience and the involvement of the body. Both are strongly related to the experience of the divine in form of the Holy Spirit.[25] Moreover, Pentecostal church services are notorious for their highly expressive, celebrative, exuberant, and eventful character. They are usually shaped by joyful music and strong emotional expressions.[26]

Other characteristics often associated with Pentecostalism include its strong focus on evangelization and conversion. Pentecostals emphasize evangelization. Devotees are expected to engage in proselytism.[27] Moreover, Pentecostals stress the conversion experience. Conversion is conceptualized as a life transformation that implies the beginning of a new life oriented towards God. The new Christian identity is expected to become virulent in all expects of life.[28]

Biblical fundamentalism – a literal understanding of the Bible – is another feature frequently ascribed to Pentecostals.[29] Fundamentalism goes along with a

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23   See Anderson 2004: 13; 284; Aubrée 2010: 875–876; Mariz 1994: 67; Lehmann 2003: 479; Parker 1996: 142, Santagada 1975: 626; Schäfer 1998: 67; 2009b: 569; Semán 2000: 159; Stoll 1990: 4; 112–113; Willaime 1999: 6–7.

24   See Chesnut 1997: 6, 47; Corten 1995: 10–12, 153–154; Cox 2001: 81–110; Freston 1998: 340; Mariz 1994: 67; Jenkins 2007: 8, 73; Lehmann 2003: 479; Luca 1999a: 9–10; 2008b: 29–30; Parker 1996: 142; Schäfer 1992a: 53–57; 1998: 67; 2009b: 567; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 7–8. Anderson, for instance, describes the prayer for divine healing as "perhaps the most universal characteristic of the many varieties of Pentecostalism and perhaps the main reason for its growth in the developing world." (Anderson 2004: 30).

25   See Anderson 2004: 14, 284; Luca 2008b: 29–30; Semán 2000: 159; Schäfer 2009b: 565; Schäfer and Tovar 2009: 5–6.

26   See Luca 1999a: 10; Robbins 2004: 125–126; Schäfer 1988: 71; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 7–8. Pentecostal beliefs and practices are closely related to popular religion and culture. See Freston 1998: 349; Robbins 2004: 128–129.

27   See Robbins 2004: 124; Willaime 1999: 6.

28   See Chesnut 1997: 73; Lehman 2003: 479: Robbins 2004: 127–129; Schäfer 2009b: 565.

29   See Bastian 1997: 143–144; Parker 1996: 142; Santagada 1975: 626; Wynarczyk et al.1995: 4. Yet, Pentecostalism does not form a branch of the fundamentalist movement. The fundamentalist movement partly rejects Pentecostalism (Corten 1995: 150; Robbins 2004: 122–123; Schäfer 1992b: 64–65). Moreover, Schäfer (1998: 62–66; 2003) questions if all Pentecostals can be considered as fundamentalists. He raises two conditions for fundamentalism: (1) the own position is regarded as the absolute truth and (2) the aspiration to rearrange one's (secular) environment according to the religious truth. The second condition

supposed anti-intellectualism: Pentecostals are usually conceived of as renouncing theological education and relying instead on spiritual inspiration.[30]

With regard to its organization, the most important attribute of Pentecostalism is the absence of a central organization. There is no unifying organization that could control the whole movement.[31] Instead, there are thousands of – if at all – loosely coupled Pentecostal churches: the majority of them are very small and isolated congregations located predominantly in slums and lower class neighborhoods. Therefore, Pentecostalism is often conceived of as a grassroots movement.[32] The lack of a central institution confers a high flexibility to the movement enabling churches to adapt to local culture.[33]

Finally, characteristics often identified with traditional Pentecostalism are a strict moralism, – which forbids members, for instance, to wear modern cloth and jewelry – the rejection of the secular world and its pleasures, as well as a premillenaristic worldview.[34] However, this type of Pentecostalism seems to represent today only a small part of the movement. It has been replaced by a less moralistic and sectarian Pentecostalism that allows – and often even encourages – its members to engage in the secular world.[35]

This new type of Pentecostalism is occasionally denominated as "Neo-Pentecostalism". Yet, the term remains highly problematic through its use in varied ways. Some scholars like Hollenweger use the term to describe the charismatic renewal within traditional Protestant churches.[36] Others use the expression simply with regard to a less strict and rather wordly oriented type of Pentecostalism: they refer with the term to Pentecostals who engage in the

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is not necessarily given in the case of Pentecostals. For a comprehensive introduction into fundamentalism, see Schäfer 2008b.

30   Anderson 2004: 14; Corten 1995: 243; Robbins 2004: 130; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 7–8.

31   Robbins 2004: 125; Semán 2000: 160; Willaime 1999: 14.

32   Anderson 2004: 282; Schäfer 2009b: 562–563.

33   Anderson 2004: 281–283; Aubrée 2010: 881; Luca 1999a: 7, 9; Robbins 2004: 118–119; 129–131; Schäfer 2009b: 554, 562–563; Semán 2000: 160; Stoll 1990: 112–113. Moreover, an astonishing feature of the movement is its gender gap. Scholars have observed that Pentecostal attract by far more female than male devotees. Estimations range from an average 60% to 75% female membership in Pentecostal congregations. See Aubée 2010: 878; Bergunder 2000: 14; Chesnut 1997: 22; 2003: 136; Freston 1998: 348; Martin 1995: 107; Martin 2001: 56; Robbins 2004: 132.

34   Robbins 2004: 121.

35   Anderson 2004: 38; Martin 2002: 77; Schäfer 2009b: 573.

36   Hollenweger 1976: 33–45; Stoll 1990: 50.

secular society instead of withdrawing from it.[37] Moreover, scholars often refer to Neo-Pentecostalism as a type of Pentecostalism marked by prosperity gospel and the vast use of mass media. With "Neo-Pentecostalism" they mean a Pentecostalism that preaches worldly well-being, joy, and directs itself towards consumer culture.[38] In Central America this type of Pentecostalism applies to middle and upper class Pentecostal churches. In contrast, in Brazil, this type of Pentecostalism attracts predominantly the lower class; one example is the IURD.[39] Consequently, the term "Neo-Pentecostalism" can be misleading. Originally designed to differentiate the Pentecostal movement into different types and development stages, the term often contributes to more confusion than it helps to provide clear cut categories. On one hand, there is no shared definition of the characteristics of "Neo-Pentecostalism".[40] On the other hand, it is often empirically difficult to distinguish between "traditional" Pentecostal and "Neo-Penecostal" churches.[41] In Buenos Aires, for instance, most Pentecostal churches embrace some characteristics that are often attributed Neo-Pentecostalism while rejecting others. For this reason, this study will rather abstain from the term "Neo-Pentecostalism" and refer to Pentecostalism in general. The most common feature of Pentecostals is their emphasis on the Holy Spirit, which entails the belief in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and supernatural intervention. The belief in the Holy Spirit can express itself in ecstatic experiences, faith healing practices, and exorcisms.[42]

Pentecostalism experienced a rapid growth and vast success in Latin America where religious belief and practice as well as the public involvement of religious actors – particularly the Catholic Church – remain high.[43] Therefore, Hervieu-Léger's notion of secularization as a reconfiguration of the religious field appears to fit better with the Latin America case than the classical concept of secularization.[44] This reconfiguration manifests itself in the

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37   See Garcia-Ruiz 2007; Schäfer 2002: 139–148; 2008a: 495–496; 2009a: 49.

38   See Aubrée 2010: 877; 879; Hallum 2002: 227; Jaimes 2007; Mansilla 2006, 2008. Sometimes "Neo-Pentecostalism" is also associated with spiritual warfare. See Aubrée 2010: 877.

39   Freston (1998: 341; 1999: 150) indicates that the term is used in very different ways in Central America and in Brazil. He defines "neo-Pentecostalism" as the latest wave of a contextualization of lower class Pentecostalism to society (Freston 1999: 152).

40   See Freston 1999: 150; Jaimes 2007; Willaime 1999: 8–9.

41   Freston 1999: 152; Mansilla 2008.

42   I will refer with the term Pentecostalism only to Protestants and mostly use the terms "charismatic Catholicism" and "Catholic renewal" for the charismatic movement within the Catholic Church.

43   Beliveau and Esquivel 1996; Frigerio 1993; Mallimaci 2007; Höllinger 2006; Parker 1999:11.

44   Hervieu-Léger 1986: 227.

diversification of the religious field and the dissolution of the Catholic Church's religious monopoly. The monopoly is substituted by a "religious market" where religious "suppliers" compete for "clients."[45] Pentecostalism played an important role in this reconfiguration process. It became the central competitor of the Catholic Church and helped to break its religious monopoly.

Although Pentecostals already arrived at the beginning of the 20th century in Latin America, the mass expansion of Pentecostalism started in most countries half a century later and showed different growth rates in the various regions of Latin America. While the earliest mass growth occurred in Chile from the 1930's onwards, the expansion of Pentecostalism in Argentina occurred relatively late. Here, the movement experienced a vast growth in the 1980's and 1990's after the end of the last military dictatorship.[46]

Barrett et al. estimate for the year 2000 that there are 141.4 Million Pentecostals in Latin America.[47] The proportion of Pentecostals varies from country to country. Brazil and Chile have the highest proportion of Pentecostals with an estimated 24% of their population being Pentecostal. They are followed by most of Central America, including Guatemala with 17%.[48] These numbers illustrate the success of a movement that turned out to be much more successful than liberation theology and mainstream (historical) Protestantism, even though historical Protestantism had already arrived in the 19th century.[49]

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45   Bastian 1997: 11–17; 2004, Chesnut 2003; Forni 1987; Mallmaci 2004; Parker 1999.

46   Aubrée 2010: 878; Bastian 1994a: 115; Chesnut 1997: 39; Cleary and Steigenga 2004: 12; Freston 1998: 336–337; 1999: 147; Gill 1999: 287–288; Hurtado 1941: 104–127; Jenkins 2007: 73; Martin 1990: 49; 2002: 71.

47   See Barrett et al. 2001(1): 14, 20. The number of Pentecostals has to be taken carefully since it entails also charismatic Catholics which will form a great proportion of this group. Barrett et al. (2001(1)) split the group of the Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal basically into three subgroups: Pentecostal Renewal, Charismatic Renewal, and Neocharismatic Renewal. Further they add to this a sub-group of "peripheral quasi Pentecostals" which consists of Prepentecostals and Postpentecostals. Pentecostalism in Latin America in 2000 consists according to Barrett et al. of 23% Pentecostals, 52% Charismatics (including Anglican, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Charismatics) and 24% Neocharismatics (including, for instance, the IURD and grass-roots movements). See Barrett et al. 2001(1): 19–21.

48   Gooren 2010b, 2010c; Schäfer 1988: 69; Stoll 1993: 2. More recent research suggests that the countries with the highest proportion of evangelicals are today Guatemala and Nicaragua. The proportion of evangelicals is estimated to be even up to 40% for Guatemala and 29% for Nicaragua. See Schäfer 2013.

49   Cleary and Steigenga 2004: 12; Stoll 1993: 3, 11; Stoll 1993: 1–2, 4–7.

The spreading of Pentecostalism was not an unanimous success. Not all parts of society readily welcomed Pentecostalism. While it faced often rejection in public discourses, its expansion remained widely limited to the lower class.

Pentecostalism was perceived critically in Latin America's media debates and was often treated as a dangerous sect. Particularly at the beginning of the mass expansion, Pentecostals faced strong criticisms and prejudices. They were regarded as a North-American conspiracy and stigmatized as fundamentalist sects recruiting its members from the most vulnerable sections of the society: the ignorant and poor.[50] Although Pentecostalism has spread in the meanwhile strongly through many Latin American countries, it does not necessarily form a well-accepted religious option. By contrast, wide parts of their host societies still critically judge Pentecostals, particularly among the educated middle class.[51]

The stigmatization of the movement appears to have had an effect on its expansion, which took particularly place among the lower class, while its impact in Latin America's middle classes remained – apart from some exceptions such as Guatemala – marginal. Thus, numerous scholars and studies point to the lower class appeal of the movement.[52]

Its success among the "poor" spurred deprivation theories: scholars interpreted the lower class appeal of Pentecostalism as a product of their

50   Bastian 1994a: 116; 1997: 21–23; Frigerio 1993b; Freston 1998: 344–345; Semán 2000: 161; Wynarczyk 2009a: 179–192, 194–197.

51   Martin (2002: 9–11), for instance, points out that Pentecostalism is often experienced as unacceptable even by scholars. Further, Bergunder (2000: 23–28) points to the fact that historical Protestants in Latin America seek distinction from Pentecostals. In addition, Bernice Martin mentions an example that may help to illustrate the educated middle class' rejection of Pentecostalism in South America: "When I met him 1989, the distinguished Chilean Pentecostal theologian Jan Sepulveda made the same point. I had asked him a foolish question. Thinking of George Eliot's fictional portraits of nineteenth-century Dissenters, I asked whether there were any Latin American novels in which Pentecostals appeared. He laughed and indicated that such thing was unthinkable in Chile because novels were the métier of intellectuals for whom Pentecostals were the lowest of the lower. 'Do you not know what we are called? Canudos! That is a little pipe traditionally smoked by peasants. That is what our intellectual class thinks of us!'" (Martin 2006: 145). See also Algranti 2010: 49; Frigerio 1998: 446–450, 453–455; Semán 2004: 12–18; Wynarczyk 2005.

52   Anderson 2004: 59, 282; Bastian 1997: 59–72; 61–68, 71, 139–140; Burdick 1993a: 79, 85; Chesnut 1997: 17; 2003: 39–43; Cox 2001: 167–168; Deiros 1992: 175; Fernandes 1992; Freston 1998: 338, 341–342; 1999: 145–146; Höllinger 2006: 267–269; Hunt 2002a; Jenkins 2007: 73; Lehmann 1996: 210–214; 2003: 492; Mariz 1994: 35; Martin 1990: 53; 202; 2002: 1, 20; 78; Parker 1996:154–155; Schäfer 2009a: 48; 2010: 93, 98–99; Stewart-Gambino et al. 1997: 241.

deprivation.[53] Approaches seeking to explain the lower class appeal of Pentecostalism focused unanimously on the lower class without addressing the topic from the viewpoint of its low appeal to the middle class. Instead of exploring why Pentecostalism attracts the middle class to a much lesser degree, they focused on explaining why it attracts the lower class and often reduced the phenomenon to the material living context of the lower class. The relationship of the Pentecostal movement to the middle class has been disregarded.

In addition, research on Pentecostalism in Latin America has so far mainly stressed the expansion of Pentecostalism and its cultural, political and social implications for the wider society.[54] The growing middle class membership and the internal changes within Pentecostalism occurring due to this growing middle class membership have so far not been studied in a comprehensive way.

Several scholars witness an expansion of Pentecostalism into Latin America's middle classes from the 1970s onwards. In many cases the "new" middle class Pentecostals are second or third generation Pentecostals.[55] However, the middle

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53   See, for instance, Gill 1999: 290–293; Robbins 2004: 123–124. See for a comprehensive over-view of deprivation theories in the study of Pentecostalism Hunt 2002a; 2002b. Prominent deprivation approaches in the study of Pentecostalism are Willems' (1967) "Follower of the new Faith", Lalive d'Épinay's (1968) "El refugio de las masas" and Robert Anderson's (1979) "Vision of the Desinherited". A newer and modified version of deprivation approaches was presented by Chesnut (1997). Deprivation approaches have faced serious criticism in the study of Pentecostalism (Gerlach 1974; Hine 1974) Other scholars relate the success of Pentecostalism to its proximity with Latin America's popular culture and religion (Bastian 1994a: 122–124; Parker 1996:148; Semán 2000; 2001a). Another, but less prominent, strand of approaches analyzes the expansion of Pentecostalism through the glimpses of rational choice theory, interpreting it in the context of the emergence of a religious market where religious suppliers compete for religious clients who can choose religious products from a rising variety of religious offers (Chesnut 2003; Gill 1999). Further, it is argued that Pentecostalism may contribute to poverty reduction and social upward mobility (Heuser 2013; Mariz 1994).

54   One of the most prominent approaches to Pentecostalism has been developed by Martin (1990). He conceives the rise of the movement as part of a social modernization process in Latin America. Pentecostalism offers a space to its followers where they can experiment with modernity. Bastian (1994a: 124–125; 1997: 139–140, 200–203) perceives Pentecostalism in a similar way and stresses its ability to offer a new form of social participation and integration for those who are deprived from other means of integration and social participation. Others like Stewart-Gambino et al. (1997: 237) call for caution and argue that one should not overestimate the impact of Pentecostalism on society and politics. Also Gooren's research on Pentecostalization appears to advise precaution with regard to the impact of Pentecostalism on the wider society. See Gooren 2010b; 2010c; 2011.

55   Freston 1997; B. Martin 1995: 107, 112; Martin 2002: 4, 81, 24, 114; Schäfer and Tovar 2009: 7; Stewart-Gambino et al. 1997: 241.

class membership should not be overestimated. The middle class remains in most countries a small faction within the movement, while the vast majority of members are still recruited from the lower class. Middle class Pentecostals appear to constitute a slowly growing minority among Pentecostals.

Some studies marginally tackle the presence of the middle class in Latin American Pentecostalism. The few existing studies point to a differentiation of middle class Pentecostals from lower class "mainstream" Pentecostalism. Schäfer, for instance, perceives a social polarization among Pentecostals.[56] Referring to Bourdieu, Schäfer supposes that in order to be appealing to the upper middle and upper class, religious options have to lend themselves for a religious distinction from other social actors.[57] Consequently, the upper and upper middle class will lean toward a Pentecostalism that is different from "mainstream" Pentecostalism.

A phenomenon often attributed to middle class Pentecostalism is Neo-Pentecostalism.[58] Neo-Pentecostalism is regarded as a type of Pentecostalism more appealing to the middle class than the old-fashioned, morally strict Pentecostalism. As already discussed above, the problem with the term "Neo-Pentecostalism" is not only that it is vaguely defined but that many – if not the vast majority of – Pentecostal churches in Latin America embrace today to different degrees characteristics often attributed to Neo-Pentecostalism. Therefore, the supposed middle class appeal of Neo-Pentecostalism would imply that many – if not most – of the existing Pentecostal churches nowadays attract the middle class. However, this does not appear to be the case. For this reason, one has to demarcate the characteristics of "Neo-Pentecostalism" particularly attractive for the middle class.

The tendency to identify Neo-Pentecostalism with middle and upper class involvement in Pentecostalism appears influenced by the case of Central America and especially Guatemala, where Neo-Pentecostals have a strong appeal to the (upper) middle class. Pentecostalism in Guatemala has experienced its strongest expansion during the 1970s and 1980s, when the country was dominated by military dictatorships and a violent civil war. Studies of Pentecostalism in Guatemala indicate that the movement has, in contrast to other Latin American countries, had a strong impact in the middle class and

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56   Schäfer 2009a: 63.

57   See Schäfer 2009a: 63.

58   Delgado 2004: 105–106; Jaimes 2007; Garcia-Ruiz 2007; Luca 1999b; Mansilla 2008; Martin 2002: 4; O'Neill 2010: 10; Robbins 2004: 121–122; Schäfer 20008a: 487, 492; 2009a: 49; Villamán 2002: 510–511. For the case of North America see, for instance, Hunt et al. 1997.

that specifically Neo-Pentecostals recruit their members from the middle and even upper class.[59]

Particularly interesting is Schäfer's approach, which is based on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.[60] Schäfer focuses on Pentecostal growth in the 1970s and 1980s in Central America, especially Guatemala, and observes that individuals are affected by the social transformations and conflicts in this region. The problems from which individuals suffer vary according to their social position. Sections of the upper class and middle class undergo a legitimacy crisis and experience a loss of control over their lives and their future while the lower class suffers from a crisis of their living conditions that manifests itself in migration, physical violence, and a marginal integration into the economic system. Affected by different problems and having incorporated different dispositions of perception, judgment, and action, they are inclined towards different types of Pentecostalism. The dominant social classes tend towards a Neo-Pentecostal type of Pentecostalism which lends itself for generating legitimacy and control over the empirical world. On the other hand, the lower class leans toward a traditional, premillenaristic Pentecostalism with an apocalyptic worldview that stresses the afterlife and inspires a withdrawal from the world. Remarkably, each class – although based on a similar inventory of religious symbols and concepts – creates its own type of Pentecostalism. Their inclination towards different types of Pentecostalism is not the bare product of different objective circumstances and problems, but rather due to different habitus. Class-related (pre-)dispositions of perception, judgment, and practice render them more inclined towards specific types of Pentecostalism. Schäfer shows that there are homologies between social positions and specific types of religious habitus.[61] Of particular interest is the religious habitus of (upper) middle

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59   See Anderson 2004: 76–77; Delgado 2004: 105–106; Garcia-Ruiz 2004; 2007;Hallum 2002: 227; Martin 2002: 25; O'Neill 2010: 10; Schäfer 1988; 1992a; 1992b; 1998; 2002; 2005; 2006; 2008a: 490–494.

60   Schäfer developed a habitus-analysis in order to explore the dispositions of actors. See Schäfer 2005; 2006; 2011; 2015. Moreover, Schäfer presents already in his early work a general classification of different types of Protestantism that differentiates between historical Protestantism, evangelical Protestantism, Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism and the degree of institutionalization of these groups. This classification reveals that historical Protestantism and Neopentecostalism with their tendency towards bureaucratization are appealing to the middle class and, in the case of some Neopentecostal churches, even to the upper class, whereas evangelical Protestantism and Pentecostalism are more appealing to the lower class. See Schäfer 1992a: 85–113.

61   See Schäfer 1988; 1992; 85–113, 183–186; 1992b; 1998; 2002; 2005; 2006; 2008a: 490–494; 2009b; 2010: 103–105; 2011. Moreover, Schäfer argues that the practice of Pentecostalism

class Pentecostals. In contrast to traditional Pentecostals, they do not withdraw from the world but endeavor to shape it: Neo-Pentecostals in Guatemala engage strongly in politics and have managed even to produce presidents, including Efrain Rios Montt and Jorge Serrano. Instead of withdrawing from the world, they seek to accumulate power in order to control the fate of their society.[62] Furthermore, Schäfer explains that upper and middle class Neo-Pentecostals are inclined towards a discourse of excellence, hold neo-liberal economic views, and tend to a negative regard of Latin American culture, which is perceived by them as promoting laziness and corruption.[63] Moreover, the religious discourse in church services shows a strong emphasis on demons and exorcisms.[64]

The case of Guatemala provides some insights into middle class Pentecostalism in Latin America. However, at the same time, one has to take the peculiarities of the Guatemalan case into account, which consist, among other factors, in a violent conflict threatening not only the lower but also the middle and upper class. This context has contributed to a middle class appeal of the Pentecostal movement exceptional for Latin America.[65] Moreover, Pentecostalism in Central America appears to have developed its own logic. In comparison to South America's Pentecostalism, the movement in Central America is characterized by a stronger involvement in politics and society, as well as by a closer relationship to the evangelical movement in North-America.[66] Another peculiarity is that Central America – and particularly Guatemala – seems to be the region where the general classification into (upper) middle class Neo-Pentecostals and lower class traditional Pentecostals best fits. In other regions of Latin America, the class differences between traditional and Neo-Pentecostalism are different or less evident.

In the Brazilian context, Neo-Pentecostalism refers mainly to lower class Pentecostalism, as Freston points out. He argues that there is a need to distinguish between Neo-Pentecostal churches, which attract mainly the lower class like the IURD, and middle class churches, such as *Renascer*. For this reason, Freston uses a different term, and denominates middle class Pentecostals

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allows individuals to retrieve their sense of agency in the context of crisis, especially within the crisis of modernity in Latin America. See particularly Schäfer 1998.

62   See also Freston 1997: 198–201; Garcia-Ruiz 2007; Hallum 2002: 227, 233–235.

63   Schäfer 2008a: 496, 498.

64   Schäfer 1998: 68–69; 2003: 29–35.

65   In the rest of Latin America Pentecostalism remains widely a lower class movement. Schäfer 2009a: 53; Freston 1998: 341–342.

66   See, for instance, Freston 1997: 198–201.

"charismatic Evangelicals". Many of these charismatic congregations are related to traditional Protestantism or independent evangelical communities.[67] Similar to Guatemala, these middle class congregations engage in politics with the objective to put the fate of their societies under evangelical leadership.[68] The concept of spiritual warfare frames this project. Here, spiritual warfare refers less to exorcisms within the context of church services than to a macro project of cleaning the society – including the political system – from evil forces. Spiritual warfare on the macro level embraces Pentecostal networks that seek, for instance, to expel the "demon of corruption" from different spheres of the Brazilian society.[69] Meanwhile middle class congregations abstain from the micro applications of spiritual warfare in church services. Freston writes:

> (…) at the level of combat against individual demonic oppression, the Comunidades consciously differ from lower class churches such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God: they do not put possessed people through embarrassing situations (for middle class sensibilities) such as physical manhandling or interviewing the demons.
> FRESTON 1997: 191

Hence, middle class sensibilities appear to play an important role in the design of middle class church services. Concerning the middle class sensibilities Freston argues that "(…) the search for respectability would not be served by appearing too Pentecostal." (Freston 1997: 188) Middle class Pentecostals keep distance from strong forms of Pentecostalism, which entail, for instance, "embarrassing" exorcisms. This dissociation becomes also evident with regard to the more traditional type of Pentecostalism. Middle class Pentecostals are reported to indulge in a less ascetic lifestyle. While maintaining the core moral rules with regard to marriage, they selectively engage in some of the pleasures of modern society, such as television, alcohol consumption, or soccer.[70] With regard to the clothing of middle class Pentecostals, Bernice Martin notes:

> Pentecostals in the professional middle classes, some of them second or third generation Protestants with experience of higher education, are acutely aware of the class connotations of the typical Pentecostal dress

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67   Freston 1997: 187; 1998: 341; 1999: 150–151.
68   Freston 1997: 198–199.
69   Freston 1997: 190–193. For spiritual mapping, see also Holvast 2009.
70   Martin 1995:108; Robbins 2004: 121–122.

code and tend to modify, if not wholly abandon it. Their clothes are virtu-
ally indistinguishable from those of their non-Pentecostal class peers in
cut and quality, while still avoiding sexual immodesty.

<div align="right">MARTIN 2006: 152–153</div>

Dressing in a modern, "un-Pentecostal" way, they seek distinction from tradi-
tional, lower class Pentecostalism. Further, Martin indicates that prosperity
gospel is less evident among middle class congregations.[71] Yet, these insights
have to be taken carefully since they appear to refer particularly to one case:
the congregation *Renasce*r in São Paulo, which is reported to attract the middle
class and to have a strong attachment to youth culture and the music milieu.[72]

Also, Henri Gooren's recent work on Pentecostalization in Chile provides
some indications with respect to middle class Pentecostalism. He reports that
young professionals who grew up in traditional Pentecostal churches dislike
the unsophisticated preaching styles, anti-intellectualism, and the tendency of
their Pentecostal congregations to isolate themselves from society. Many of
them switch, according to Gooren, to Baptist congregations, the Anglican
Church, and, in particular, an evangelical congregation called *Viña Las Condes*.
This church is led by an US-American pastor and shaped by a charismatic style
of Protestantism. Further, Gooren describes the congregation as a well-
organized church that provides a variety of Bible and leadership courses,
entails a small charity program, and has a high quality of music.[73]

Although this book focuses on Pentecostalism in Latin America, a short excur-
sion to the case of South Korea provides some interesting insights. Nathalie
Luca reports a tendency among university students and (upper) middle class
individuals involved in Pentecostalism to privatize strong spiritual and emo-
tional practices that could alienate non-Pentecostals.[74] Thus, the charismatic

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71   Martin 1995: 116.

72   Martin 1995; 2006: 150; Freston 1997: 193–195.

73   See Gooren 2011.

74   Luca (1999b) states that some of the characteristics of Pentecostalism become less and
      less acceptable for a South Korean population which experiences a significant improve-
      ment in its life quality and education. Thus, the changes in life quality and education are
      accompanied by changes in the style of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul. Moreover,
      in the Whole World Church she finds many ex-members of the Yoido Full Gospel Church
      who experienced an improvement in their social position and other Koreans from the
      (upper) middle class. This church shows a different style which is calmer and less emo-
      tional than the style of the Yoido Full Gospel church and embraces at the same time a
      more "cultivated" membership. Luca witnesses a strong orientation towards the Occident.
      In addition, the church enjoys a high reputation within the society. Further, Luca describes

gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as glossolalia, become banned from the church services while they may be practiced in the private sphere of the devotee.[75] The withdrawal of spiritual practices from the church services indicates – similar to the case of Brazil – that middle class sensibilities with regard to potentially embarrassing or inappropriate practices play an important role among middle class Pentecostals.

Several scholars argue that middle class Pentecostalism in Latin America tends towards an institutionalization process. This institutionalization process implies a partial removal from the spiritual and emotional characteristics of Pentecostalism and a transformation towards a more bureaucratic and formal type of Pentecostalism. André Corten supposes that an increasing participation of the middle class in Pentecostalism implies a transition from sect to church. Referring to Weber, Troeltsch, Niebuhr, and Yinger, he argues that Pentecostals will develop from a sect into a church, which implies an adoption of a more socially adapted form of Pentecostalism, as well as a tendency towards a more intellectual and less emotional style.[76] David Martin presents a similar hypothesis arguing that bureaucratization and institutionalization will increasingly find their way into Pentecostalism.[77] Also, Schäfer observes a process of institutionalization and bureaucratization among middle class Pentecostals in Latin America, which consists of, for instance, middle class churches opening schools, cooperating strongly with the wider society, and promoting umbrella organizations. Moreover, he describes a tendency towards softer enthusiastic forms of expressions – which becomes, for instance, evident in the worship music of middle class church services – whereas stronger expressions of Pentecostalism – exorcism and faith healing – as well as the concept of prosperity gospel are more present in lower and lower middle class Neo-Pentecostal churches, such as the IURD. Practices involving the Holy

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a third church that recruits almost exclusively young students. This church encourages the professional ambitions of its young members, shows a transcultural style by inviting pastors from abroad, and employs vastly mass media. Strong emotional expressions are restricted to specific spaces, particularly its football matches.

75   This appears not only to be the case with churches located in South Korean but with South Korean congregations that have expanded to Europe. Luca reports that the French branches of the Yoido Full Gospel Church are dominated by middle and upper class Koreans who have banned some of the spiritual manifestations for which their mother church in Seoul is notorious from their church services. See Luca 2008b: 229.

76   See Corten 1995: 189–192, 209–215.

77   Martin 2002.

Spirit appear to lose importance among middle class Pentecostals in comparison to lower class communities.[78]

Do the "tongues of fire" cease to burn among middle class Pentecostals? Is there a tendency towards a more institutionalized and less spiritual style of Pentecostalism?

The few existing studies concerning middle class Pentecostalism indicate that middle class Pentecostalism involves a middle class sensibility. The sensibility of Latin America's middle classes appears to stand in tension with strong and old-fashioned, sectarian forms of Pentecostalism. Consequently, middle class Pentecostals are inclined towards a type of Pentecostalism that fits better with the sensibilities of the middle class and distinguishes itself from "lower class Pentecostalism". This Pentecostalism appears to be less morally strict, abstains from "embarrassing" spiritual practices and adapts itself to and engages itself in the wider society instead of breaking away from it. Yet, we know little about the religious preferences and styles of middle class Pentecostals. The research on middle class Pentecostalism in Latin America is at most fractional. There is a lack of comprehensive empirical studies about the religious styles and preferences of Latin America's middle class Pentecostals. This study wants to help overcome this void by conducting an empirical study on middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. Thereby, it raises the following questions: How does Argentina's educated middle class relate to Pentecostalism? What type of Pentecostalism do middle class Pentecostals create in Argentina? How do they deal with the tensions between their religious and their class belonging?

1.3   The Structure of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. In order to address middle class Pentecostalism, I will use a theoretical approach that stresses the social representations and symbolic boundary work of the Argentinean middle class. The second chapter will outline this theoretical approach. Based on the theoretical framework, the third chapter provides an outline of the methods that are applied for the empirical the study of Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism.

Middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina is embedded in a specific socio-religious context. Therefore, the fourth chapter sketches a general picture of the context of middle class Pentecostalism. Focal topics are Argentina's socio-religious history, its middle class, the religious field, and the relationship

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78   Schäfer 2009a: 62, 67–72; 2010: 103.

between class and religion. After having described the socio-religious context, the fifth chapter portrays the Pentecostal movement in Argentina. In this chapter it becomes evident that Pentecostalism remains mostly a lower class movement in Argentina. It will be argued that the continuing stigmatization of Pentecostalism and its mismatch with the representations of the middle class contribute to the lower class bias of the movement. Due to this mismatch educated middle class actors tend to avoid the movement. Despite the lower class stigma of Pentecostalism and its tensions with the representations of the middle class, there exists a small group of educated middle class Argentineans participating in the movement. Their religious belonging is frequently experienced by peers as inappropriate and creates tensions in their social relationships. These tensions raise the question of how educated middle class Argentineans come to convert to Pentecostalism. This question will be addressed in the following chapter where different factors that facilitate the conversion of educated middle class Argentineans to Pentecostalism are explored.

While the fifth and the sixth chapter illustrate the tensions between the educated middle class and Pentecostalism and show how middle class Argentineans convert to Pentecostalism, the following two chapters sketch a picture of the religious tastes and styles of middle class Pentecostals. Chapter 7 presents the example of two Pentecostal churches: God Is Love and Assembly of Christ. This chapter presents an in-depth study of two Pentecostal churches which helps to illustrate the boundary work of Pentecostal churches. Although both churches are situated in middle class neighborhoods, they attract a very different clientele. Assembly of Christ attracts mainly the Argentinean middle class, while God Is Love shows a high appeal to the lower class. The comparison of these churches reveals that they represent vastly different styles of Pentecostalism.

Since the comparison between these two churches delivers only a very limited perspective on middle class Pentecostalism, Chapter 8 widens the perspective by integrating larger empirical material from my field research in Buenos Aires. This chapter presents the religious tastes and styles of middle class Pentecostals along different symbolic boundaries. It is argued that middle class Pentecostals show religious tastes and styles that draw different types of boundaries in opposition to other Pentecostals: "legitimate" boundaries, structural and organizational boundaries, educational boundaries, expressive boundaries, and moral boundaries. Each of these boundaries will be addressed in a separate section. Chapter 9 portrays the evolution and implications of this boundary work. The study ends with a conclusion summarizing the main results of the study and sketching an outlook.

Religious Boundary Work and Class Representations – A Theoretical Framework to Study Middle Class Pentecostalism

This chapter will sketch the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework aims to describe and analyze the specific case of Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism. Hence, the theoretical approach outlined here is primarily designed as a theory of Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism. For this reason, there will be a theoretical – and empirical – focus on the middle class.

Since the main objective of the theoretical approach is to describe and analyze a specific empirical phenomenon, sociological theory will be applied as a toolkit that helps us to grasp, describe, and understand the given social phenomenon.[1] When investigating a particular social phenomenon, specific theoretical instruments of this toolkit become relevant and some tools must be adapted to the empirical conditions. Following this logic, the theoretical framework presented here developed in dialogue with the empirical results.

A theory of middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina must meet certain conditions. For studying the presence of the middle class in a predominantly lower class religious movement one needs a theoretical approach that conceptualizes the relationship between class and religion, but, at the same time, makes allowances for non-conformance with class standards. In other words, the approach must bring together the contradictory tendencies of middle class Pentecostals: the non-conformance with and the adaptation to class order. Further, the approach must tackle the social tensions that arise from the non-conformance of middle class Pentecostals and how they deal with these tensions.

The most suitable approach for the study of the relationship between class and different types of practice is Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. His sociology lends itself not only to the study of social class but also for the study of religion as was shown, for instance, by scholars like Terry Rey, Heinrich Schäfer and Leif Seibert.[2] For studying the specific case of Argentinean

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1 See for Bourdieu's sociology as a toolkit, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 160.

2 See Rey 2005; 2007; Schäfer 2002; 2004; 2005; 2011; Seibert 2010.

Pentecostalism, the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's sociology is applied in a specific way. Essentially, adding the concept of symbolic boundary work and the notion of middle class representations extends the theoretical framework.

The concept of symbolic boundary work emphasizes the everyday practice of individuals to draw symbolic boundaries (distinctions) between themselves and others. These boundaries can serve as markers of class belonging. For instance, Argentinean middle class individuals may portray themselves as educated and well-mannered in opposition to the Argentinean lower class, perceived as lacking education and manners. The boundaries that middle class individuals tend to draw in opposition to other classes can accumulate over time into a system of established middle class boundaries. This study refers to these established boundaries as middle class representations. Middle class representations are institutionalized symbolic boundaries that form an ideal-typical imaginary of the middle class. This middle class imaginary assumes a rule-like character and frames the everyday boundary work of middle class individuals by constituting a pool of established class distinctions. These class distinctions define what type of behavior is regarded as appropriate for middle class individuals. Nevertheless, middle class actors may deviate from these standards of appropriate behavior by dedicating themselves to practices that will probably not be perceived as appropriate by middle class peers. The inappropriate behavior may lead to tensions. In these cases, boundary work enables actors to negotiate the appropriateness of their practice by drawing symbolic boundaries in opposition to the characteristics of the practice perceived as inappropriate.

The choice of these two conceptual extensions is related to the research topic and the empirical findings of this study. The two conceptual extensions lend themselves to the research focus on Argentinean middle class Pentecostals, since they stress two aspects central to understanding middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina: (1) the partial non-conformance with class-related standards of appropriate behavior and (2) the negotiation of this non-conformance.

In order to develop the general theoretical framework of this study, the theory section continues with a short introduction into the relevant pieces of Bourdieu's sociology. Such a brief introduction can evidently not reflect the complexity of Bourdieu's sociology but tackles only the elements that are necessary for the proposed analysis of middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. After this introduction, the concepts of boundary work and middle class representations will be described and embedded into this framework.

2.1 Bourdieu's Sociology as a General Framework for Grasping Class in Religion

This study employs Bourdieu's sociology as a general theoretical framework to explore Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism.[3] Adapting Bourdieu's sociology to the case of Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism, the study uses an approach to Bourdieu that may be perceived as unorthodox. This approach aims to describe the non-conformance with and negotiation of class order and distances itself, therefore, from interpretations that understand Bourdieu's sociology in a rather deterministic way.

The theoretical framework is particularly based on Bourdieu's seminal work *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*.[4] This study explores correspondences between social class positions, lifestyles, and tastes of actors in the French society of the 1960s and 1970s. Bourdieu shows that individuals from

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3   More than other contemporary sociological approaches – such as, for instance, Niklas Luhman's systemtheory (Luhman 1977, 1997, 2000, 2001) or rational choice theory (Colemann 1992; Elster 1989; Esser 1990; Iannaccone 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994; Lovett 2006; Stark and Finke 2000; Wiesenthal 1987; Young 1997) – Bourdieu's sociology lends itself for the study of Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism since it emphasizes the relationship between social class and practice and thereby allows for exploring potential tensions between class position and religious belonging. Particularly the notion of tastes and styles as class markers contributes to an understanding of Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism, as will be seen later in this study. Bourdieu's sociology has received a wide reception and was applied in manifold ways (for an overview see Sallaz and Zavisca 2007; Swartz and Zolberg 2005). Different strands of Bourdieu reception interpret his sociology in contrasting ways and compete with each other. Hence, the reception of Bourdieu's sociology is very much semantically charged. Using Bourdieu's own terms, the controversies around his sociology appear to constitute a hard-fought social field in which different camps struggle for hegemony. Thus, many scholars read Bourdieu's work in a rather deterministic way: they criticize it for being static and leaving little space for agency and deviations (Bennett et. al. 2010: 27; Gartmann 1991: 422, 438; Jenkins 2002: 149; King 2000: 427–430; Mutch 2003: 389–392; Savage 2003: 540–541; Sewell 1992: 15).

4   See Bourdieu 1979. Bourdieu's main writings concerning the religious field are only of very limited usefulness for studying middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. His main writings about the religious field are two early articles in which he draws on the sociology of religion of Max Weber (Bourdieu 1971a, 1971b). These articles have been criticized for their focus on the "supply side" of religion and their disregard for the active role of "religious consumers" and the internal diversification process of the religious field (Dianteill 2003: 529, 546; Dillon 2001: 422, 425; Urban 2003: 364–365; Verter 2003a: 151). Yet, the active role of "religious consumers" in form of middle class Pentecostals stands in the center of this study. From this perspective, it appears more fruitful to employ Bourdieu's more developed social theory that he crafted after these two articles (see also Dillon 2001: 426).

different social positions are inclined to display different cultural tastes and lifestyles. While individuals from the lower class exhibit a taste of the necessary, the middle class tends towards a taste of pretension, and the upper class towards a taste of distinction. Regarding these correspondences between class and taste, Bourdieu argues that cultural taste and lifestyles serve for the distinction and reproduction of social classes. The cultural competence and consumption of individuals – their lifestyles and tastes – act as markers of their class belonging. Cultural tastes and lifestyles are essential characteristics of social class.[5] Class boundaries are created and reproduced along tastes and lifestyles since they allow for classifying individuals.[6]

Tastes and life styles constitute emblems, markers of class belonging. Dedicating themselves to a specific lifestyle and rejecting the lifestyle of individuals from other social classes, actors classify themselves and (re)produce symbolic class distinctions.[7] Class-related tastes and lifestyles define what practices and lifestyles are experienced as legitimate in a given class. Thus, actors are supposed to act according to the tastes and styles related to their class position.

The tastes and lifestyles of individuals can be described as manifestations of their habitus. In simple terms, the habitus constitutes an individual's system of interpretative and behavioral dispositions. As such, the habitus is a generative structure that produces the perceptions, thinking, and practices of an individual. The dispositions of the habitus constitute embodied and durable – but not unchangeable – structures that are to a wide extent unconscious and form an embodied, tacit knowledge. The habitus is shaped by the biography of an individual. Actors tend to embody the dispositions of their class environment that they reproduce by showing a class-related taste and lifestyle.[8] Consequently, individuals with similar social backgrounds and social trajectories are likely to show similar habitus embracing specific tastes and lifestyles, whereas individuals from different class backgrounds will tend to display different tastes and lifestyles.[9]

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5 Bourdieu 1979: 1–11.
6 Bourdieu states: "(...) étant le produit des conditionnements associés á une classe particulière de conditions d'existence (...) le goût est le principe de tout ce que l'on a, personnes et choses, et tout ce que l'on est pour les autres, de ce par quoi on se classe et par quoi on est classé." (Bourdieu 1979: 59).
7 Bourdieu 1979: 61–64.
8 Bourdieu 1979: 230–232.
9 Bourdieu introduces the concept class habitus in order to grasp this idea. The class habitus translates the objective social life conditions into corresponding tastes and lifestyles. Individual habitus are shaped by class habitus. See, for instance, Bourdieu 1979: 230–232.

The correspondences between social positions and lifestyles are illustrated in the prominent model of the social space.[10] The social space is a two dimensional model that allows for representing individuals and their attributes in a space of positions. In this model, Bourdieu relates a space of "objective" social positions to a space of lifestyles. The "objective" positions depend on the amount and composition of "objectified" capital that actors hold. The "objectified capital" in "La Distinction" refers to economic and cultural capital. These two sorts of capital are shown on two scales. The vertical scale indicates the total volume of cultural and economic capital while the horizontal scale exhibits the composition of these two sorts of capital.[11] In this space of objective positions, actors can be located according to their possession and composition of "objectified" capital. In consequence, the space illustrates the proximity and distance of actors in terms of their "objected" capital. In addition to the space of "objective" positions, the space of lifestyles reveals the proximity and distance of different lifestyles and practices. The social space combines both spaces with each other. In this way, the social space illustrates what types of practice and lifestyles are associated with which objective positions. The model illustrates the proximity and distance of different actors and lifestyles. Individuals that are located in close proximity to each other can be treated as "classes on the paper".[12] They do not form mobilized classes in a Marxian sense. Instead, they constitute classes of actors located in an "objective" and symbolic proximity, and are, therefore, likely to show similar cultural dispositions and lifestyles.

> (…) sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances.
>
> BOURDIEU 1985b: 725

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10   For the social space, see Bourdieu 1979: 109–185, 1984, 1985b, 1994b: 15–29, 1996. In methodological terms there is one important difference between Bourdieu's model of the social space and the model that will be applied in this study. In Bourdieu's "La Distinction" the social space is based on correspondence analysis and the objective positions depend on the following variables: formal education, father's occupation, and income. I will apply a more simple approach to the social space which is based work of the CIRRuS research team at university Bielefeld team (Schäfer et. al. 2016). This space combines the variables household income per capita in Argentinean pesos and education in form of educational degrees.

11   Bourdieu, 1985b: 724.

12   Bourdieu 1985b: 725, 1994b: 26, 54, 1996: 18–19.

From a vertical perspective – the total volume of capital – the space can be categorized into hierarchical classes: a lower, middle, and upper class hemisphere. Conceiving the model from a horizontal perspective, one can perceive different class fractions in each of these classes. To each of these positions correspond specific tastes and lifestyles.[13]

Combining "objective" positions with tastes and lifestyles, the social space illustrates that the social positioning of individuals is not a simple question of the objective possession of capital but a question of symbolic attributes. Middle class actors get recognized as "middle class actors" if they behave in a middle class way which is different from way of behavior that is attributed to lower classes.

Applying this model to religious practice, one can assume that individuals in different social positions will be inclined towards different religious options. Educated middle class individuals will tend towards types of religious practice that are different from the preferred religious practices of lower classes and allow them to display their middle class position. This is illustrated, for instance, by the critical attitude of the educated Latin American middle class towards popular religion and Pentecostalism. Educated middle class individuals abstain from choosing Pentecostalism and Afrobrazilian religion perceived as typical lower class options. What types of religious practice are regarded as appropriate will depend, among other factors, on the distribution of power in the religious field. This leads us to the concept of social fields.

The concept of social fields describes the horizontal differentiation of modern societies.[14] On a general level, modern societies can be conceived of as differentiated into relatively autonomous social fields related to specific types of practice and sorts of capital (e.g. political field, academic field, economic field, religious field, field of arts). Depending on the given research focus, fields can be conceptualized as embracing subfields.[15] This study assumes, for instance, that there is a field of Pentecostalism embedded in the religious field. Fields develop their own logic and rules. Showing different degrees of openness/closeness, fields vary in their autonomy with regard to their environment.[16]

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13   Bourdieu and Saint Martin 1976: 14–41, Bourdieu 1979: 128–138.

14   For the notion of the social field, see Bourdieu 1979: 249–291, 1993: 107–114, and with a particular focus on the fields of arts, see Bourdieu 1992, 1994b: 61–80.

15   For fields and subfields, see also Fligstein and McAdam 2011.

16   The more developed a field, the more it is likely to operate in a rather in autonomous fashion. See Seibert 2010: 100.

Internally, fields are marked by power struggles. They constitute social arenas where actors compete with each other over the accumulation of specific forms of capital. According to the distribution of capital, actors assume different positions in the field. Similar to the social space, fields are marked by a hierarchical structure. They form hierarchical spaces where different positions are related to different levels of power and legitimacy. The distribution of power shapes the standing and the room for maneuver of actors in the field. Actors who have reached the most dominant positions are able to define the "rules of the game". Holding the highest degree of power, they are able to define the way in which the "game" is played. Actors who engage in the power struggle aim for achieving a dominant position. Struggling for power, they evolve specific styles and employ strategies to improve their position in the field. The strategies and styles engaged in the struggles for recognition are related to the position of actors. Other actors in the field may engage in strategies to delegitimize these strategies and styles. The power struggles of actors in the field can lead to a crisis of dominant structures that may end up in a transformation of the field. In this case, dominant actors, rules and styles change.

For the topic of this study, the religious field and the subfield of Pentecostalism are particularly relevant.[17],[18] Religious actors compete with each other over the religious "market share" and symbolical recognition in the

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17   This study employs in some occasions also the metaphor of the religious market in order to underline the competition between religious "suppliers" and the diversity of religious options between which individuals can choose. The use of the market metaphor does not necessarily contradict with the general idea of a religious field. In both competition and diversity is essential.

18   With regard to the religious field, Bourdieu supposes a disintegration process of its boundaries. The boundaries of the religious field fray due to the increasing competition of religious actors with other types of practice related to the physical and mental well-being of the modern individual (Bourdieu 1985a). Based on this assumption, Argentinean sociologists often refer to the religious field as a field of healing practices (Algranti 2007b; 2010: 41–45. Algranti and Bordes 2007; Giménez and Esquivel 1996: 63–68; Mallimaci 1996b: 283–284; 2004; 2007: 720; 2008: 85–90; 2009b: 17–19; 2010: 16–17). On this field, different types of medical, esoteric, and religious healing practices compete with each other. Since the focus of this study is on Pentecostals, I will refer to the religious field in a stricter sense and take only actors into account generally considered religious actors. This does not imply that there is no competition between strictly religious and other healing actors. Religious actors are defined as actors whose practice is related to a concept of "transcendence" or "supernatural". Actors who repetitively employ references to some type of "transcendence" can be conceived of as religious actors. For similar definitions of religion that point to the necessity of references to "transcendence", see Krech 2011: 40–43; Luhmann 1977, 2000; Riesebrodt 2007; Schäfer 2009c; Stark and Finke 2000: 89–96.

religious field. In the course of these struggles, they seek to legitimize themselves and to delegitimize other actors. The model of the religious field employed in this study bases itself upon Seibert's approach to the religious field.[19] This model illustrates the distribution of power between different religious actors at a given moment of time.[20] He defines the field through two types of resources: organizational complexity and credibility.[21] In this study, I use two slightly different criteria for the design of the religious and the Pentecostal field: (1) the legitimacy of religious actors and (2) the impact of religious actors in the society as defined by their public visibility and the assistance in their religious services. Consequently, religious actors compete over public impact and their recognition as legitimate religious actors. Sketching the positions of religious actors along these categories helps to illustrate the distribution of power between them. In the case of Argentina, the model of the religious space shows that the Catholic Church is the most respected – in other words: the most legitimate – religious actor. Being the most legitimate actor, it attracts established segments of the society. By contrast, religious options that suffer from a low legitimacy but enjoy a high impact among popular segments of the society appeal significantly less to the established segments of the society. This is the case for Argentinean Pentecostalism from which middle and upper class actors seek distinction.

Switching the focus to the field of Pentecostalism, one can sketch a more differentiated picture. On the field of Pentecostalism, there are positions to which a minority of middle class Pentecostals tends. With respect to the dimension of legitimacy, middle class Pentecostals assume with their churches and styles an elevated position in the Argentinean field of Pentecostalism, whereas the majority of lower class congregation suffers from low legitimacy. The positions that middle class Pentecostals assume in the Pentecostal field corresponds to a specific position in the social space – a middle class

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19   See Seibert 2010.

20   Seibert 2010: 99.

21   Seibert 2010: 101–109. Credibility does not refer to the religious credibility of actors but to their general social credibility: their recognition as legitimate religious actors. Empirically, the credibility of religious actors refers to the judgments of people about the authenticity of these actors. I will refer with the term legitimacy to this resource. The second resource is the organizational complexity of religious producers. With this criterion Seibert draws on Yinger's seminal differentiation into different types of religious organization. Empirically this resource refers to the numerical distribution between religious experts and ordinary members in the organization, its internal hierarchical stratification, and its level of integration into embracing social structures. Due to the empirical limitations of this study, I will refer simply to the size and visibility of these actors.

position – which is different from the position of lower class Pentecostals. This shows that the Pentecostal field and the social space intertwine. The position of actors and their styles within a given field will usually correspond to specific lifestyles and positions in the social space.

Seeking distinction from the lower class, middle class actors are inclined to choose religious options that mark a difference with regard to the lower class. Even when choosing "lower class options", such as Pentecostalism, they are likely to evolve techniques to underline their differentness and generate legitimacy. In this way, class boundaries get produced and reproduced in the religious field in the course of symbolic struggles for distinction and legitimacy. These struggles involve practices that stress differentness and attribute and/or withdraw value.

In total, Bourdieu's sociology emphasizes power struggles and the (re)production of class order through the production of symbolical differences. Social positions are created and made visible by symbolic attributes. Due to these attributes actors can be recognized as assuming a certain social position. Hence, symbolic attributes constitute the central feature of class differences. This idea is central for this study and will be further developed by the concept of boundary work and the notion of middle class representations in the following sections.

2.2   Everyday Boundary Work

Bourdieu's sociology points to the fact that actors draw distinctions in order to mark their social position. Michèle Lamont's concept of boundary work further stresses these struggles for distinction and recognition. Boundary work refers to the efforts of social groups and individuals to create and maintain distinctions vis-à-vis others.[22] This practice of producing and reproducing distinctions enables for evolving and sustaining social group identities. Boundaries are drawn as "the lines that include some people, groups and things while excluding others" (Lamont 2001: 15341). As such they are employed by social actors to categorize themselves and others. Boundaries can serve as status

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22   The term "boundary work" was first time used by Gieryn (1983) to describe the boundary work within science and later overtaken by Lamont (1992) in her seminal study about the French and U.S. American upper middle class. See Lamont 1992; 2001: 15344–15345; Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002: 171; Pachuki et. al. 2007. For an application of the approach to German's class structure, see Sachweh 2013, to the case of immigration in Europe, Bail 2008 and to musical taste Bryson 1996. For further theoretical developments of the boundary approach, see Wimmer 2008, 2009.

markers. They constitute signs that communicate the social position of an actor. For instance, by showing a specific type of behavior, an actor can be classified by middle class peers as a respectable middle class peer or not.[23]

In general terms, one can distinguish between two types of boundaries: symbolic boundaries and objective – or social – boundaries.[24] In analogy to the "objective" positions of the social space, objective boundaries refer to the "objective" conditions and inequalities that may limit the possibilities of actors.[25] Lamont and Molnár, referring to objective boundaries as social boundaries, write:

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23 See Lamont 1992. In her study about the French and U.S. American upper middle class, Lamont distinguishes between three types of boundaries that upper middle class men employ in order to draw distinctions: socio-economic boundaries, cultural boundaries and moral boundaries. Moral as well as socioeconomic and cultural boundaries can serve as status markers. By placing a high emphasis on moral boundaries, Lamont argues that Bourdieu underrated morality as a resource for boundary work (Lamont 1992: 184–185). For the American and French upper middle class Lamont reports moral boundaries to be essential. Skeggs (2005) also refers to moral boundaries by describing the moral boundary work of the middle class in Britain.

24 I subsequently use the term "objective boundaries". The term "objective" is preferred over the term "social" for two reasons. First, the term "social" is confusing when referring to these characteristics since "social" can refer in a sociological study also to many other characteristics. Second, the term "objective" gives consideration to the fact that these characteristics are generally regarded by actors and sociologists as the attributes that define the social position of a given individual in an "objective" or "objectified" manner (e.g. in form of the economic income and educational level of the individual).

25 It is often difficult to differentiate empirically between objective and merely symbolic boundaries since objective boundaries are symbolic boundaries that have turned into structural arrangements, into objective conditions of existence. The "objective" boundaries – the social structure – of a society are the result of the distribution of particular recourses (forms of capital). These resources are not valuable by nature. They obtain their value by the society in which they are placed. Their objectivity appears to be related to the fact that they constitute resources which are acknowledged by the whole of the society, embracing individuals from all social positions, whereas other sorts of resources – symbolic boundaries – may be only acknowledged by certain groups or classes. The general acknowledgment of these sorts of resources (boundaries) – as well as their convertibility – objectifies them: they become objective criteria for the categorization and hierarchization of individuals. Sociologists make use of these criteria in order to attribute individuals to classes and generate a picture of the social structure of a society. Symbolic boundaries and objective boundaries interact strongly with each other. Hence, the possession of specific symbolic characteristics – such as particular lifestyle – may shape the objective life conditions and vice versa. Symbolic boundaries do not only mark, but may also enforce and maintain objective boundaries. See Bourdieu 1979; Lamont and Molnár 2002: 167–169.

> Social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities.
>
> LAMONT and MOLNÁR 2002: 168

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of the social space, objective boundaries can be interpreted as forms of "objectified" capital. In the majority of modern societies, the most salient forms of objectified capital are cultural capital (education), economic capital (income), and additionally the job occupation of actors.[26] Individuals have to hold a specific amount of economic and cultural capital in relation to other individuals of a given society to be "objectively" classified by other actors as middle class individuals.[27]

Symbolic boundaries, by contrast, refer to the symbolic attributes – such as appearances, tastes, (moral) attitudes, and lifestyles – of actors. Individuals draw symbolic boundaries by showing distinctive tastes and lifestyles. Displaying these symbolic characteristics, they portray their belonging to a "class of individuals" and their differentness from other "classes of individuals", which are experienced as less valuable.[28]

Both – objective and symbolic boundaries – are employed in boundary work to mark social belonging and (re)produce the distinguishing lines between classes of actors.[29] Objective and symbolic class belonging are usually expected to go along with each other. Individuals that are "objectively" located in a middle class position – due to their level for school education and their occupation – are expected to behave like middle class individuals. They are expected to perform their social position in everyday boundary work.

The practice of drawing distinctions in everyday life is defined in this study as everyday boundary work. Individuals draw boundaries in their daily life. These boundaries enable them to mark their belonging to a "class of

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26   See Bourdieu 1996: 13; Kraus et. Al 2011: 246.

27   While actors draw symbolic boundaries in their everyday practices, scholars usually define objective boundaries in advance. Studying social classes, scholars already claim to know what the "lower class" or "middle class" is, irrespectively of how actors define social classes. Yet, when taking the cultural (symbolic) approach to social class seriously, scholars have to take into account that not their definitions but the class definitions of actors frame their everyday boundary work. See Visacovsky 2008: 20–23.

28   Thus, McCloud states: "Class concerns boundaries, those distinctions that we make between ourselves and others." (McCloud 2007a: 2).

29   The class-related lifestyles, tastes and habitus that Bourdieu describes in "Distinction" can be interpreted as symbolic boundaries that allow classifying individuals. See Lamont and Molnár 2002: 172.

individuals" and to generate respectability in the presence of their peers. Everyday boundary work usually implies the displaying of particular tastes and styles.[30] Taste refers to the communication of preferences that may imply judgments about the quality and/or legitimacy of other individuals, groups, things, or attributes. Individuals can, for instance, express disdain for a specific type of practice in front of their peers. In this way they draw a symbolic boundary between themselves and the practice, as well as the characteristics and people that are associated with the practice. Style refers to the display of specific attributes in everyday practice such as dressing, moving, or speaking in a specific way.

The advantage of boundary work is that it reveals on a micro level how individuals draw boundaries in their daily lives. It refers to the daily practice of drawing boundaries in which actors engage to mark their differentness from other people and their attributes and to generate respectability among peers.

These boundaries are not created in a symbolic vacuum. They are based on the symbolic resources – discourses, values, etc. – within a social class.[31] Thus, middle class actors are likely to employ established boundaries in their everyday boundary work. They make use of attributes that are generally recognized by their peers as valuable and appropriate. The concept of middle class representations, which will be described in the following section, refers to this pool of established middle class boundaries.

2.3   Middle Class Representations

A class-related pool of established boundaries frames the everyday boundary work of actors. Actors can employ boundaries from this pool in order to mark their class belonging and to pursue the recognition of their class peers. This pool of established boundaries is termed "class representations".[32] Class

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30   Tastes and styles intertwine. The way in which actors speak and move can imply judgments of taste in particular social situations. Similarly, the way in which individuals communicate their preferences is a question of style. Moreover, individuals that express a particular taste are generally expected to implement this taste in their style and vice versa. Empirically there may be, of course, differences between the communicated tastes and practices of actors. For instance, despite expressing disdain for a specific practice in some situations, the same individual can be dedicated in other situations to the given practice.

31   See Lamont 1992: 7, 11.

32   The notion of social representations is borrowed from Moscovici (1976; 1988; 1998). In the words of Moscovici, social representations correspond to "a certain recurrent and

representations refer to inter-subjectively shared class imaginaries consisting of class-related boundaries that imply standards of appropriate behavior.[33] Due to the focus of the study, there will be an emphasis on the class representations of the middle class. Middle class' representations can be interpreted as an accumulation and combination of symbolic boundaries on which middle class actors widely agree.[34] Together they form an ideal-typical image – a social imaginary – of the middle class that defines the characteristics conceived of as typical middle class characteristics. These representations

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comprehensive model of images, beliefs and symbolic behaviours. (…) representations (…) order around a theme (mental illness are contagious, people are what they eat) a series of propositions which enable things or persons to be classified, their character described, their feelings and actions to be explained, and so on." (Moscovici 1998: 243) Based on the notion of social representations a wide variety of research has been conducted, especially in social psychology, and has contributed to develop the concept in different directions (Bauer and Gaskell 1999). I apply the notion in a specific way and refer particularly to the social representations of the middle class which are produced and reproduced in "middle class" communications and practices. The concept of class representations is employed in a likewise manner by Skeggs (1997, 2004). In „Ce que parler veut dire" Bourdieu (1982) employs also the term "representations". In some parts of this work, he employs representations as group-related schemes of classification ("classement") which enable actors to classify other actors, things, and practices (Bourdieu 1982: 147). These classifications are subject to power struggles. Individual actors and groups engage in power struggles to impose their representations as "objective" representations (Bourdieu 1982: 136–142). Their success depends on their ability to represent with their representations the group in which they seek to establish these representations (Bourdieu 1982:101, 152). This study suggests that middle class representations impose classifications (representations) on those who move within middle class environments. These classifications classify particular practices, actors, things, and concepts as appropriate and other practices, actors, things, and concepts as inappropriate.

33   For imaginaries, see Guano 2004, Reay 2007b, Strauss 2006. In Bourdieu 's terminology "doxa" reflects some of the characteristics of social class representations. It is the sense of the appropriate and of one's place (Bourdieu 1979: 549; 1984: 8).

34   If the belief in specific boundaries is widely shared among actors they become part of the class representations. Barth, for instance, writes with regard to ethnic groups: "The identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgment. It thus entails the assumption that the two are fundamentally 'playing the same game' (…)." (Barth 1969/70: 15) Barth stresses particularly the process of boundary construction and maintenance. He promotes a focus "on the boundary and the processes of recruitment not on the cultural stuff that the boundary encloses." (Barth 1994: 12) The present study assumes that content is a basic element of "boundary work". Contents have to be pushed forward in order to draw and maintain boundaries between groups.

embrace an understanding of what types of behavior are regarded as appropriate in middle class environments and what types of behavior not.[35]

The pool of established boundaries constitutes at the same time a resource for and a product of the daily boundary work of actors. Class representations develop over time. They emerge as a product of historical institutionalization processes.[36] Boundaries that become constantly engaged in the everyday boundary work of middle class actors assume a rule-like status over time. Progressively assuming a binding character, individuals are increasingly expected to orientate their boundary work upon them. Class representations are related to the routinization of practice.[37] They reflect a routinized way of drawing class distinctions.[38]

Middle class representations constitute social norms. As such, they provide criteria according to which social behavior can be assessed and classified. Middle class actors are likely to evaluate their own behavior and that of others according to these criteria. Whenever they publicly fail to follow these criteria

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35   These boundaries are produced and reproduced in everyday interaction and mass media communication but also by sociologists who contribute to class imaginaries by allocating individuals into groups that tend to show particular types of behavior (Lahire 2001).

36   From the perspective of new institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Hall and Taylor 1996; March and Olsen 1989, 2009; Scott 2008; Thelen 1999), middle class representations are institutions. Institutions are – in a wider sense – rules which structure interactions by providing normative orientation. They consist of "durable social structures made up of symbolic elements" (Scott 2008: 48). These structures "arise in interaction, and they are preserved and modified by human behavior." (Scott 2008: 49) Being the product of a constant reproduction in daily practices, institutions are relatively stable and tend to change only slowly (Scott 2008: 48–49). Being a social institution, middle class representations fulfill two functions. They assume a regulative function for social behavior and they provide recourses for daily interaction (Scott 2008: 50).

37   Reckwitz 2002.

38   This routinization of class practice could be also described by the concept of class habitus (Bourdieu 1979: 230–232). The theoretical approach outlined here is based on a specific interpretation of this class habitus. In this reading, the class habitus is conceived of as an institution, a pool of established boundaries that assumes a rule-like character for the daily boundary work of actors. This class habitus does not necessarily refer to the way in which individuals act but rather to the expectations that are related to their behavior. Since the class habitus is usually not understood as merely forming a social norm, the notion of middle class representations was chosen to avoid misunderstandings. The present interpretation of the class habitus could be perhaps described as a new-institutionalist approach to the class habitus. For an overview of new-institutionalism and its different strands, see Hall and Taylor 1996, and Thelen 1999.

they may show regret and try to camouflage their "wrongdoing".[39] Nevertheless, middle class representations do not define exactly how an actor has to behave: they provide criteria for appropriate behavior and set limits defining the boundaries of appropriate practice. Within these limits a wide variety of practices and attributes is conceived of – to different degrees – as appropriate.[40] Hence, middle class individuals can combine practices from a wide spectrum to design their individuality without necessarily crossing the limits of appropriate behavior. Yet, their behavior can and will be evaluated as more or less appropriate. Being committed to less appropriate practices can affect the appraisal that other middle class individuals have for an actor and create tension.[41]

Middle class representations allow for classifying individuals and their practices by defining what type of behavior and person is respectable and what type of behavior and person is not. From the viewpoint of the middle class, it is particularly the lower class and its practices that are perceived as less respectable and appear as deficient.[42] Rejecting the lower class is a way of generating value, as Skeggs points out.[43]

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39   See Lahire 2001: 78; 2004/2006: 627–636; 2005.

40   See, for instance, Bennett et. al. 2010: 252.

41   See Scott 2008: 55. Frederik Barth states with reference to ethnic groups: "Since belonging to an ethnic group implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity." (Barth 1969/70: 14).

42   See Skeggs 1997: 167. Skeggs states: "(…) representations are a key site in this class struggle; they are where symbolic violence occurs. Who would want to be seen working class? (Possibly only academics are left.) Within the field of cultural criticism working class people have come to be seen as bearing the elemental simplicity of class consciousness and little more." (Skeggs 1997: 95) Thus, lower class culture in Great Britain is perceived as deficient (Reay 1998: 264, 267; 2005a: 921; Skeggs 2004: 79–118; 2005). In "Class, Self, Culture" Skeggs writes with reference to the case of Great Britain: "The working-classes are being spoken of in many ways: as underclass, as white blockage to modernity and global prosperity, as irresponsible selves to blame for structural inequality, as passive non-market competitors, as lacking in agency and culture, whilst the middle-classes are represented as at the vanguard of the modern, as a national identity and a cultural resource. In this symbolic identification and evaluation we see class divisions being made. The rhetorical positioning of the working-class is a powerful formulation, presented as literally use-less, a group as inept as they are dysfunctional. (…) They are represented as having nothing to offer; their culture is not worth having; they only represent a burden." (Skeggs 2004: 94).

43   Further, Skeggs supposes that the need to draw and maintain boundaries indicates the fragility of the middle class: "The proliferation and reproduction of classed representations

> Attributing negative value to the working class is a mechanism for attrib-
> uting value to the middle class self (such as making oneself tasteful
> through judging others to be tasteless). (…) Any judgment of the work-
> ing-class as negative (waste, excess, vulgar, unmodern, authentic etc.) is
> an attempt of the middle class to accrue value.
>
> SKEGGS 2004: 118

Drawing distinctions in opposition to the lower class contributes to the consti-
tution of a valuable middle class self. This is also evident in the case of
Argentina. In Argentina, which is shaped by a strong middle class discourse,
the middle class is imagined as white, European, well-educated, tidy, rational
(vs. superstitious) and sober (vs. emotional). These representations are based
on boundaries that are established as in opposition to the lower class often
imagined as untidy, superstitious, uneducated etc.[44] The vigor of class repre-
sentations depends on their reproduction in everyday boundary work. In order
to maintain the imaginary of the middle class, the established boundaries have
to be reproduced and portrayed. Goffman underlines this need to reproduce
the class representations:

> A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed
> and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent,
> embellished, and well articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness,
> awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that
> must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized.
>
> GOFFMAN 1959: 75

Class boundaries have to be cultivated and nourished. Boundary work consists
not only of creating boundaries, but also in maintaining them: middle class
individuals have to behave according to the class representations or at least to

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over such a long period of time demonstrates the understated ubiquity of class, showing
how it is continually referenced, even when not directly spoken. Proliferation and repeti-
tion, also point to the fragility of the authority of the middle class. If they were secure,
difference would not be continually be drawn, values established, legitimated and institu-
tionalized." (Skeggs 2004: 117).

44   Interestingly, also Argentinean sociologist Gino Germani refers to social class representa-
tions which he calls the "psycho-social criterion" of class belonging. He distinguishes the
psycho-social criterion from the objective criteria of the class belonging – namely income,
education, and occupation – and describes them as the typical attitudes of the middle
class as a system of values (Germani 1950: 5) and as collective representation (Germani
1981:110–111).

create the impression that they do so.[45] Consequently, everyday boundary work contributes to the reproduction of the class representations by reproducing the "appropriate" and the distinction from the "inappropriate".[46]

In order to maintain symbolic class representations, middle class actors are expected to act according to their class representations and therefore to behave differently from the attributes that are associated to the lower class.[47] Thus, Argentinean middle class individuals are expected by their peers to dress in a tidy way and address themselves in an educated manner to others. By acting according to the middle class representations they do not only mark their middle class position, but reproduce also the established middle class boundaries and maintain them in vigor. In total, the concept of boundary work underlines that the formation of classes is about the (re)production of symbolic hierarchies in everyday practice.[48]

2.4   Relating Boundary Work and Class Representations to the Social Space

The previous thoughts can be related to the concept of the social space. Applying the model of the social space, correspondences between class representations and "objective" social positions can be supposed. Middle class

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45   The established class boundaries must be reproduced in practices and discourses. Middle class representations are not only (re)produced in everyday interactions between individuals but also by the mass-media which transmits ideal-typical images of the middle class.

46   Nevertheless, class representations are alterable. They evolve over time and can be subject to significant changes. New boundaries may be drawn, while others evaporate leading to a modification of class representations. Previously unaccepted practices may become tolerated while once accepted practices can convert into inappropriate practices. The cultural ascriptions of a group may change without necessarily undermining its boundaries, as Frederik Barth (1969/1970) has argued with regard to ethnic group boundaries.

47   Consequently, the empirical differences in the practices of social classes may not only be due to the reproduction of embodied social structures but also due to a calculated adaptation of visible behavior: actors adapt their behavior to what they think is appropriate with regard to the social class they represent and the sort of situation (formal/informal, public/private) in which they are. As already stated above, this approach does not neglect the reality of socialization and internalization of social structure, but it is cautious with respect to the degree and detectability of embodiment of social structure. Concerning the adaptation of human behavior to standards of appropriateness in mind March and Olsen (2009) speak of a "logic of appropriateness".

48   Reay 1998; 2005a: 924; Skeggs 2004; Savage 2003.

representations are likely to show a normative pressure on the behavior of actors located in objective social positions usually associated with the middle class. Facing normative pressure to act according to the middle class representations, actors will be inclined towards drawing boundaries in their daily boundary work that conform to the representations of the middle class.

Yet, not only individuals generally perceived as being situated in a middle class position may relate their daily boundary work to the representations of the middle class. Also lower class actors with middle class aspirations may orientate their boundary work toward some of the established boundaries of the middle class representations. Consequently, the approach does not suggest that there are exclusive correspondences between the normative orientation on middle class representations and the positions that are usually regarded as fitting "objectively" to the middle class.[49]

Moreover, the everyday boundary work of individuals will not only be based on class-related boundaries. Besides class representations, daily boundary work will be based, for instance, on gender representations and representations that define what is appropriate in particular age groups.[50]

In total, the model supposes that in some positions there exists a normative pressure to act according to the middle class representations. When assuming

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[49] Considering the horizontal differentiation of the social space, the space entails not only classes, but also class fractions. These class fractions stick to specific variations of their class representations (Bourdieu and Saint Martin 1976: 14–41, Bourdieu 1979: 128–138.). Hence, different middle class fractions are likely to adhere to specific variations of the middle class representations that emphasize different boundaries. These variations will express themselves in different forms of daily boundary work. Despite these variations among middle class fractions, there will be a general agreement on many middle class attributes. The agreement on these attributes helps to draw and stabilize the fundamental boundaries in opposition to the lower class. Due to the lack of research about internal differences in Argentina's middle class and the limitations of the empirical sample, this study only stresses the general middle class representations.

[50] Besides class representations there will be other group related representations that shape the behavior of individuals. Thus, there will be representations related to gender and ethnicity as well as representations for specific sub-cultures such as, for instance, Heavy Metal fans. These types of representations may also have an impact on religious practice. Thus, in addition to social class other factors are also likely to play an important role for shaping religious practice (McCloud 2007a: 14–15, 29–30; 2007b 845; see for ethnicity Althoff 2006). Different representations may overlap and conflict with each other leading to contradicting expectations of behavior. Furthermore, actors may also draw boundaries to underline their individuality and seek distinction from others of their social class. However, pursuing at the same time the recognition of their class peers, they may combine their individual with a class-related boundary work.

positions that are generally conceived of as middle class positions, actors are likely to act in social environments framed by the expectation to behave according to the middle class representations.

Based on these theoretical considerations, the way in which the term "middle class" is employed in this study can be outlined in following way. Middle class actors are defined by taking the "objective" and symbolic attributes of actors into account. First, middle class actors are actors "objectively" situated in the middle class. This means they hold a certain amount of "objectified" capital in form of education and income that differentiates them "objectively" from the lower class and the upper class. Second, when moving in middle class contexts, middle class actors usually relate their everyday practice to the middle class representations. This does not imply that they strictly follow the middle class representations in their daily practice. However, in public situations with middle class peers present, they likely employ the middle class representations as a normative standard for their public behavior. In these middle class contexts, they generally seek to appear as appropriate middle class actors. In order to portray themselves as appropriate middle class actors, they may employ established middle class boundaries by displaying "middle class" tastes and styles.

2.5   Towards Religious Non-conformance

With respect to the religious field, middle class representations are likely to infer particular views on different types of religious practice. Religious options will be regarded to different degrees as appropriate and legitimate. For instance, religious practices that imply emotional outbursts or shouting and crying in public may be perceived as inappropriate.[51] Also, specific faith communities judged negatively by the middle class may not be regarded as appropriate religious options. Particularly the imaginary of the "sect" illustrates the risk of crossing boundaries when choosing an "inappropriate" religious option. Thus, Corten describes the sect in opposition to the middle class: the sect is the place where practices that are perceived as unacceptable by the middle class may become manifest.[52] As Nathalie Luca points out, the membership in a religious

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51   For instance, Chaves indicates for the United States that middle class congregations tend to show more formal styles of worship whereas worships of lower class congregations are inclined towards a more spontaneous and less formal styles (Chaves 2004: 136).

52   "La secte est l'« ailleurs » où le « non-de-classe-moyenne » peut se présenter avec son langage, avec ses émotions, avec son imagination." (Corten 1995: 248).

group that is perceived as unacceptable, as a "sect", may be experienced as a rupture with the "pacte citoyen".[53] By belonging to an "unacceptable" religious group or conducting unacceptable religious practices, the individual may cross the border of respectable citizenship and runs the risk of becoming an inappropriate other in the eyes of his/her peers.[54] Middle class actors risk becoming excluded from the imagined circle of the respectable middle class. Therefore, they will rather avoid these groups.

This is the case with Pentecostalism in Argentina. Here, the educated middle class shows a critical attitude towards Pentecostalism. Embracing characteristics – such as exorcisms, prosperity gospel, faith healing, emotional outbursts, etc. – perceived as inappropriate, and being regarded as a religion of the ignorant and poor, Pentecostalism does not fit well with the representations of the educated middle class. Therefore, middle class actors tend to avoid Pentecostalism. Instead, they gravitate towards religious practices that are perceived as more appropriate such as, for instance, Catholicism.

Nevertheless, the negative attributes associated with Pentecostalism do not prevent some middle class individuals to affiliate with the movement. Although Pentecostalism does not fit well with the representations of Argentina's educated middle class, there is a group of highly educated middle class individuals in Argentina that shows an affinity for Pentecostalism. Affiliating with a religious movement that involves "inappropriate" characteristics and tends to be perceived as a lower class religion, they deviate to some extent from the middle class representations.

For this reason, this study has to take non-conformance with class order into account. One sociologist who addresses the topic of non-conformance is Bernard Lahire. The work of Lahire reveals that middle class actors frequently deviate in their cultural practices from what is considered legitimate and appropriate.[55] However, when performing non-conforming practices, middle

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53   Luca 2009: 238. For the public discourses about "sects" and the often tense relationship between citizenship and sect membership which public discourses create, see Luca 2002; 2004a; 2008b; 2009; 2010.

54   See Lamine 2009, Skeggs 2004: 94; 2005: 977.

55   Non-conformance with class order appears to be a ubiquitous phenomenon. Lahire 2001; 2004/2006; 2005; 2008. Also Schäfer (2002: 286–287; 2005: 275–276) points to the presence of deviations. The presence of non-conforming behavior raises the question of why individuals show non-conforming tendencies. Forming its own strand of sociology, the study of deviation has generated a wide array of approaches that describe and explain non-conforming behavior (Clinard and Meier 2008; Lamnek 2007, 2008). Immersing into this academic debate is beyond the scope of this study. In general terms, inappropriate tendencies can be the product of genetic predispositions, psychological factors and/or social

class actors often express regret and shame, or engage in strategies to disguise the inappropriateness of their actions. This applies also to Argentina's middle class Pentecostals who have an affinity for Pentecostalism and some of its "inappropriate" practices such as speaking in tongues. These "inappropriate" religious affinities can arise from an early contact with the universe of popular religion, as will be shown below.

Middle class Argentineans, dedicating themselves to "lower class options" such as Pentecostalism, overstep to some extent the boundaries of the educated middle class. A mismatch between their religious belonging and their symbolic class belonging emerges. Middle class actors who openly cross the established symbolic class boundaries manipulate the representations of the middle class. Therefore, their behavior may be sanctioned. They risk being stigmatized and being considered as less worthy than other class members. In extreme cases peers, may even exclude them from the imagined circle of the "respectable middle class".[56]

Many of the middle class Pentecostals I interviewed had suffered from different types of tension due to their religious belonging. They were, for instance, discriminated against by work colleagues, lost contact to their friends after their conversion, suffered rejection from relatives, and were described by middle class peers as lunatic. The non-conformance of middle class Pentecostals

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influences (Clinard and Meier 2008: 42–65). For instance, Bradshaw and Ellison (2008) point to the influence of genetic factors on religious practice. Due to the sociological character of this study, the influence of genetic and psychological predispositions on the religious affinities of middle class Pentecostals cannot be explored here. A sociologically more accessible factor is social influence. Approaches that fit to the findings of the present study are proposed by Lahire and Schäfer's notion of the habitus as a complex network of dispositions (Lahire 2003, 2004/2006, 2010; Schäfer 2005, 2015). These approaches suggest that individuals become socialized and participate in various social environments that may sometimes imply conflicting social standards. Thess approach to non-conformance can be related to the sub-culture and socialization approaches of deviant behavior. Sub-culture approaches underline the existence of various groups and cultural spheres in which different, sometimes contradicting, values are valid (Clinard and Meier 2008: 12–15; Lamnek 2007: 147–189, 2008: 80–87). Socialization approaches to deviance point out that non-conforming behavior is often a product of socialization: "deviant" norms, values, affinities have been learned by actors in the course of their socialization (Clinard and Meier 2008: 43–49; 99–104; Lamnek 2007: 190–222). Thus, non-conforming behavior is learned in specific sub-cultures or groups. The learned behavior stands in conflict to the norms of the social environment in which the behavior is labeled as deviant.

56   Discrepant behavior will be avoided and may be sanctioned. See, for instance, Barth 1969/70: 18; 1994: 22–23.

raises the question of how they deal with the inappropriateness of their religious practice.

2.6   Boundary Work as a Way of Dealing with Non-Conformance

Individuals that constantly cross class boundaries likely develop techniques to deal with the tension between their non-conforming practice and the class representations. Theoretically, they can hide these practices from the eyes of class peers and dedicate themselves to these practices only in the intimacy of their private sphere.[57] This, however, is not always feasible for middle class Pentecostals since Pentecostals are required to stick to their religious beliefs. They are not permitted to deny their religious identity in public and are supposed to practice their faith in a congregation.

Instead, middle class Pentecostals dedicate themselves to symbolic boundary work in order dissolve the tensions between their class belonging and their religious belonging.[58] This boundary work could perhaps be labeled "second order boundary work" since it is conducted in order re-establish the boundaries that were crossed in the first place. To perform this "second order" boundary work middle class Pentecostals employ distinctive religious tastes and styles in Pentecostalism.

Religious tastes refer to the preferences that actors communicate concerning the practice of religion. Actors display likes and dislikes regarding the way in which religion is practiced. By expressing a specific taste they can draw boundaries vis-à-vis particular characteristics of religious practice. For instance, middle class Pentecostals may communicate that they dislike emotional practices in church services. Manifesting this dislike, they draw a boundary in opposition to an emotional type of Pentecostalism. Religious style, in contrast, refers to the way in which religion is practiced. In this study, I will refer with the term predominantly to the religious style of churches. The religious style of a church embraces a variety of characteristics: its symbolic recognition, the form in which its church services are conducted as well as the configuration of its physical infrastructure and organization. One method to identify the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals will be the empirical comparison of the tastes and styles of middle and lower class Pentecostals.

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57   See, for instance, Clinard and Meier 2008: 52–53; Goffman 1959; Lahire 2004/2006: 627–632.

58   Similarly to the British working-class in the studies of Skeggs (1997, 2004), middle class Pentecostals develop strategies to generate – despite their inappropriateness – respectability.

Religious tastes and styles are engaged in the boundary work of Argentina's middle class Pentecostals. Middle class Pentecostals draw boundaries in opposition to the "inappropriate" characteristics of Pentecostalism by displaying distinctive tastes and styles of Pentecostalism. These tastes and styles become, for instance, visible in specific ways of organizing their churches, carrying out church services, performing spiritual practices, and speaking about other Pentecostals. Displaying these distinctive tastes and styles permits middle class Pentecostals underlining their differentness from other Pentecostals.

The boundary work of middle class Pentecostals is based on preexisting resources. They lend established boundaries from the middle class representations. Middle class Pentecostals employ characteristics that are conceived of as appropriate – such as, for instance, the ideal of education – and attribute them to Pentecostalism. At the same time, characteristics that may be perceived by non-Pentecostal middle class peers as inappropriate are banned from the public sphere of the church service and transferred into the private sphere. Middle class Pentecostals appear to separate between the private and public practice of Pentecostalism. This distinction can be grasped by Goffman's concept of impression management that differentiates between a front region and a back region. On the front region, individuals tend to disguise inappropriate tendencies and try to perform a play that corresponds to the middle class representations. In the back region, by contrast, inappropriate tendencies that do not fit well to the standards of appropriate behavior can become manifest.[59] Inappropriate practices such as speaking in tongues and exorcisms are more likely to be carried out in private contexts. Church services, in contrast, are experienced as a public sphere since they are also accessible for non-Pentecostal class peers. For this reason, the church service forms a highly controlled social sphere from which the inappropriate aspects of Pentecostalism – such strong spiritual practices – have to be withdrawn. Attributing appropriate, middle class characteristics to Pentecostalism and banning inappropriate, "lower class" characteristics from the public practice of Pentecostalism, middle class Pentecostals engage in crafting a Pentecostalism that appears as more appropriate from the viewpoint of their class representations.

When being dedicated to an inappropriate practice, boundary work consists of drawing distinctions in opposition the inappropriate characteristics of this practice and thereby creating an appearance of appropriateness. This boundary work serves two purposes. First, on the macro-level of the class representations, it allows to maintain class representations, since the established class boundaries are reproduced by performing the practice in a more

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59   See, for instance, Goffman 1959.

appropriate way. Second, on the micro-level of the individual, it enables individuals to deal with their inappropriateness and to negotiate the legitimacy of their practice. Middle class Pentecostals renegotiate their symbolic class belonging and the appropriateness of their religious practice by drawing boundaries as in opposition to the inappropriate characteristics of Pentecostalism. However, the negotiation function of everyday boundary work does not imply that the inappropriateness and the social tensions related to the non-conformance fully disappear. Some inappropriate characteristics and misfits may persist. But even so, boundary work makes allowance for partly disguising inappropriateness, renegotiating value, and reducing social tensions.

2.7   Summary

The aim of this chapter was to advance a theoretical approach for studying middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. Using sociological theory as a tool kit to explore social phenomena, the theoretical approach was developed in a dialogue with the empirical findings. Therefore, the theoretical approach started from the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and extended it by adding the notions of boundary work and middle class representations. The concepts of boundary work and middle class representations, closely linked to Bourdieu's sociology, allow for emphasizing two important characteristics of Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism: the non-conformance with class standards and the negotiation of this non-conformance. The distinction between established class boundaries (class representations) and the everyday practice of drawing class boundaries provides a helpful theoretical device to explore these characteristics.

Everyday boundary work is related to the daily struggle for recognition and refers to the daily practice of drawing symbolic boundaries. Individuals draw symbolic boundaries in order to generate recognition and appear as respectable citizens in the glances of their peers. By displaying specific attributes in form of tastes and styles, individuals portray themselves as forming part of a class of individuals which is different from other classes of individuals which are perceived as less valuable, legitimate, respectable, or just as different. Everyday boundary work does not take place in a symbolic void. It is usually based on institutionalized boundaries that have become established over time. Thus, the boundary work of middle class actors is likely to be framed by established middle class boundaries. These established middle class boundaries are labeled as "middle class representations" in this study. They constitute a class

imaginary that does not only provide symbolic resources for everyday boundary work but that exercises also normative pressure on individuals' everyday practice. Nevertheless being a normative and ideal-typical representation, individuals do not necessarily follow its normative standards in their everyday practice.

The theoretical approach of this study supposes that everyday practice is framed but not determined by symbolic class representations. Individuals may deviate in their practice from what is regarded as appropriate by class peers. Having non-conforming affinities, individuals may dedicate themselves to inappropriate practices. "Inappropriateness" is a ubiquitous phenomenon, as Lahire has pointed out. When facing the risk of being depreciated for their inappropriate tendencies, actors can renegotiate the appropriateness of these tendencies in their everyday boundary work. By displaying distinctive tastes and styles that draw boundaries in opposition to the inappropriate characteristics of the given practice, individuals can portray their practice in a more appropriate light. Hence, everyday boundary work consists in creative maneuvers to disguise one's inappropriate tendencies. Drawing boundaries as in opposition to the inappropriate is a creative effort that goes beyond a rigid reproduction of middle class representations.

This study suggests that middle class Pentecostals renegotiate the appropriateness of their religious practice through boundary work. This boundary work consists in displaying distinctive tastes and styles of Pentecostalism according to which they present themselves as less emotional, less superstitious, more ordered and educated, in other words: more middle class than other Pentecostals.

Exploring Middle Class Pentecostalism in Argentina – Methodological Considerations

The objective of this study is to explore middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. The central questions that guide the research include the following: In what kind of socio-cultural context is middle class Pentecostalism embedded? How does the middle class relate to Pentecostalism? What form of Pentecostalism do middle class Pentecostals develop?

Therefore, this study places an emphasis on middle class Pentecostals and above all on Pentecostals who work as professionals and hold higher education degrees. Argentina and Buenos Aires in particular were purposefully chosen for the research since they lend themselves for the study of middle class Pentecostalism.[1] Most importantly, Argentina has the reputation of being one of the countries with the strongest middle class in Latin America.[2] The presence of an extensive middle class was thought to facilitate the study of middle class Pentecostalism. Especially Buenos Aires is known for its relatively wealthy middle class population. At the same time Buenos Aires is marked by the presence of slums in the city and a bolster of lower class neighborhoods and slums surrounding the city. Shaped by strong social inequalities, Buenos Aires lends itself to studying the reproduction of inequalities within the field of religion. Another reason for choosing Argentina was the comparatively late mass expansion of the Pentecostal movement in this country. In contrast to other countries where the Pentecostal movement grew massively from the 1950s onwards, Argentina experienced a rather late mass expansion of Pentecostalism starting in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Due to the late expansion of Pentecostalism, the vast majority of actors who participate today in Pentecostal churches were not born in into their church but chose at one point in their lives to affiliate with a particular Pentecostal church. Furthermore, it can be assumed that when they chose to affiliate themselves with a specific Pentecostal church, they decided upon a specific style of Pentecostalism.

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1 The aim of purposeful sampling is to select an information-rich case with regard to the research question (Patton 1990: 169). Pentecostalism in Buenos Aires meets this criterion.

2 Tevik 2006: 23–24; Visacovsky 2008: 11–12. The rise of the middle class in Argentina was prominently studied by Argentinean sociologist Gino Germani. For the expansion of the middle class in Argentina, see Germani 1950; 1966; 1981.

Therefore, the study of the religious styles of churches and their social composition will allow for exploring the religious tendencies of different social classes in Pentecostalism.

My personal reasons for studying Pentecostalism in Latin America include a strong interest in the Pentecostal movement and a general interest for Latin American culture. I had my first contact with Pentecostalism in Germany. A friend who was a member of a Pentecostal congregation in my hometown took me on a Sunday morning to a church service. This experience and the following visits spurred my sociological interest in the Pentecostal movement. The interest in Pentecostalism combined with an affinity for some of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological concepts drove me to study the relationship between social class and Pentecostalism in Latin America.

Studying a religious movement in a foreign continent implies various difficulties. Although already fluent in *Castellano* – unfortunately the Spanish *Castellano* – I arrived as an outsider in Buenos Aires where I had to adapt my Spanish and to learn "how things work" in Argentina. This partial adaptation to the new situation did, of course, not change my general status as a stranger. My outsider status did, however, not only imply disadvantages. It also enriched my research to some extent. The lack of an Argentinean cultural background enabled me to observe my research object – middle class Pentecostalism – from a different, non-Argentinean angle. Moreover, being a stranger from a "respectable" European country, middle class, Pentecostals treated me usually with openness and welcomed me to their congregations.

3.1   Methodical Remarks: Controlling the Quality of Qualitative Research

The research bases itself on a combination of different research methods. This mixture of methods consists mainly of qualitative methods (ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews) and to a minor degree of quantitative methods (surveys). Qualitative research faces different challenges. Above all, qualitative research is marked by the fact that its explorations are based on a small number of cases. Therefore, qualitative research projects bear limitations regarding the generalizability of their results.[3] A second problem, one related to the generalizability of qualitative research, addresses the credibility

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3   Bryman 2008: 391–392; Gobo 2011: 29; Lamnek 2005: 180–187; Patton 1990: 486–490.

and reliability of the research results.[4] Qualitative research runs the risk of being perceived as subjective since researchers may have a biasing impact on the research, which obtrudes the reproducibility of its results.[5] I applied basically three strategies to avoid a subjective bias and to improve the credibility of the research: (1) orientation on methodological standards for qualitative research, (2) triangulation of methods and data sources, and (3) communicative validation.

The research was oriented along the common criteria for good qualitative research in data collection and analysis. These standards imply that the researcher seeks to adopt a stance of neutrality with regard to its research object.[6] A strategy to increase the neutrality and credibility of one's research is triangulation which consists of the adoption of different perspectives on the research object.[7] This study employs two types of triangulation: methods triangulation and triangulation of sources. Different methods were applied to gather data: participant observation, ethnographic interviews, narrative in-depth interviews, quantitative surveys, and content-analyzes of existing studies. The employment of different methods implied also the exploration of different data sources: scientific studies and surveys, collective religious gatherings (church services), and interviews with pastors and church members. Another strategy to improve the credibility and neutrality of qualitative research is communicative validation.[8] Communicative validation consists of providing accounts of one's research to peers and receiving a (critical) feedback. Similar to triangulation, this strategy can help assume different perspectives. During and after my empirical field research, I presented different parts of my project in numerous research seminars in Bielefeld, Oldenburg, Paris, and at various international conferences. On these occasions I received many comments and insights that allowed for controlling and improving the research approach.

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4 Bryman 2008: 376–380; Heidenreich et al. 2012 46–48; Knoblauch 2003: 162–168; Patton 1990. Reliability and credibility concern the quality of the gathered data and the results drawn from it. In an objectified reading these criteria refer to the degree to which the data and results represent the given empirical reality while in a more constructivist reading the criteria refer to the degree to which the results will be accepted by scientific peers and/or the explored population as "correct".

5 Bryman 2008: 391; Gobo 2011: 28; Patton 1990: 54–56; 479–486.

6 Patton 1990: 461, 54–56.

7 Different perspectives can be adopted by combining different methods, data sources, or theories. See Bryman 2008: 377–379; Flick 2008; Lamnek 2005: 274–291; Patton 1990: 187–198, 464–470; Yin 2009: 114–118.

8 Knoblauch 2003: 166.

3.2   A Threefold Approach

The study of middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina was conceptualized as an explorative research project and was conducted on three empirical levels: macro, meso, and micro level.[9] The macro level refers to the context of middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina and is based on an analysis of the existing literature about social class, religion in general, and Pentecostalism in particular. The actual empirical study was conducted on the meso and micro level. The meso level stresses religious organizations and explores the religious style of different Pentecostal churches while the micro level explores the religious tastes of Pentecostals from different social classes. The research was conducted in different waves between the second half of 2009 and the first half of 2011. I spent a total of one and a half years in Buenos Aires, during which I assembled and studied the existing literature about the topic, conducted interviews and surveys, and visited a vast variety of Pentecostal churches. In the following paragraphs, I will present briefly the methods that I applied on each of the three levels.

The research on the macro-level included a study of the existing literature about social stratification, religion, and, more specifically, Pentecostalism in Argentina and Latin America. The aim was to generate an overview of the relationship between religious – and more particularly, Pentecostal – practice and social class. Of particular relevance for this process was the exploration of the existing literature about popular religion in Latin America and Argentina. While the religiosity and culture of Argentina's lower class is well studied, there is little literature about the culture of Argentina's urban middle class and virtually no literature about its religious tendencies. More developed is the research on Pentecostalism in Argentina. Thanks to the efforts of various local scholars – such as Joaquin Algranti, Alejandro Frigerio, Daniel Míguez, Hilario Wynarzcyk, and Pablo Semán – there exists today a variety of studies about Pentecostalism in Argentina. Yet, studies tackling the topic of Pentecostalism in the middle class do not exist thus far. Hence, I had to fill this gap with my own empirical research

Using the insights from the literature about social stratification, religion, and Pentecostalism in Argentina, I sought to sketch the context of middle class Pentecostalism: the historical development of the country, its social stratification, the symbolic class representations of the middle class,

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9   A three level approach to study social groups which stress the macro, meso and micro level is, for instance, also proposed by Barth (1994: 20–30).

the religious tendencies of the middle and lower class, and the tensions between Pentecostalism and middle class culture.

While the research on the macro-level intended to explore the broad context of middle class Pentecostalism, the actual empirical field work was conducted on the meso level and the micro level.

The objective of the research on the meso level was to identify potential peculiarities of Pentecostal churches that recruit a significant proportion of their membership from the middle class. To what style of Pentecostalism do middle class churches tend? What are the differences between middle class churches and other Pentecostal churches?

In order to determine the peculiarities of middle class churches, I compared the religious styles of churches which recruit their members from different social classes. The "religious style" is defined in a broad manner: the religious style of a church concerns all the characteristics that may potentially differ from that of other congregations and that may be relevant for members and potential members of the church. Therefore, the religious style embraces the style of church services as well as the physical infrastructure, organization, and symbolical recognition of the church.[10]

Although I visited a wide variety of churches with different social compositions, an emphasis was placed on churches that appealed the middle class.[11] My empirical approach on the meso level entailed three steps: (1) visiting a wide range of different churches to explore the variety of Argentinean Pentecostalism, (2) limiting the study to a middle and a lower class church to explore their differences in a detailed manner, and (3) broadening my approach again by studying a sample of middle class churches and comparing it to the religious style of other Pentecostal churches. In the following paragraphs I describe these steps with more detail.

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10   Also Meyer (2006) refers to the idea of religious style but uses the concept more in an aesthetic way. "Style is a core aspect of religious aesthetics (…). Inducing as well as expressing shared moods, a shared religious style – materializing in, for example, collective prayer, a shared corpus of songs, images, symbols, rituals, but also a similar clothing style and material culture – makes people feel at home." (Meyer 2006: 24) Another way of dealing with the religious style of a church is to describe it is a "congregational culture". Chaves (2004: 10) employs the term particularly with regard to different spheres of congregations: worship, education and the arts.

11   Moreover, my study focused on churches of a specific size: medium-sized churches. The focus on medium-sized churches is due to two reasons: (1) they are successful religious organizations which attract continuously a significant amount of members, and (2) they are more likely to show a relatively homogenous social composition in their membership than bigger churches which attract various social classes due to the fact that they usually embrace a variety of religious styles.

In the first wave of research, I visited church services of a wide range of churches in the Argentinean capital and the province of Buenos Aires. This allowed me to get an overview of the Pentecostal movement and to develop some preliminary ideas about the relationship between social class and religious practice.

After having visited numerous Pentecostal church services in and around Buenos Aires, I limited my empirical research in a second step to a comparative case study of two Pentecostal churches. Although both churches are situated in middle class neighbourhoods, they recruit their members from different social classes.[12] The pastors of both churches agreed to my project and supported my empirical research. This enabled me to conduct an extensive empirical research, including a quantitative survey, ethnographic observations, and narrative interviews.[13] The quantitative survey explored the demographic composition of both congregations with a specific focus on the social backgrounds of church members. The surveys were conducted with the help of theology students from the Faculty for Protestant Theology in Buenos Aires, Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos (ISEDET), during various weeks after different church services in the first half of the year 2009.[14] Furthermore, I conducted narrative interviews with church members and pastors and participated in numerous churches services. After church services, I wrote field notes summarizing the structure, content, and environment of the church service, and other important impressions.[15] Moreover, on many occasions I made audio-records of the church services and taped some parts of church services on video. The gathered data allowed me to create "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) of the religious style of each church and to compare them to each other.[16] Constituting intensified studies of single units,[17] the two case studies bear strong limits concerning their generalizability.

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12   Both churches were purposefully selected since they show significant differences in their social composition. Thus, the sampling of these churches followed the strategy of a "maximum variation sampling" (Patton 1990: 172) in order to grasp the potential differences between lower and middle churches.

13   See for ethnographic – participant – observation Brymann 2008: 400–434, Diekmann 1995: 456–480; Flick 2002: 206–220; Knoblauch 2003 : 76–81; Lamnek 2005: 547–621.

14   The questionnaire was constructed along general criteria for designing questionnaires (cf. Diekmann 1995: 410–418). Moreover, two pretests were conducted in order to cut potential errors and improve the questionnaire.

15   For field research notes, see Knoblauch 2003: 90–96; Lamnek 2005: 613–621 Patton 1990: 239–244.

16   For ethnographic description, see Laplantine 2010.

17   A case study is an "intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units." (Gerring 2004: 342). For case study research, see particularly Yin 2003.

Although purposefully selected, the two cases form contingent cases that can hardly represent the whole population of lower and middle class churches in Buenos Aires. Therefore, I enlarged my sample in a third step and studied other churches that recruit a significant proportion of middle class Pentecostals in Buenos Aires. Yet, the number of medium-sized middle class churches appears to be highly limited in Buenos Aires. I detected a total of twelve middle churches in the area of Buenos Aires.[18] In these churches, I conducted observations to determine potential differences and similarities in the religious style of middle churches and other Pentecostal churches that do not attract a significant number of middle class Argentineans. The most important form of exploration was the participation in the Sunday church services. Here, I observed the audience, the music, sermons, prayers and other activities during the church service. In many cases, I recorded short video and audio sequences of the central practices after getting permission from a church leader. Moreover, I conducted ethnographic interviews with members and ten narrative interviews with pastors.[19] The interviews with the pastors entailed questions about the history and social composition of the church, church activities (groups, social projects etc.), practices during the church services, and their differences with regard to other Pentecostal churches. The study of a variety of churches allowed me to enlarge the empirical basis of the research. In total, the meso-level research reveals how middle class Pentecostals draw boundaries in opposition to other Pentecostals by developing a distinctive style of Pentecostalism.

The objective of the research on the micro level was to study the way in which middle class Pentecostals draw boundaries by displaying specific religious tastes. The religious taste of middle class Pentecostals was analyzed by comparing it to the religious tastes of lower class Pentecostals. The religious taste of both groups – lower and middle class Pentecostals – was explored in qualitative, in-depth interviews.[20] The central questions that guided this step of the research were: What are the religious tastes of educated middle class Pentecostals? How and with regard to what attributes do they draw boundaries when communicating their taste?

The sampling of the interview partners was conducted purposefully to gather a contrastive sample of lower and middle class Pentecostals.[21] The focus of the sampling strategy was particularly on the middle class: out of a total of

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18   The term "middle class churches" refers to churches that recruit a significant proportion of middle class Pentecostals.

19   The names of the interviewed pastors haven been changed.

20   For qualitative interviews, see Diekmann 1995: 443–455; Flick 2002: 117–145; Knoblauch 2003: 122–134; Patton 1990: 277–359.

21   For purposeful sampling, see Patton 1990: 169–183.

44 interviews 30 interviews were conducted with middle class Pentecostals and 14 with lower class Pentecostals. For the sample of the middle class, I sought Pentecostals who had attained or were to attain higher education degrees (university or tertiary) and had a household income per capita above the Argentinean average. For the lower class group, I searched for Pentecostals that had significantly lower education degrees than finished secondary school and perceived lower household incomes per capita than my interviewees from middle class group. In order to avoid any effect of the religious style of a specific church on the results, the 44 interviewees were sampled from 22 different Pentecostal churches.[22]

Interviews were conducted with an interview guide approach.[23] The semi-structured interviews allowed for a high flexibility while guaranteeing, at the same time, the comparability of interviews due to a similar interview design. Interviews were audio-taped and lasted in the majority of cases between two and three hours. The main areas of the interview referred to the biography, religious choice (current, past and potential church affiliations), social background, religious upbringing, and religious preferences of the interviewee. Moreover, interviews included short video sequences which showed religious practices of other Pentecostal churches. After watching the video sequences, interviewees were asked about their opinion. This method allowed interviewees to communicate likes and dislikes with regard to specific styles of Pentecostalism. Thus, middle class Pentecostals often used the impressions from the video in order to draw boundaries in opposition to particular attributes of Pentecostalism. The interviews were analyzed with the software program Atlas.ti. After analysing and comparing the tastes of the lower and middle class interviewees, I wrote a case study summarizing the preferences of each group. These case studies enabled me to identify the cultural characteristics that middle class Pentecostals employ to draw boundaries. In order to ensure the anonymity of my interview partners, their names have been changed in this study.

In total, the empirical research explored the relationship between the middle class and Pentecostalism on the level of church styles and religious tastes. Although the research on the meso and micro level were conducted and analyzed separately, the results from both levels of research turned out to be highly congruent and are, therefore, portrayed together in this study. The comparison of the tastes and styles of Pentecostals from different social backgrounds was

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22   Since the taste of an individual may be influenced by the style of the church to which he is affiliated, interviewees had to be sampled from a variety of churches.

23   Patton 1990: 283–284.

carried out with regard to different aspects of Pentecostal practice. Thus, tastes and styles were compared, for instance, with regard to the organization, infrastructure, and status of churches, as well as their music, spiritual practices, and sermons.

3.3 Remaining Limitations of the Study

The study faces several restrictions inherent to qualitative research. Although a mixture of methods and different data sources are employed, the scope of the study is highly limited: as in every qualitative research project, the question of whether the studied cases can be generalized to the whole population – in this case middle class Pentecostals in Argentina – remains an open one. Conclusions from this research will have to be drawn with caution. Yet, as stated already above, the project is conceptualized as an explorative study. As such, it may create a data basis for further – potentially quantitative – research about middle class Pentecostals in Argentina or in other regions.[24]

Another potential problem of qualitative research lies in the subjectivity of the observer.[25] The observer's background may bias the research.[26] Rephrasing this problem in terms of the boundary work approach, one has to acknowledge the ubiquity of symbolic boundaries. Actors draw boundaries with which they classify their environment and distinguish between valuable and less valuable things, practices, attitudes, and people.[27] The tendency to draw boundaries concerns also religion: even when abstaining from regular religious practice, individuals communicate their opinions, likes, and dislikes

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24 Another limitation of the study is its emphasis on middle class: the study explores the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals. At the same time it widely disregards the boundary work of lower class Pentecostals. Disregarding the lower class boundary work does not mean that lower class Pentecostals do not draw boundaries. In fact, they draw boundaries and seek distinction from other actors. Yet, this study concentrates on Argentina's middle class Pentecostals.

25 Knoblauch 2003: 162, 169.

26 Among other factors, my European background ran the risk of directly influencing the research through my perspective and indirectly through its impact on my interview partners.

27 Particularly the middle class background of academics can have an impact on their research when dealing with different social classes. Diane Reay states: "The challenge for all theorists of class is how to problematise the middle-class perspective in which academics are inevitably caught up." (Reay 2005b: 143) See also Reay 1998: 266; 2005b: 141,143; Skeggs 1997: 167.

concerning religion, describing, for instance, religious fundamentalists as mad, stating doubt about the contraception policies of the Vatican, or showing sympathy with the *Taizé* movement. Also researchers of religion are not free of religious preferences.[28] They may prefer some types of religious practice over others and feel disdain for some expressions of religion, which may influence their work.[29] While exploring Pentecostalism in Argentina, I felt sympathy for some of the religious practices that I observed and for others less. Being relatively conscious about my personal religious preferences, I hope to have limited any effect of my personal religious taste on this study. In addition, I sought to prevent the general impact of my subjective preferences and perceptions as far as possible by triangulation, communicative validation, and the orientation on criteria for good research.

3.4   Summary

This chapter described the methodological approach of the research. The empirical study was conceptualized as an explorative research project and was conducted on three empirical levels: macro-, meso-, and micro-level. The macro-level refers to the context of middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina and is based on an analysis of the existing literature about social class, religion in general, and Pentecostalism in particular. The actual empirical study was conducted on the meso- and micro-level. The meso-level explores the religious styles of different Pentecostal churches through ethnographic observations and interviews with pastors. The micro-level explores the tastes of Pentecostals through interviews with Pentecostals from different social backgrounds. The empirical data gathered through the meso- and micro-level research allows for determining specific religious styles and tastes among middle class Pentecostals.

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28   See, for instance, Bourdieu 1987.

29   McCloud, for instance, states: "Scholars routinely and often explicitly deemed the religions of minorities, the poor, and the indigenous as inferior." (McCloud 2007b: 844) Thus, some scholars charge each other with showing disdain against lower class religious movements and thereby dedicate themselves to symbolic boundary work in academia. One example is B. Martin (2006) who charges Lehmann (1996) with depreciating Pentecostalism as a "bad taste".

Social Class, Symbolic Boundaries, and Religion in Argentina

Argentinean middle class Pentecostalism is embedded in a wider social context. In order to apprehend the dynamics of middle class Pentecostalism it is necessary to consider this context. Therefore, in the course of this chapter, different elements will be collected and arranged to create a general picture of the socio-religious setting in which middle class Pentecostalism is embedded. Important elements to be considered are the socio-religious history of Argentina, the objective and symbolic class boundaries, the religious field embracing numerous religious options, the legitimacy of these options, and the relationship between social class and religion. These elements frame the appropriateness of Pentecostalism for the middle class and the endeavors of middle class Pentecostals to renegotiate the appropriateness of their religious practice.

The chapter starts with a brief introduction into Argentina's history, which stresses particularly the social and religious developments in the 20th century. The subsequent section evolves a picture of the Argentinean middle class while the religious field forms the topic of the last portion of this chapter. In this last section, the contemporary developments in Argentina's religious field and the religious tendencies of the lower and middle class will be discussed.

4.1 A Brief Overview of Argentina's Socio-Religious History

> In America everything that is not European is barbarian.
>
> JUAN B. ALBERDI[1]

Argentina's social stratification, the configuration of its religious field, and its class representations have developed over time in the course of social struggles and crises. Therefore, it is helpful to look at Argentina's history for understanding its social structure and symbolic struggles. Since middle class Pentecostalism

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1 Alberdi quoted according to Burdick 1995: 18. Juan B. Alberdi (1810–1884) is regarded as one of the intellectual fathers of the Argentinean constitution.

stands in the center of this study, there will be a specific focus on the development of Pentecostalism and the middle class.

The structure of this section follows the development of Argentina's history. It will subsequently tackle the beginnings of the Argentinean nation state, the symbolic boundary work of the future middle class, the transformation of the religious field, and the rise of Pentecostalism.

4.1.1   *The Foundation of the State and the National Civilization Program*

The history of the Argentinean nation state begins in 1816 when the parliament of Rio de la Plata declares its independence from Spain: the former Spanish colony turns into a nation-state.[2] With the objective to maintain the order in the unstable new nations, the recently formed nation states of Latin America head for a close collaboration with the Catholic Church. Thus, in Argentina, the Catholic Church assumes the function of a protector of social order and gains, in return, the possibility to assure and expand its involvement in the Argentinean society. Catholicism is imposed as the official religion: being Argentine and being Catholic become synonymous. Through the course of Argentine history, the Catholic Church will form a strong alliance with the Argentine nation-state.[3]

The dominance of the Catholic Church in the public is first questioned by the liberal elite that governs Argentina at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. They seek to modernize the country by following the example of Europe. As soon as the political liberalism emerges on the political stage, the favourable position of the Catholic Church appears to be endangered. Political liberalism reaches its peak between 1880 and 1910 when liberal politics exhibit an open anticlericalism. In their perception, Catholicism appears as a blockade for social progress. Hence, they attempt to banish Catholicism from the public sphere of the Argentinean society and limit it to the private sphere. An institutional secularization process is carried out that entails the extension of secular education as well as the narrowing of Church rights.[4] Nevertheless, the attempts to banish the influence of the Catholic Church are finally doomed to failure due to the harsh resistance of the Church and its supporters.[5] In the long run, the Catholic Church responds by creating a new form of Catholicism that will be later called *Catolicismo*

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2   Bein and Bein 2004, Boris and Tittor 2006: 9.

3   See for Argentina Algranti 2007b: 8–13; for Latin America in general Bastian 1997:35–40. Yet, the relationship entails also conflicts between state and Church as Burdick (1995) shows.

4   Burdick 1995: 3, 21–25; Dusell 1992: 144–147; Prien 1978: 522–524; 581.

5   See Algranti 2007b: 9–10; Mallimaci 2004. See for Latin America Bastian 1997:35–40.

integral (integral Catholicism). *Catolicismo integral* includes a new and strengthened relation between public sphere and Catholicism. It is an all-embracing Catholicism that aims for absorbing different areas of social life: education, social services, politics, state, and family.[6] Evidently, the new model of Catholicism implies a strengthening of its public role. The religion becomes more and more the patron of the Argentinean national identity: the population identifies being Argentinean with being Catholic.[7]

Not only Catholicism, but also popular religion and culture are highly questioned during the rule of the liberal elite. Popular culture and popular religious beliefs are conceived by the liberal elites as a hindrance to the modernization of the society. Being committed to the European paradigm of modernization and positivism, they depreciate popular culture and religion as barbaric.[8] Their objective is to convert Argentina from a "savage" and "uncivilized" nation into a modern and prosperous nation state. The political elites create symbolic boundaries between *clases cultas/gente decente* (cultivated classes/decent people) and *masas incultas* (uncultivated masses). While describing themselves as *gente decente* and admiring European – particularly the French and British – culture, they regard Latin America's "uncivilized masses" with disdain. *Indios* and *mestizo*s are portrayed as barbaric and an obstacle for the development of the country. The representations of the middle class will partly draw upon these boundaries.

Aiming for social and economic progress, the political elite implements civilization programs that entail the diminution of the "barbarian" indigenous and *mestizo* culture. Civilization means for the elite progress, rationality, and science, in short, modernity. Europe is seen as the incarnation of civilization. Therefore, the civilization campaign embraces, on one hand, policies to attract white, European immigrants and on the other, education programs to civilize the country according to European cultural patterns. As a consequence of the education programs, literacy increases. In addition, the immigration policy

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6   Mallimaci 1993a; 1996a; 2004.

7   Bianchi 2004: 9; Mallimaci 1996a: 165. Especially after 1930, there is a reinforced emergence of Catholicism in the public sphere. The Catholic Church assumes a more offensive policy (Algranti 2007b: 9–10, Mallimaci 1993b: 47; Meccia 2003: 72). The Church expands its political influence continuously and collaborates closely with the state, especially during the dictatorships.

8   Mallimaci 2004; Dussel 1992: 151; Prien 1978: 516–524; 574–575. See also Burdick 1995: 23–34. In Brazil, for instance, healing practices, magic and shamanism are prohibited and penalized in 1890 (Ortiz 2000: 130).

leads to a massive influx of "civilized" Europeans who arrive mainly from Italy and Spain.[9] In the long run the, massive European immigration and the ideology related to it creates the imaginary of a principally white and European Argentina.[10]

The immigration policy of the liberal elite also seeks to increase the immigration of Protestants from Europe. Liberal politicians expect civilizing and modernizing effects from the implementation of Protestantism in Argentina. Especially in the sphere of market economy and commerce, they anticipate social progress from the presence of Protestants.[11]

First, Protestants have already been arriving from 1825 onwards. In this first wave of Protestantism, historical Protestants, such as Lutherans and Presbyterians settle in Argentina. They tend to create rather enclosed Protestant communities and are reluctant to spread their faith within the Argentinean population. This panorama changes slightly with the second wave of Protestantism in Argentina. The second wave refers to the arrival of missionary Protestant groups like the Salvation Army, Baptists and the Plymouth Brethren (*Hermanos Libres*). Finally, a third wave of Protestantism occurs at the beginning of the 20th century when the first Pentecostal missionaries arrive from North America and Europe, in particular, Italy and Sweden.[12] These missionaries form the first wave of Pentecostalism in Argentina.[13] They are mostly single actors who lack extensive organizational networks. Therefore, during the first wave, the existing Pentecostal

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9   Yet, the incoming immigrants do not conform very well to the expectations of the
        Argentinean elites (Sarlo 2000: 114; Svampa 1994: 130). The majority of them come from
        the poorest strata of their native countries (Germani 1966: 168).

10   Adamovsky 2009: 30–38, 63–66, 97–100, 477; Bianchi 2004: 43–44; Blancarte 2000: 600;
        Burdick 1995: 13–12; Germani 1966; Guano 2004: 71; Jelin 2005: 393; Lewis 2001: 53–71; Prien
        1978: 574–575; Rowe and Schelling 1991: 32; Schelling 2000: 9–13; Svampa 1994: 19–27, 31;
        Tevik 2006: 81; Torrado 2003: 91–95.

11   Bastian 1994a: 117–120; Prien 1978: 576.

12   See Bianchi 2004: 45–51, 71–88; Saracco 1989: 299; Séman 2000: 161; Stokes 1968: 13–16;
        Wynarczyk 1999; 2003: 38; Wynarczyk and Semán 1994: 33; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 7–8.

13   The development of Argentinean Pentecostalism can be divided into three waves: The
        first wave, beginning with the 20th century, brings missionary Pentecostalism from the
        USA and Europe to Argentina. After the establishment of traditional Pentecostalism by
        foreign missionaries, Pentecostalism nationalizes and assumes local cultural characteristics in the second wave from the 1940s onwards. A domestic Pentecostal culture emerges
        and the first national Pentecostal branches appear. Finally, new forms of Pentecostalism
        become visible during the third wave in 1970s and 80s: spiritual warfare and prosperity

congregations remain small and loosely organized groups without any major appearance on the public scene or in the religious field.[14] In the cases of success, the movement spreads mostly among recently arrived European immigrants and indigenous groups in the Northern provinces of Argentina while it faces serious difficulties in recruiting first-generation descendants of Italian and Spanish immigrants.[15] Hence, the two groups which most respond to the missionary efforts during the first wave of Pentecostalism are situated at the margins of the Argentinean society.

Protestantism – embracing historical Protestants, non-Pentecostal Evangelicals, and Pentecostals – remains a small minority during the first half of the 20th century. Despite the efforts to promote the immigration and establishment of historical Protestants, they form only a small minority among the masses of European immigrants seeking for a better future in Argentina.

Yet, the massive influx of Europeans to Argentina is not only a product of the immigration programs of the liberal elite, but also intensively spurred by a rapid economic development. Argentina experiences a strong economic expansion from 1870 onwards.[16] The expansion causes a considerable immigration towards the political and economic center. Driven by the European

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gospel spread through the Pentecostal field. At the same time Pentecostalism experiences a massive growth and expansion through the Argentinean society (Algranti 2010: 69–83; Oro and Seman 2001: 182; Wynarczyk 1999). Although taking place in different pace, one can observe similarities in the evolution of Pentecostalism in Brazil which was also differentiated in three waves (Freston 1995; 1999).

14   See Algranti 2007a: 113–114, Wynarczyk et al.1995: 5–6. The most important Pentecostal congregations during the first wave are *Asamblea Cristiana, Asambleas de Dios* and *Unión de las Asambleas de Dios.Asamblea Cristiana* (AC) forms the first Pentecostal church in Argentina. Its origins in the country trace back to the year 1909 (Algranti 2010: 72; Saracco 1989: 43–54). The *Asambleas de Dios* (AD) draw back to the work of Swedish missionaries who arrive in 1920 and work during the first decades mostly in the northern provinces of Argentine. Here they have particular success among indigenous groups (Algranti 2007b: 16; 2010: 72–73, Saracco 1989: 66–75). The Argentinean *Asambleas de Dios* should not be confused the North-American *Assemblies of God*. AD forms an independent Argentinean branch of Pentecostalism which does not correspond to the North-American *Assemblies of God*. The North-American *Assemblies of God* is represented in Argentina by the *Unión de las Asambleas de Dios* (UAD) (Algranti 2007b: 17; 2010: 73; Saracco 1898: 54–66; Soneira 1996: 244).

15   Saracco 1989: 69–70, 140.

16   Argentina experiences the strongest European immigration between 1870 and 1930 (Germani 1966; Torrado 2003: 91–95).

immigration, the city of Buenos Aires experiences a substantial growth and becomes deeply marked by the presence of European immigrants.[17]

Buenos Aires is constructed according to the European affinities of the liberal elite and becomes a European city in the mindset of its habitants: the "Paris of South America".[18] Most of the European immigrants who arrive in the harbor of Buenos Aires have escaped poverty and seek upward social mobility and economic welfare in Argentina. They are of lower class origin and start as poor workers. The descendants of the European immigrants will form the urban middle class.[19] The emerging middle class relies on the concepts of economic and social modernization of the liberal elite.[20] Hard work, saving money, and education are the principal means through which upward mobility is sought. Together they constitute a lifestyle of self-discipline and – control that will mark the middle class representations.[21] Particularly the concept of *gente decente* will inform the representations of the emerging middle class. Being decent – being *gente decente* – different from the masses – *gente de pueblo* – is essential and determines the respectability of urban citizens. Cultural symbols and education signal decency. One of these signals is *la buena presencia* (good presence), which becomes apparent in an appropriate, educated way of speaking as well as tidy clothing: decent people have to control their appearance in clothing and manners.[22] In this way, the first symbolic ascriptions – status markers – of the middle class appear.[23]

The favorable economic development at the beginning of the 20th century spurs the growth of the middle class.[24] Driven by rapid growth of its agricultural

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17   Germani 1966: 172.

18   Burdick 1995: 18; Tevik 2006: 41; 44; 81.

19   Germani 1950: 15–17; 1966: 168–172.

20   Schelling 2000: 12.

21   Adamovsky 2009: 116.

22   Adamovsky 2009: 53–117.

23   Rowe and Schelling 1991: 28–29. The concept of the middle class is still not very well established at the beginning of the 20th century this moment. It establishes itself from 1920 onwards and particularly during Perón's government. See Adamovsky 2009: 22–27.

24   Germani supposed that between the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century a massive expansion of the middle class takes place (Germani 1950; 1981; 1966: 168–172). He estimates that 45.9% of the habitants of Buenos Aires are middle class in 1936 (Germani 1950: 8); in the 1940s 55.2% of Argentinean population (Germani 1950: 10). However, these estimations have to be treated carefully since Germani attributes social groups to the middle class that may be not considered as middle class according to more restricted definitions of the middle class.

industry and rising exports, Argentina is on its way to becoming an economic world player. However, the Great Depression of 1929 puts an abrupt halt to the economic expansion and Argentina's aspirations of becoming a world economic power.[25] The economic and social instability, as a consequence of the 1929 crisis, incite political unrest. In this context of economic decline and political conflict, the military stages a coup, the first of many that will disrupt Argentina's politics and society through the 20th century.[26]

In the following decades until the end of the military dictatorship in 1983, Argentina's history is marked by various military coups, Perón's famous presidency, and social conflicts. During this time span, the representations of the middle class consolidate and Pentecostalism appears for the first time on the public stage with the famous evangelical campaign of Tommy Hicks in 1954.[27] The campaign attracts multitudes and forms the most important event during the second wave of Pentecostalism in Argentina.[28] Despite the success of this campaign, it is not until the 1980s that Pentecostalism experiences a massive growth.

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25   See Romero 1994: 66–73. The economic downturn causes external migration from Europe to decline. Simultaneously, internal migration from the provinces to the cities reaches new levels and cities like Buenos Aires grow heavily.

26   See Boris and Tittor 2006: 12–15; Romero 1994: 107–128.

27   In 1954, in the context of the crisis between Church and government, Perón grants Pentecostals the right to realize an evangelical campaign with Tommy Hicks (Algranti 2007b: 19; Bianchi 2004: 224; Míguez 1998: 18; Saracco 204–206, 208–209; Wynarczyk 2009a: 72–79). According to Saracco, the federal police estimate the total number of attendees during the campaign to be around six million (Saracco 1989: 210–211). The massive success of the campaign is also a surprise for the Pentecostal community: local churches are not prepared to receive a massive influx of new participants. Due to the lack of preparation and infrastructure, no significant growth of Pentecostalism results from the campaign. The potential expansion stays away and the mobilizing effect of the campaign evaporates (Algranti 2007b: 19, 23; 2010: 75; Forni 1993: 13; Wynarczyk 2003: 40; 2009: 58–59; Saracco 1989: 210, 215.). In a 1960s national census, 2.6% of the Argentinean population defines itself as Protestant (Míguez 2001: 78; Prien 1978: 587). However, the proportion of Pentecostals among them is not clear. Arno Enns estimates the proportion of Pentecostals among Protestants based on calculations of membership to be around 42.7% in 1967 (Enns 1971: 84). Thus, around 1.11% of the Argentinean population would be Pentecostal in the 1960s.

28   From the 1950s occurs an extensive nationalization of Pentecostalism. Missionary Pentecostal churches adapt more and more to the local culture, and become national churches For the Pentecostal acculturation, the lack of centrality and central hierarchy within Pentecostalism seems to be of central importance. As Algranti (2007b: 18; 2010: 74) points out, the absence of a central institution (organization or dogmas) facilitates the adaptation of Pentecostalism to local culture. Thus, the extensive dogmatic freedom and

4.1.2   *The Transformation of the Religious Field*

The last military dictatorship begins in 1976 and will last until 1983. The Catholic Church supports the dictatorship while the generals maintain close personal relationships with the ruling elite of the Church.[29] In return, the military junta rewards the church's loyalty with financial, administrative and symbolic benefits. One benefit is the support of the religious monopoly of the Catholic Church. Non-Catholic religious actors are banned from the public sphere: they are not allowed to broadcast radio-programs or hold public events. Further, there are also administrative regulations: every non-Catholic religious organization must apply for a subscription into the *Registro Nacional de Culto* (National Registry of Cults, subsequently: *registro*) to be approved by the state.[30] Thus, the religious competition between the Catholic Church and its non-Catholic rivals is restricted. The Catholic Church dominates the religious field without having to face serious threats from potential competitors.

In 1983, the military junta resigns from government and opens the way for democratic elections. Raúl Ricardo Alfonsín becomes the first democratic elected president after the military dictatorship.[31] Yet, the negative economic development of the 80s overshadows Alfonsín's presidency. The "lost decade" of the 80s is characterized by an increasing impoverishment, loss of jobs in the official sector, and the expansion of an informal economic sector. Real wages decrease while the dramatic inflation hits the population hard. At the same time the social welfare system is no longer experienced as sustainable and

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lack of limiting ties allows Pentecostalism to adapt to local habits and practices. Pentecostalism mutates in an interchange with its local socio cultural context. Hence, local forms of Pentecostalism emerge which combine the traditional, imported Pentecostalism and the local religious culture. At the same time, the adaptation of Pentecostalism to local culture facilitates the contact and interchange with the local population. Locally adapted versions of Pentecostalism turn out to be more successful in recruiting new members from local culture than rigid versions of Pentecostalism which refuse any adaptation.

29   Romero 1994: 311. Nevertheless, there are also sectors in the Catholic Church which are opposed to the military dictatorship and its violation of human rights. While there are disagreements about the approval of the military government at the lower levels Church hierarchy, its ruling elite (arc-bishops and most bishops) sympathize consistently with the dictatorship (Bresci 1987: 71–73).

30   In 1978 the law obligating non-Catholic religious groups the inscription in the Registro Nacional de Culto is reestablished. This law allows for controlling non-Catholic religious groups and traces back to the year 1946 (Wynarczyk 2009a: 60).

31   Romero 1994: 333.

becomes dismantled. The socio-economic transformations strike the lower and middle class.[32]

The social and political transformations of the country are accompanied by religious transformations.[33] With the end of the dictatorship the restrictions for religious competition are loosened and a partial deregulation of the religious field takes place. From now on, non-Catholic religious actors gain access to the public sphere: they are allowed to use mass media (television, radio, paper publications) and to organize public events (e.g. massive evangelical campaigns in soccer stadiums).[34] Partly as a result of these developments, an extraordinary expansion of Pentecostalism, Afrobrazilian religions and other religious alternatives takes place during the 1980s and 1990s.[35] Pentecostals, Afrobrazilian groups, Jehovah Witnesses, and Mormons expand and smaller religious movements like Buddhism and New Age gain ground. Meanwhile, the inner differentiation of Catholicism augments.[36] A plural religious field evolves where different religious suppliers compete over the favor of religious clients.

4.1.3   *The Rise and Transformation of Pentecostalism*
In the 1980s and 1990s, Pentecostalism experiences an immense growth in Argentina. Besides a favorable context, the spreading of Pentecostalism is spurred by several religious innovations within Pentecostalism that increase its appeal to the population and mark the third wave of Pentecostalism in Argentina.[37]

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32   Adamovsky 2009: 413; Boris and Tittor 2006: 21–24; Cueto 2007; 2008; 2010; Lvovich 2000; Mallimaci 1996c; Míguez 2005: 7; Parker 1996: 43–54; Rodríguez et al. 2007: 49–51; Svampa 2001, 2005; Tevik 2006: 56.

33   The reputation of the Catholic Church is affected by the former collaboration with the military governors. In the public view it appears as an accomplice of the repressive regime and suffers a low credibility. In reaction to its crippled reputation the Catholic Church spends efforts on restoring its credibility as a public institution. Thus, the Church expands its social services and participates in public discourses where it represents itself as a critic of liberal capitalism and a protector of the poor and vulnerable (Mallimaci 1995; 2000; 2004; 2008: 88–90). The public sphere – and not particularly the religious sphere – remains the principal focus of the Catholic Church (Mallimaci 2004; 2008b: 123).

34   See Frigerio 1993b: 28–29; Míguez 2005: 9.

35   Holvast 2003: 44.

36   See Parker 1999: 12.

37   Context factors which facilitate the expansion of Pentecostalism through Argentina's population are: (1) the end of the dictatorship in 1983 leads to the abolition of certain restrictions in the religious field and gave new liberties to non-Catholic religious actors. Especially the so called Neopentecostal churches make an extensive use of new media techniques like

One of these innovations is prosperity gospel.[38] Prosperity gospel is based on the conviction that obedient Christians have the right to benefit in special treatment from God. God is believed to allow its obedient devotees to prosper. Therefore, firm religious practice and belief in God are supposed to produce this-worldly prosperity. The health and wealth gospel resets the theological focus from salvation to this-worldly prosperity: the primary objective appears to be less the other worldly salvation, but rather the good life in the empirical world.[39] The concept of prosperity gospel is adapted by Hectór Gimenez, a former drug addict who becomes a star preacher with his 1982 founded church *Ondas de Amor y Paz*. Due to his media presence and the immense growth of his church, the religious principles of prosperity gospel spread massively through the field of Pentecostalism and the Argentinean society.[40]

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radio, television, print media and later internet to promote their religious 'products' (Frigerio 1993: 28–29). (2) The support of the military government and the disregard of lower classes lead to a crisis of the Catholic Church in Argentina. Due to a historical focus on leading social sectors and the lack of innovative and appealing religious products the Catholic Church fails to represent the religious and social prospects of vast parts the population. The crisis of the Catholic Church leaves an empty space in the religious field. Especially evangelical and Pentecostal churches succeed in filling the empty space left by the Catholic Church. (3) The end of the dictatorship leaves a climate of social crisis and uncertainness in the Argentinean society. Moreover, neoliberal politics facilitate the growth of social inequality. The rising social inequality and poverty in the 80s and 90s cause a sensation of uncertainness and instability. Under these circumstances, Pentecostalism offers a strategy to deal with these uncertainties. (4) The crisis of political representation feeds the search for new non-political solutions. According to Saracco the success of Pentecostalism is a response to national social and political crisis (Saracco 1989: 301,305).

38   The concept of prosperity gospel appears for the first time in Argentinean Pentecostalism with Reverend Omar Cabrera. His congregation *Visión de Futuro* dates back to the year 1972 and experiences its climax in membership growth in 1985 (Wynarczyk 1989: 5, 36, 45; 2009a: 147). *Visión de Futuro* constitutes the first evangelical mega church in Argentinean history. Wynarczyk describes its audience as heterogeneous, but consisting of a majority of individuals from a poor social backgrounds. Omar Cabrera's sermons emphasize the power of Christ, the activity of demons and the concept of prosperity gospel (Wynarczyk 1989: 5).

39   See Wynarczyk 2009a: 138–143.

40   In 1989, *Ondas de Amor y Paz* lodges already fifty-five thousands members and is said to be the second biggest Christian congregations in the world during the 90s. Wynarczyk (1989: 91, 102) estimates the number of members in 1989 to be around 55.000 and the number of daily visitors of the main temple, cine Roca, to be 14.000. Allan Anderson (2004: 69) states that Ondas de Paz Y Amor was once one of largest congregations of the world and had 340,000 affiliates. *CineBoca*, a colossal movie theatre in the center of the city of Buenos Aires serves as the main church. Here, thousands of adherents of the new

A different innovation in the Pentecostal field is spiritual warfare.[41] Spiritual warfare is based on the widespread believe in demons, bad spirits and curses in Latin America. The term refers to the spiritual battle against Satan and its adherents. Different types of suffering are ascribed to the action of Satan or evil spirits in the life of the afflicted person: poverty, unemployment, family struggle, health problems are regarded as the product of spiritual afflictions caused by evil forces.[42] Divine intervention, which detaches the evil spirits from the individual, is supposed to provide remedy from these afflictions.[43] These interventions are usually associated with specific spiritual practices, such as exorcisms (or: liberation) and faith healing.

Prosperity gospel, spiritual warfare, and, in some cases, also the use of mass media become features of Argenentinean Pentecostalism. New churches based on these innovations emerge and grow rapidly while many of the existing churches employ to varying degrees the concepts of spiritual warfare and/or

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prosperity gospel, coming mostly from the very low ranks of the society, gather together every day (Algranti 2007b: 24–25; Tort et al. 1993: 59; Wynarczyk 1989: 75). Hector Gimenez helps not only to spread the concept of prosperity gospel, but also introduces a new marketing style of Pentecostalism which relies largely on the use of mass media and a strong involvement with show business (Algranti 2007b: 24; Wynarczyk 1989: 89–91, 99–102). Due to the engagement of Gimenez and other Pentecostal preachers in modern mass media, Pentecostalism reaches new levels of public visibility. Yet, at the end of the 1990s, Gimenez suffers from various scandals which include complains about economic fraud and physical violence against his own family. His subsequent divorce and lawsuits are colorfully accompanied by the national media producing large amounts of headlines and causing an enormous decay in Gimenez credibility (Wynarczyk 1989: 75–76).

41   Spiritual warfare is introduced in the Pentecostal field by Carlos Annacondia, a business man who converts at the age of 35 years to Pentecostalism and starts a few years later, in 1981, his own evangelical campaigns. His evangelical campaigns become notorious for its miracles and faith healing and attract multitudes from different places in Argentina and other Latin American countries leading to enormous amounts of conversions (Algranti 2007b: 23–24, Wynarczyk 1989: 107, 140–146; 1993a: 86–91, 2009: 65). Hence, the breakthrough and overall spreading of Pentecostalism in Argentina during the 1980s is often attributed to Carlos Annacondia. Interestingly, despite being an advocate of spiritual warfare – a characteristic often ascribed to Neo-Pentecostalism – Annacondia rejects the idea of prosperity gospel – another characteristic frequently associated to Neo-Pentecostalism (Semán 2001b: 147).

42   Pentecostals often attribute the presence of bad spirits to the exercise of witchcraft, occultism and Afrobrazilian religions (Wynarczyk 1995; Míguez 2001: 79).

43   Wynarczyk 2003: 46.

prosperity gospel.[44] The spread of the innovations is accompanied by a cultural change in Pentecostalism.

From the 1980s onwards, Pentecostalism in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires experiences a cultural change in its attitude towards secular society. Before the 1980s, Pentecostal churches tend to be morally strict and inwardly orientated. They regard society as well as its technical innovations as evil. The moral strictness manifests itself among other characteristics in the dress code for members: women have to wear *polleras* (long skirts), and cannot use make-up or wearing short or colored hair while men wear formal suits. Most churches have a millennialistic vision waiting for Jesus' soon return and the end of times.[45] Consequently, congregations do not encourage their members to engage in professional training or in the improvement of the society.[46] However, in the 1980s, a cultural transformation begins: many of the existing congregations pass through a slow transformation process while new churches with a style different from the inward-orientated sect-type churches appear. Many of the existing churches begin to open up and to soften their hard doctrines with regard to behavior and clothing of their members. Millennialism is replaced by a rather post-millennialistic vision. This opens the way for valuing engagement in society and personal training. Puritanism and the ascetic lifestyle are abolished and substituted by an ethic more open towards the pleasures of the modern world. Consumption of worldly goods and pleasures stop being stigmatized.[47]

Pastors in my interviews often referred to these two types of Pentecostalism as an old and modern Pentecostalism.[48] They supposed that today only a minority of churches in Buenos Aires follows strictly the old model of sectarian

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44   See Frigerio 1994: 13, 23; Wynarczyk 1995; Semán 2001b. Yet, these innovations of
      Pentecostalism are not free of dispute. Many Pentecostal actors regard the concepts of
      prosperity gospel and/or spiritual warfare critically. Especially the idea of prosperity gos-
      pel causes controversies among Pentecostals (Míguez 1998: 31, 68; Semán 2001b: 155–156).
      The spread of spiritual warfare is related to spiritual mapping in Argentina, as described
      by Holvast (2009).

45   See, for instance, Galliano 1994; Spadafora 1994.

46   The withdrawal from and the rejection of the world is often associated with classic
      Pentecostalism.

47   See for instance Wynarczyk 2003: 45. The opening towards society is perhaps the most
      unifying characteristic of this last wave of Pentecostalism (Algranti 2010: 19–22; Garcia-
      Ruiz 2007; Wynarczyk 1999: 14; 2003: 45).

48   Scholars often describe these innovations as a new era and type of Pentecostalism which
      is subsumed under the term "Neo-Pentecostalism". While the content of the term and its
      viability are controversial, the main and unifying characteristic of the "new" or "neo"
      Pentecostalism appears to be the relationship to the empirical world: while traditional

Pentecostalism, which emphasizes the imminent return of Jesus Christ and the end of times. My observations support this view: only in a few cases did I observe churches with very strict moral values, a millennialistic focus, and traditional forms of clothing.[49]

The innovations and modifications of national Pentecostalism – accompanied by a favorable social context – cause a boom of Pentecostalism.[50] Pentecostals refer to the expansion of Pentecostalism often as an *avivamiento*, a spiritual awakening. According to this view, the Holy Spirit reaches Argentina, blesses its followers and will transform Argentina into a country of Christ.[51] The *avivamiento* does not limit itself to the Pentecostal movement but reaches also many traditional evangelical congregations.[52] Especially among Baptists and the Plymouth Brethren, which form the biggest non-Pentecostal evangelical denominations in Argentina, an *avivamiento* takes hold: many of their congregations become pentecostalized. Other congregations split due to conflicts between traditional and charismatic fractions. Charismatics are frequently called to leave their congregations while new charismatic branches emerge assembling those who have been rejected by traditional congregations. "Old fashioned evangelicals" lose ground. Today, the majority of the Baptists and Plymouth Brethren appear to have turned towards Pentecostalism.[53]

Pentecostalism refused the world and tried to cut its relations to it, Neo-Pentecostalism does not reject the empirical world: it seeks involvement in the world and uses worldly measures to spread its message (Algranti 2010: 19–22; Wynarczyk 1999: 14; 2003: 45).Yet, if one reduces the definition of Neo-Pentecostalism to its orientation towards the world most churches in Argentina could be defined today as Neo-Pentecostal.

49   In most temples, the majority of members participate in church services wearing leisure clothing. Yet, there are varying degrees of "legalism": some churches apply partly the classical moral code by denying women, for instance, entering the pulpit with pants instead of polleras (dresses).

50   See Holvast 2009: 50, Míguez 2001: 78. Saracco (1989: 154) asserts that the number of members in Pentecostal church tripled between 1980 and 1985. Yet, he does not mention any data source. Wynarczyk (1997: 13) states that 65% of the inscriptions in the registro take place between 1981 and 1993. 68% of these inscriptions are Protestant churches, the majority among them Pentecostal.

51   See Wynarczyk 1997: 9.

52   See, for instance, Wynarczyk 2002: 42; Wynarczyk and Semán 1994: 38–40; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 12–13.

53   The rise of Pentecostalism and the pentecostalization of non-Pentecostal evangelicals lead to a significant reduction of the proportion of non-Pentecostal among evangelicals (Enns 1971: 84, 178). According to data from the Conicet (2008) survey, almost 90% of Argentinean Protestants are Pentecostals.

In Buenos Aires city, the expansion of the Pentecostal movement takes place later and to a lower degree than in the rest of Argentina. The Argentinean capital forms a geographical space comparatively difficult to penetrate for the movement while the poor surroundings of Buenos Aires city provide a much more fertile soil for its expansion.[54] Nevertheless, there is also a notable growth of Pentecostalism in the city of Buenos Aires.[55] The religious conquest of the city of Buenos Aires entails not only the penetration of a new geographic space but also the first step into a new social sector: the middle class.[56] The movement begins to have a slight impact in the middle class, particularly the lower middle class. Some churches adapt to the preferences and culture of the urban middle class and attract individuals from different middle class sectors.[57] At the same time, some of the second generation Pentecostals ascend to the middle class. Despite these dynamics, the movement remains mainly a lower class movement: the vast majority of Pentecostal churches continue recruiting their members essentially from the lower sectors of the Argentinean society.

4.2   Argentina's Middle Class: Objective and Symbolic Boundaries

Comparing the German or Scottish settlements in the south of Buenos Aires and the slum that has developed nearby makes you feel both shame and compassion for the Republic of Argentina. In the former, the houses are painted; the front of the house is always neat, decorated with flowers and attractive hedges; the furnishings are simple but complete; the dishware is shiny copper or tin; the bed, with pretty curtains. The people who live there are constantly active – milking cows, making butter and cheese. Some families have managed to make large fortunes and move to the city to enjoy the amenities. But the slums in Argentina are a disgraceful antithesis of this picture: dirty children covered in rags, living with a pack of dogs, men lying on the floor, completely idle. There is filth and poverty all around; a small table and stuffed bags are the only furnishings; miserable messes for living quarters, and a generally barbarian and uncivilized way of life.

SARMIENTO[58]

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54   Wynarzyk 2009a: 53–54, 170–171.

55   Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 9.

56   See Algranti 2007b: 26; Saracco 1989: 306; Anderson 2004: 68.

57   See, for instance, Algranti 2007b: 15, Saracco 1989: 309–310.

58   The original quote is: „Da compasión y vergüenza en la República Argentina comparar la colonia alemana o escocesa del sur de Buenos Aires y la villa que se forma en el interior:

The aim of this section is to present a picture of Argentina's middle class.[59] This picture will allow us in the following parts of this study to consider how the middle class relates to Pentecostalism and how middle class Pentecostals deal with their religious belonging.

"Objectively" the middle class is characterized along some objective boundaries, such as income, education, and occupation.[60] In general terms, the middle class can be defined by a completed secondary school degree or higher education

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en la primera las casitas son pintadas; el frente de la casa, siempre aseado, adornado con flores y arbustillos graciosos; el amueblado, sencillo, pero completo; la vajilla de cobre o estaño reluciente; la cama, con cortinillas graciosas, los habitantes, en un movimiento y acción continuo. Ordeñando vacas, frabricando mantequilla y quesos, han logrado algunas familias hacer fortunas colosales y retirarse a la ciudad, a gozar de las comodidades. La villa nacional es el reverso indigno de esta medalla: niños sucios y cubiertos de harapos, viven con una jauría de perros, hombres tendidos por el suelo, en la más completa inacción; el desaseo y la pobreza por todas partes; una mesita y petacas por todo amueblado; ranchos miserables por habitación, y un aspecto general de barbarie y de incuaria los hacen notables." (Sarmiento's "Facundo" quoted according to Bianchi 2004: 43).

59   Traditionally, Argentina is classified as country with one of the strongest middle classes in Latin America (Germani 1950; 1966; 1981; Tevik 2006:23; Visacovsky 2008: 11–12). However, in the last decades of the 20th century this picture has changed. Social transformations spurred by neoliberal policies have led to an impoverishment of parts of the middle class, whereas a small section of the middle class has benefited from these transformations (Boris and Tittor 2006: 30–34; Kessler and Espinoza 2003; Míguez 2005: 3–9; Rodríguez et al. 2007: 41, 49–51, Svampa 2005: 129–130, 138, 167–171). Therefore, the Argentinean sociologist Maristella Svampa distinguishes between the winners and losers of the social transformations (Svampa 2001). Those who see their economic standards threatened and experience an impoverishment are, for instance, sellers, administrative employees, teachers, and specialized workers. Typical winners are business owners, executives, or successful freelancers. Both – losers and winners – share similar educational backgrounds, but they have different economic possibilities (Adamovsky 2009: 424–434; Cueto 2004, 2007: 11–15; 2008; 2010; Cueto and Luzzi 2008: 62–80; Svampa 2001; 2005: 129–158; Tevik 2006: 56). Yet, it is difficult to assess the extent of these transformations within the middle class (Kessler 2010a). The vast majority of middle class Pentecostals studied during the empirical research of this study can neither be classified as winners nor losers of these transformations.

60   See Cueto and Luzzi 2008: 61–62; Tevik 2006: 24. There is no general statistical definition for Argentina's social classes. Nevertheless, there are some studies that indicate what "objective" attributes are regarded as corresponding to different social classes (SAIMO 2006; Svampa 2005; Torrado 2003). Based on these insights, I draw an approximate picture of the "objective" characteristics of the middle class in Argentina. The technical definitions of the middle class are based on statistical data from INDEC (2005, 2009), and NSE (SAIMO 2006), general studies about social stratification and my field experience. Using

and a household income per capita above average.[61] Within the middle class, one can distinguish between the lower middle class and the middle and upper middle class. The lower middle class holds secondary school degrees but no higher education degrees.[62] Typical occupations in the lower middle class are qualified technical workers and assistants, shopkeepers, employees in the public administration, the service sector, and/or technical areas. They are located on the border to the lower class. The middle and upper middle class, in contrast, generally hold finished higher education degrees.[63] In most occasions, the heads of households work as professionals such as technical employees, physicians, managers, lawyers, teachers, etc. or are small and medium-size business owners.[64] This study emphasizes particularly this group. With respect to their education and type of occupation they represent the general imaginary of the middle class.[65]

Yet, the "middle class" is not only marked by an objective social position. It is also identified with symbolic attributes such as lifestyles.[66] "Symbolic" attributes in form of lifestyles and displayed tastes constitute status markers that create symbolic boundaries in opposition to other social classes.[67]

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this data one can define classes with regard to their cultural capital (formal education) and economic capital (household income per capita).

61   For the second quarter of 2009, it can be defined by a minimum household income per capita of 820 Argentinean pesos. This group is thought to represent around 45% of the Argentinean population.

62   For the second quarter of 2009, the household income per capita of the lower middle class is estimated to move between 820 and 1300 Argentinean pesos per month, equalizing approx. 231–366 US Dollars (based on an exchange rate of 3.55 Arg. Pesos per US$). This group is estimated to represent around 25% of the Argentinean population.

63   They have a household income per capita of more than 1300 Argentinean pesos per month, equalizing approx. 366 US Dollars (based on an exchange rate of 3.55 Arg. Pesos per US$). Many individuals with unfinished higher education degrees and a relatively high income also form part of the middle and upper middle class. In total, this group will include around 20% of the Argentinean population.

64   See Cueto and Luzzi 2008: 61.

65   Adamovsky 2009, Svampa 2005, Tevik 2006.

66   See Adamovsky 2009: 433; Cueto and Luzzi 2008: 10–12. Despite the importance that is attributed to the middle class in Argentina, there exists barely literature about Argentina's middle class culture (Adamovsky 2009: 11). Some of the exceptions are the publications from Cueto (2004, 2007), Maristella Svampa (2001, 2005), and Tevik (2006) as well Adamovsky's "Historia de la Clase Media en Argentina" published in 2009 to which I will particularly refer. Since there is only very sparse literature about the cultural habits, attitudes and preferences of the middle class, I can only sketch a very general picture of the middle class representations.

67   Lamont 1992.

Adamovsky portrays the Argentinean middle class as an imaginary that consists of specific attributes defining what the middle class is and not is. He shows that the middle class is a historical construction filled over time with ideas and characteristics. In order to assume a distinct identity in the Argentinean society distinctive characteristics had to be attributed to the "middle class".[68] What emerged are social representations, an imaginary, of the middle class as something different from other social classes: a distinct social class that defines itself neither as the lower nor as the upper class.[69]

Symbolic boundaries are based on a cultural repertoire that is the product of a social evolution.[70] As described above, the creation of symbolic boundaries in opposition to the "uncivilized masses" started early in Argentina's postcolonial history. Good manners and clothing served as an indicator for the respectability of citizens. Later in Argentina's history, these characteristics were ascribed to the middle class.

A middle class identity develops particularly during the first two presidencies of Perón as a result of the conflict with Peronism. "Respectable" citizens seek distinction from Peronism and its "uncivilized" followers: the working class persuaded by Perón. Thus, the middle class identity assumes an anti-plebeian character. From the viewpoint of the middle class, the working class is imagined as a mass of uncivilized, uncontrolled "negros" from the rural backlands of Argentina. Lower class individuals are not only experienced as lacking appropriate culture, but as also missing the soberness and rationality of the middle class. They appear to be solely controlled by their emotions. Rowe and Schelling summarize the imagined lack of control and rationality in the phrase: "They do not think, they feel."[71]

The "respectable" middle class experiences Latin America and particularly its lower class as uncivilized. In order to distinguish itself from an "uncivilized" surrounding, the middle class of Buenos Aires represents itself as European in its tastes, culture and manners.[72]

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68   Adamovsky 2009.

69   The need for a distinctive symbolic identity is among other factors spurred by the "objective" social position of the middle class. Middle classes are located in a social position in between: they are not the poor or working class nor are they the upper-class which causes the general difficulty of social scientists to define the middle class (Adamovsky 2009: 11; Cueto 2007: 19–22; Lvovich 2000: 51). At the same time they may share many characteristics with those located below them. In order not to be confounded with those below them they need symbolic attributes that make their "objective" class belonging visible to other social actors.

70   Lamont 1992: 7, 11.

71   The phrase is a title in "Memory and modernity: Popular culture in Latin America". See Rowe and Schelling 1991: 169.

72   Adamovsky 2009: 372–378; Guano 2002: 183–184; Sarlo 2000.

(…) throughout the 20th century much of the porteño middle classes proudly cultivated their ancestral Europeanness. Constructed in racial and cultural terms, this Europeanness posited middle-class porteños as displaced from a more "civilized", more "modern" elsewhere to which they essentially belonged.

GUANO 2002: 184

A way to show this difference is through a tidy, well gloomed appearance, a controlled behavior, and good manners.[73]

Over time, an ideal-typical imaginary consolidates. This imaginary portrays the middle class as white, modern, living in Buenos Aires, European and civilized and principally different from lower classes, which are perceived as uncivilized, anti-modern and non-European.[74] The antipode between the

FIGURE 1
Representation of Perón's followers in an anti-Peronist publication
(ADAMOVSKY 2009: 283)

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73   Adamovsky 2009: 477, 484, 488.
74   Adamovsky 2009: 477, 484, 488; Guano 2004.

"uncivilized lower class" and the "civilized, decent middle class" creates a cultural basis for the symbolic boundaries in today's Argentina.

The distinction from the "uncivilized" lower class continues to be a core characteristic of the representations of the middle class.[75] The imaginary of the lower class is often constructed around some attributes that have a negative connotation for the middle class: lack of culture, education and good taste, chaos, bad manners (*maleducado*), uncleanliness, violence, laziness, superstitious magical believes, dependancy on the politics of *asistencialismo, clientelismo* etc.[76] The following quote from an interview with a middle class Argentinean living in Buenos Aires illustrates some of the characteristics that the middle class attributes to the lower class:

> Meanwhile, the very low class is characterized by its carelessness and neglect of personal hygiene, especially oral hygiene. They do not have a viable income, and they usually live in the city outskirts. They do not have a high school education; they have limited vocabulary, only a basic understanding of many concepts, and have very few resources, even intellect.
>
> QUOTED ACCORDING TO ADAMOVSKY 2009: 431[77]

This comment does not only refer to the education and income of the lower class, but also to what the speaker perceives as their typical way of speaking, their physical appearance, and intellectual capacities. I received similar comments from some of my middle class informants who described the lower class as being careless, living in chaotic and marginal habitats in the *conurbano,* and lacking education. Lower class Argentineans are often regarded as an "inappropriate" other, as lacking culture and education, being untidy and superstitious,

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75   The representations of Argentina's middle class appear to be relatively stable over time. This does, however, not prevent changes. For instance, there seems to be a change with regard to the role of private education. Private education second school education seems to be increasingly a general expectation among the middle class. It appears to be more and more the rule for middle class parents to send children to private secondary schools.

76   Adamovsky 2009: 488.

77   The original quote is: "Por su parte la clase baja muy baja se caracteriza por la desprolijidad y descuido en el aseo personal, la boca, los dientes incompletos. No tienen un sueldo viable, viven generalmente en el conurbano, no tienen educación secundaria, repiten las palabras, manejan pocos conceptos, son escasos en todos los recursos, también los intelectuales." (Quoted according to Adamovsky 2009: 431) The quote is taken from Adamosky (2009). Unfortunately, the source is not clearly indicated in the text.

and leaning towards magical practices.[78] In contrast to the lower class, middle class Argentineans are thought to embody "appropriate" culture: they are imagined as rational – in contrast to superstitious –, tidy, well-gloomed and orderly individuals who live in nice and clean places, care for their physical appearance and express themselves in a proper way. Hence, the culture of the popular masses is conceived of as standing in opposition to the decent lifestyle of the middle class *Porteño*.

The distinction from the lower class can manifest itself in stigmas. Pejorative terms that refer to the lower class such as "cabecita negra", "negro", "negro de mierda", or "villero" illustrate the disdain that is often exhibited towards parts of the lower class.[79] "Negro", for instance, refers to lower class individuals who do not fit to the middle class concepts of decent behavior. Although those who use the term are anxious to claim that it has no racist connotation, there remains at least a slightly discriminative tone since the term is frequently used for individuals with darker skin colors. The imaginary of the "negro" is strongly associated with the imaginary of the "uncivilized lower class".[80] Tevik mentions some examples of situations in which the middle class uses the terms "negro", "cosa de negros" or "negrada". The terms are used for practices and people that stand in opposition to the good taste of the middle class and are judged as culturally inferior.[81] One example is *cumbia*. *Cumbia* is a highly popular type of music among Argentina's lower class. The middle class tends to reject *cumbia* as a primitive and simplistic monorhythmic type of music.[82] Other examples

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78   The way of life of the lower class is not only experienced as wrong and culturally inferior, but is also supposed to be the reason for their poverty. According to this reasoning, only a reeducation that transmits appropriate culture – cleanliness, orderliness, good manners, formal education etc. – to lower class Argentineans may help them to renounce their "culture of poverty".

79   Guano 2004: 75. This does not mean that the lower class acts passively. They also develop their ways of depreciating parts of middle class culture. The term "cheto", for instance, refers to extremely well gloomed and tidy individuals. This term is, however, be also used by middle class individuals. See Tevik 2006: 137, 139.

80   Middle class representations are partly drawn along boundaries of ethnicity: the middle class is imagined as white and European in opposition to a "negro" lower class. This enmeshment of ethnic and social class boundaries is related to Argentina`s colonial and immigration history which has led to descendants of European immigrants – the "Transplanted Peoples" (Ribeiro 1970) – shaping the imaginary of the Argentinean middle class. See Frigerio 2006; Ribeiro 1970; Torrado 2002.

81   Tevik 2006: 82, 114–115.

82   Tevik 2006: 145–147.

of practices perceived as lacking culture and good taste, include showing a naked torso in public, drinking beer and leaving trash in public places, not respecting well administered facilities, employing brute force, and speaking frankly about one's problems in public.[83] Respectable middle class individuals are thought to abstain from this type of practices since they signal lower class incivility instead of middle class respectability and decency. Characteristics attributed to the lower class can form a stigma that should be avoided.[84]

The social representations of the *Porteño* middle class encompass also a specific conception of the city of Buenos Aires. Buenos Aires is thought to be a middle class city and the *Porteño* the very manifestation of Argentina's middle class. The imaginary of a modern and "European" Buenos Aires draws back to

FIGURE 2
Representation of the respectable middle class family in 1947[85]
(ADAMOVSKY 2009: 160)

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83   Tevik 2006: 114–115; 211–214.

84   The stigmatization of the lower class becomes manifest in public surveys. Even individuals objectively living in poverty prefer to describe themselves as middle class and avoid a self-description as lower class. Thus, a high proportion of the population calls itself middle class without being objectively part of the middle class. See Adamovsky 2009: 419–421 479, 490; Cueto 2010: 45–46.

85   The figure shows the representation of the respectable middle class family according to a publication from the committee of bank employees.

the early modernization projects of Argentina's liberal elites.[86] Buenos Aires was conceptualized by the elites as a modern, European metropolis manifesting modernity in its organization, architecture, culture and population. The middle class has historically been portrayed as the promoter of modernity and social progress[87] and widely relied on the idea of economic and social modernization, a process thought to be accompanied by secularization and scientific progress.[88] Religion was believed to be substituted by a more scientific worldview. The identification with the project of modernity marked the educated middle class, which keeps identifying itself with occidental concepts of modernity and secularity, prefering "rational" and scientific worldviews over religious ones.[89]

Hence, the notions of "Buenos Aires", "middle class", "European" and "modernity" are strongly intertwined. Buenos Aires is imagined as a European city with a modern, European middle class population. Its *Porteño* middle class population tends to portray itself as modern and European. These self-descriptions shape the aspirations of the middle class which shows a high affinity to the western – European and North American – lifestyles in consumption, culture, and behavior.

Middle class representations are also related to specific consumption patterns and material belongings that serve as status markers. Popular pastimes of the middle class are shopping, dining in cozy restaurants, visiting cinema theatres, and playing sports. Typical status markers among the affluent middle class are driving brand new, imported cars, having a house in a gated community, employing service personal, spending one's holidays abroad, wearing exclusive polo sweaters, sending the children to a private school.[90] Although not every middle class individual can afford these goods, the aspiration for them is widespread.[91]

Besides consumption patterns and material belongings, cultural capital plays a crucial role within the middle class. Particularly education as a source of middle class identity can hardly be underestimated in its importance. Education

86   Guano 2002; 2004.
87   At the same time, the lower class is depicted as badly integrated into modernity and a barrier for social progress. See Salvia 2007: 31.
88   Schelling 2000: 12.
89   Schelling 2000: 3, 12; Viotti 2011: 5.
90   Tevik 2006: 54, 97, 103, 105, 107–109, 111, 149–162, 232.
91   The consumption of these goods does not only serve as a distinction from the lower class but can also form a status sign within the middle class marking a distinction between the "losers" and "winners" of the social transformations.

is regarded as the most important indicator of class belonging and assumes a central role in the middle class.[92] Good educational training is viewed as essential. A university title or at least a *terciario* is a desired asset since university titles are highly valued.[93] Astonishingly, the educated middle class shows, despite its valuation of education, no particular taste for high culture. Thus, the middle class does not dedicate itself to frequent visits of museums, art exhibitions, or classic concerts. Unlike the French upper middle class, high culture does not constitute a typical symbolic boundary that the Argentinean middle class draws in opposition to the lower class.[94] Rather than by the consumption of high culture, symbolic boundaries are drawn along a "good taste" in appearance and behavior. Specific practices and styles are experienced as standing in contrast to the good taste, as was discussed above. The presence or absence of a good taste is generally associated with the education of the individual. This is best illustrated by the concept of "grasa". *Grasa* refers generally to the lack of good taste and is often used for Argentineans who enjoy a good economic position but show a bad taste in clothing or behavior. Accordingly, the concept of *grasa* forms a mechanism for limiting social upward mobility into the ranks of the decent middle class. Those who have not received a decent education and cultural training are excluded from the circle of the respectable middle class. They are regarded with disdain and are laughed at.[95]

Middle class representations produce a certain pressure for adaptation on those who are embedded into social networks of others – family, friends, neighbors and

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92   Adamovsky 2009: 433.

93   This is illustrated, for instance, by the frequent use of university titles (Tevik 2006: 97–98). Middle class parents normally plan to send their children to the university and encourage them to acquire a university title. Education constitutes the preferred strategy for the reproduction and improvement of social positions within the middle class. Private education plays an increasing role: more and more middle class parents send their children to private schools and universities (Cueto 2004; 2007; Svampa 2005; Tevik 2006: 91–92). Nonetheless, education is not only valued as a strategy for social upward mobility, but is also believed to have a positive effect on other attributes: education is conceived of as a mean of personal development and generating a good taste. However, in the case of the Argentinean middle class the good taste is not necessarily related to high culture.

94   Tevik 2006: 109. See for French upper middle class and high culture Bourdieu 1979 and Lamont 1992. An affinity for the established cultural production (arts, literature and music) and rejection of popular culture is maybe a characteristic of the most educated sectors of the Argentinean middle class and may serve for drawing further boundaries within the middle class.

95   See Tevik 2006: 139–148.

colleagues – defining themselves as middle class. In these "middle class" circles exists a pressure and inclination to behave according to the middle class representations. Argentineans having grown up in these middle class circles and defining themselves as decent members of the middle class are likely to know and share the middle class representations of appropriate behavior. They will tend to control their appearance, behavior, and communication to correspond to the middle class representations by, for instance, reflecting rationality, tidiness, education, and good manners in their communication.[96]

This does however not imply that the practice of middle class individuals does always entirely correspond to their representations. Middle class individuals may dedicate themselves to practices that are conceived of as inappropriate according to their class representations.[97] Yet, behaving against the middle class representations may affect the appraisal that other middle class individuals have for an actor. The crossing of established middle class boundaries can have severe consequences.

> The people excluded by our boundaries are those with whom we refuse to associate and those toward whom rejection and aggression are showed, and distance openly marked, by way of insuring that "you understand that I am better than you are."
>
> LAMONT 1992: 10

This does not only mean for them to risk their social standing and to be stigmatized but also to potentially drop out of supportive social networks. Active or passive support from peers necessary to maintain the "objective" class position, may be refused. Acting according to the class representations can be a key to access and maintain a social position.[98] In contrast, inappropriate behavior

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96   They may be raised in the middle class and have embodied a good part to the class representation in their habitus or they may be social climbers who seek social recognition by adapting to the representations of the middle class.

97   This implies that individuals "objectively" situated in the lower class can also share middle class values. The middle class imaginary with its ideals and distinctions is not only present among individuals from the middle class but also among parts of the lower class (Adamovsky 2009: 474). Thus, individuals from the lower class may adapt their behavior to the middle class representation in order to distinguish themselves from the middle class imaginary of lower classes and seek acceptance by the "more legitimate" middle classes. They may seek social ascendancy through adaptation of middle class representations and distinction from lower class culture or may be partly socialized in middle culture through television, school, etc. (Adamovky 2009: 488).

98   See Lamont 1992: 12.

can cause sanctions – poor school marks, negative evaluations at work – that inhibit the access to objective social positions or may even lead to downward social mobility.

The potential loss of symbolic recognition and objective possibilities creates a pressure to act in conformance with the middle class representations. As Tevik points out, the Argentinean middle class is afraid of being judged negatively by peers:

> Fear outweighs trust, and the avoidance of being judged can result in a play, in which familiarity with the correct expectations and morals are used to create masquerades.
>
> TEVIK 2006: 218[99]

The need to perform one's middle class identity can turn literally into a theatric performance.[100] Fear of negative judgments leads actors to hide and disguise inappropriate characteristics.[101] They prefer pretending over losing face in front of middle class peers. However, sometimes actors cannot hide their inappropriate attributes, as in the case of an inappropriate religious belonging. This raises the question of how middle class individuals deal with their inappropriate tendencies.

4.3   Argentina's Religious Field

After having presented in the previous section a general account of Argentina's middle class, this section focuses on the religious field. The objective of this section is to provide a brief overview of Argentina's religious field and to relate it to the topic of social class. This section thus raises the following questions: (1) What religious options are dominant in Argentina's religious field? How does Pentecostalism position itself among these options? (2) In what way are social class and religion interrelated? How do different religious options fit into the representations of the middle class?

Following these two groups of questions, the section is divided into two subsections. The first subsection offers an overview of Argentina's religious field.

99   The original quote is: "El temor social tiene más peso que la confianza, y la evitación del ser juzgado puede resultar en una farsa donde la familiaridad con las expectativas correctas y las moralidades se utilizan para diseñar mascaradas." (Tevik 2006: 218).

100   See, for instance, Visacovsky 2008: 22.

101   See Tevik 2006: 217–218.

After describing the religious field with its different religious options, the second subsection endeavors to relate the religious field to Argentina's social class structure by exploring the religious tendencies of the lower and middle classes. Exploring the general relationship between social class and religion provides some important insights for the study of middle class Pentecostalism.

4.3.1   *Rising Religious Diversity and Competition*

Despite its historical commitment to the European concept of modernization and secularization, Argentina has not been converted into a secularized country. By contrast, Argentineans show high levels of religious belief, the public sphere is marked by a strong presence of the Catholic Church, and there are a growing number of religious options constituting a thriving religious market.[102] Especially the city of Buenos Aires and its surroundings are marked by a great diversity of religious options.[103]
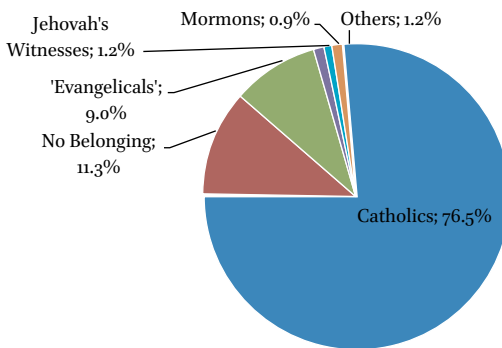
FIGURE 3
Religious belonging in Argentina in 2008
(CONICET 2008.)

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102   A survey conducted in the first quarter of 2008 by the national research institution Ceil-Piette Conicet (subsequently: Conicet) in Argentina reveals the high level of belief among the Argentinean population: 91.1% of the informants state that they believe in the existence of God while only 4.9% of the informants describe themselves as atheist or agnostic.The survey was conducted by the Argentinean research institute Ceil-Piette Conicet in the first quarter of 2008 with a total of 2403 cases and an error margin of 2% and a reliability of 95%. The belief in God is not uniformly distributed among the population. Young people and men as well as higher educated Argentineans generally exhibit a slightly lower tendency to believe in God than older people and women. See Conicet 2008.

103   Cárdneas 2003; Forni et. al 2003; 2008; Malimacci 2008b.

Nevertheless, Catholicism remains the most prevalent religious denomination in the country: 76.5% of the interviewees declare themselves to be Catholic, 9% Protestant ("Evangelicals": non-charismatic Protestants and Pentecostals) and 3.5% belong to other religious groups. Finally, 11.3% of respondents say that they do not belong to any religious denomination.[104]

Remarkably, institutional religious attendance is relatively low among Argentineans. Despite their high levels of belief, only a small proportion of Argentineans regularly attend institutional religious practices.[105] Particularly among those who declare themselves to be Catholic, religious attendance appears to be low, whereas Protestants show a significantly higher level of religious practice. The majority of those who declare themselves Catholic maintain distance from the institutional practices of the Catholic Church. This group is often described as "nominal Catholics": they display a very low degree of attachment to the church and its religious practices and tend to exhibit a low level or absence of institutional (Catholic) religious attendance.[106] Interestingly, the self-description "Catholic" remains, despite the increasing deviation from the institutional model of Catholicism, valid for the majority of Argentineans. This tendency reveals the continuing importance of Catholicism for the Argentinean identity.

Nevertheless, beyond "declared" Catholicism there exists a thriving religious plurality. More and more individuals choose religious options apart from Catholicism and refuse to define their religious identity as Catholic. Religious plurality grew from the 1980s onwards. More and more religious options

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104 Conicet 2008.

105 With respect to the attendance of religious services, 49.1% of the interviewees declare that they rarely attend the religious ceremonies of their religious organization and 26.8% say that they never frequent the religious ceremonies of their religious organization. Nevertheless, 23% claim to attend very often the religious services of their religious organization. Remarkably, 60.6% of Argentineans who claim to attend religious ceremonies very often are Protestants ("Evangelicals") (Conicet 2008). In a different survey conducted in Quilmes, a city in the *conurbano* of Buenos Aires, only 7.2% of Catholics interviewed claim to attend the Catholic mass regularly, while 45.1% say that they attend mass from time to time, and 37.8% state that they never attend (Esquivel et al. 2001: 71–75). Focusing on the religiously very active population in terms of church attendance, Protestants outnumber Catholics and every other religious group in Argentina. At 60.6%, Protestants make up the majority of those who declare they attend services very often. Hence, taking only the religiously active part of the population into account, Catholics and "Evangelicals" may even constitute almost equally large groups. See also Míguez 1998: 27; Wynarczyk 1993b; Wynarczyk and Semán 1994: 29–30.

106 Frigerio 2007: 108–109; Mallimaci 2009b.

appeared on the religious arena and some of them expanded vastly. The Catholic Church began to face serious competition from other religious suppliers to which it lost many members. Particularly Pentecostals, but also Afrobrazilian religions, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses experienced a significant growth in membership over the last decades.[107]

The increasing number of religious options spurs the competitive behaviour of religious actors. Religious organizations struggle to attract new members and maintain the existing ones. As described by Andrew Chesnut, "religious suppliers" in Latin America fight today over "religious market shares" and behave increasingly similar to competing companies by developing marketing strategies and competing directly with their rivals.[108]

Although the religious field experienced significant transformation processes that went along with the spreading of new religious options, the distribution of power continues to be in favor of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church remains the most dominant actor in the religious field.[109] The dominant position of the Catholic Church within Argentina's society and religious field is, for instance, illustrated by its position in the constitution: although there is no official state religion in Argentina, the second article of the Argentinean constitution defines that the federal government leans on the Roman Catholic worship.[110] Also the fact that all non-Catholic religious actors are legally obligated to register in the *Registro Nacional de Culto* indicates the position of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is the only religious institution legally recognized as a church in Argentina and, therefore, enjoys several organizational and financial advantages over its religious competitors.[111] Moreover, the Catholic Church remains a strong public actor and has successfully managed to portray itself as the defender of the interests of the

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107   Besides these very popular and visible religious options, there are numerous religious options with minor "market shares" such as historical Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, New Age groups, occultism, esoteric practices, faith healers, sorcerers, etc. Especially the Greater Buenos Aires today embraces a vast diversity of religious options illustrated by two extensive volumes titled "Guía de la diversidad religiosa de Buenos Aires".Forni et al. 2003; 2008. These volumes attempt to provide an overview of the available religious options.

108   Chesnut 2003.

109   Mallimaci 2009b: 19.

110   Quoted according to Mallimaci 2010: 18.

111   Wynarzcyk 2003: 51–55. The Catholic Church constitutes one of the most dominant institutions in the public sphere. It is present in the mass-media, education and social welfare system as well as in political debates. The influence of Catholicism becomes already

Argentinean people.[112] Catholicism forms as an essential part of the Argentinean national identity and continues to be, for the majority of the population, a source of cultural identity. Not only the figures on religious belonging, presented above, reflect this tendency, but also the high credibility of the Catholic Church. Despite its entanglement with the military dictatorship the Catholic Church is the most credible of all institutions in the Argentinean society: 59% of the interviewees in the Conicet survey declare that they trust in the Catholic Church, 58% trust in the media, and only 27% trust in the national political parties.[113] Hence, the Catholic Church appears to be most legitimate actor in the society.[114] Also in religious terms, the Catholic Church remains the dominant and most legitimate actor in Argentina: all other religious actors suffer from significantly lower levels of popularity and legitimacy among the Argentinean population.[115] Catholicism continues to be the standard model of Argentinean religiosity. Because of the dominant cultural and religious position of Catholicism, the conversion to other types of religion can be described as a form of "religious dissent".[116] Especially non-Catholic forms of popular religion, such as Pentecostalism and Afrobrazilian religions, are experienced as less legitimate and a deviation from the Catholic model that shapes the Argentinean identity.

4.3.2   *Religion and Social Class*

Studies in Latin American religion often assume a link between social stratification and religious practice. Social class belonging is believed to shape religious practices and beliefs.[117] Particularly for the case of Latin America's lower

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apparent in the public space of the city: Statues and symbols of the Holy Mary are omnipresent. Especially the Virgin of Lujan which is the Catholic patron of the Argentinean nation paves the cities and villages of Argentina. One, for instance can observe statues and symbols of the Virgin of Lujan for in buses, parks, streets, highways, public buildings, offices of public administration, subway-stations, etc. For the majority of the population Catholicism continues to be a source of cultural identity. But meanwhile they may distance themselves from the institution of the Catholic Church (Mallimaci 1999: 84, 86).

112   Bastian 2004b; Kruip 2004: 185; Frigerio 2007; Mallimaci 2000; 2004; 2009b: 27–34; 2010: 17–21, 24.

113   Conicet 2008.

114   Frigerio 2007: 112.

115   Esquivel et al. 2001: 55–58; Giménez Béliveau 2009.

116   Blancarte 2000.

117   See, for instance, Mallimaci 2007: 720; Parker 1996: 83.

class, there exists a vast body of research suggesting that lower classes develop specific forms of religious devotion and belief. These forms of religious devotion and belief are described by the notion of "popular religion".[118] Thus, popular religion is usually defined as a lower class pool of religious beliefs, devotions, and practices.[119] By attributing popular religion specifically to lower classes, it is indirectly suggested that the religious practices and beliefs of other social classes differ from this type of religion. Hence, popular religion is thought to be significantly less present among the middle and upper class.

Popular religion can become manifest in the context of different religions and denominations.[120] There are, however, some types of religious practice generally conceived of as manifestations of popular religion. Prominent examples are popular Catholicism, Pentecostalism, Afrobrazilian religions, indigenous religion, witchcraft, and sorcery.[121]

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118   Popular religion is a prominent, but controversially discussed topic in Latin America's sociology of religion (Ameigeiras 1996:187; Martín 2007, 2009).

119   Popular religion refers generally to the religious beliefs and practices of lower classes in Latin America. See Ameigeiras 1996; Parker 1996: 32, 36; Semán 1997: 133, 2001a: 48. However, the term is controversial and its use may differ. Thus, Knoblauch (2009), for instance, presents a different concept of popular religion which is based on Luckmann's (1991) sociology of religion and refers rather to subjective and invisible forms of religiosity that are, according to him, spreading in Western societies. Even when using the term in its "classical" sense as the religiosity of lower classes, one has to be cautious since lower class actors may show doubts with regard to popular religion while middle class actors may dedicate themselves to religious practices that are generally conceived of as "popular" or "lower class religion". Míguez' study about Pentecostalism in a lower class suburb of Buenos Aires offers some examples of lower class actors who do not feel attracted to the Pentecostal model of religiosity and show serious doubts with regard to popular religiosity (Míguez 1998: 140–162).

120   Ameigeiras 1996:192 f.; Forni 1986: 13; Semán 2001a: 47, 66; 2006b: 36–37; Forni 1986: 13.

121   Popular Catholicism is perhaps the most widespread form of popular religion in Argentina. Its main roots can be traced back to the pre-Columbian indigenous culture, the Hispanic Catholicism and the Italian popular Catholicism (Carozzi 1986: 59; Forni 1986: 17). One of the most cited characteristics is its ambivalent relationship with the Catholic Church. Sociologists of religion perceive the popular Catholicism as a religious practice takes place beyond the restrictions and domination of the Catholic Church. Thus, most studies point to its autonomy with regard to the religious orthodoxy and Church hierarchy (Büntig 1968: 10; Dri 2003: 28, 32; Forni 1986: 13, 18–19; Lehmann 2003: 483; Parker 1996: 92, 195, 213; Ruuth 2001: 85). Also the Catholic Church seems to have an ambiguous position with regard to popular Catholicism (Carozzi 1986: 64; Forni 1986: 11; 1987: 30–32). Popular Catholicism can be described as a plural universe of religious

Popular religion forms an extensive universe of manifold religious practices and beliefs.[122] Despite this heterogeneity, it is supposed that there exist similarities and typical patterns of popular religion. Scholars of religion frequently describe popular religion as a particular worldview and rationality on which the heterogeneous manifestations of popular religion are based.[123] In the following paragraphs, I will briefly name the main characteristics attributed to Latin America's popular religion.

First, in Latin American popular religion, a clear disjunction between the transcendent and the immanent seems to be absent.[124] The spiritual and the daily world are integrated into a "holistic worldview".[125] According to the holistic worldview, everything acts as one; everything is interrelated: the supernatural

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practices and beliefs which depend rather on the creativity and autonomy of popular sectors than on the hegemony of the Catholic Church. The practice of popular Catholicism expresses itself less in Sunday church attendance (Parker 1996:92), than in the devotion of saints, the Holy Virgin Mary and the decease as well as in pilgrimages and religious festivities (Ameigeiras 1996: 195–199; Ruuth 2001: 85; Parker 1996:195). Today, there are several types of popular saints that are not recognized by the church such as "San La Muerte", "Gauchito Gil" or the "Difunta Correa" (Ameigeiras 1996: 210–214). These three "saints" enjoy an extensive popularity. "Gauchito Gil" for example is the saint of the delinquents, poor, marginalized and truck drivers. Red flags and cloths are the sign of this saint and pave the high-ways and poor city districts of Buenos Aires.

122   Parker 1996: 33, 137; Ruuth 2001: 85; Semán 1997: 133; 2001a: 48.

123   Numerous sociological and ethnographic studies have sought to detect and analyze typical patterns of popular religion with the objective to reconstruct its underlying logic. These studies produced a diversity of different concepts of popular culture. Eloísa Martín (2007) gives comprehensive overview of these concepts. The most famous of these endeavor is perhaps Christian Parker's (1996) "Popular religion and modernization in Latin America". In this study, Parker supposes the existence of a particular rationality behind the expressions of Latin America's popular religion. He describes this rationality as a different logic remote from the occidental way of reasoning.

124   Historically, popular religion is shaped by different elements: the pre-colonial ("pagan") Latin American worldview, Hispanic popular Catholicism and finally – but to a minor extent – African religiosity. These cultural currents had in common – although to different degrees – that the everyday life was believed to be shaped by spiritual forces. Particularly in the "pagan" worldview the daily life was conceptualized as deeply imbedded into a spiritual world. This vision shaped Latin America's post-colonial popular religion. See Ameigeiras 1996:193–194; Deiros 1992: 123–127; Míguez 1998: 25, 27; Semán 2006a: 208–210.

125   Semán 2000; 2001a.

does not form a distinct sphere apart from daily reality. Instead, it is believed to continuously influence events in the empirical life of actors. Unemployment, poverty, personal conflicts, the absence of success in work or luck in gambling and love can be interpreted as the product of spiritual forces intervening in the actor's life. Pentecostals, for instance, often associate unfortunate events and suffering in everyday life with the presence of malicious spirits and witchcraft, whereas positive events are frequently attributed to the intervention of God.

Second, popular religion is described in the literature as directed towards the empirical world. Not the afterlife but the improvement of daily reality is the major concern of popular religion. The religious practice often aims for the deliverance from daily problems and sufferings. The famous slogan "Paré de sufrir!" ("Stop suffering!") from the Pentecostal church *Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios* (*Universal Church of the Kingdom of God*) reflects this affinity for the improvement of daily life.[126] The improvement of daily life assumes a more central role than the afterlife or moral purification.[127] Therefore, popular religion often comprises rituals that aim to improving the daily life of devotees.[128]

Third, another characteristic of popular religion that is often stressed is the festivity of its practices. The festivity expresses itself especially in popular Catholic celebrations but also in Pentecostal church services or Afrobrazilian cults.[129] In these religions, the worship assumes a celebrative and expressive character: music, singing and sometimes even dancing create an expressive atmosphere that integrates the body of the devotee.[130]

Pentecostalism appears to correspond to the central characteristics of popular religion. Pentecostals believe in the direct interference of supernatural beings – particularly in form of the Holy Spirit, Satan, and demons – in everyday life. Their religious practice is often directed towards the improvement of

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126 Related to this is the emphasis on miracles. The omnipresence of miracles can be traced back to the holistic worldview. Supernatural forces are constantly present and close to the everyday life. This religious world view leads to an emphasis of wonders in popular sectors. See Martín 2007: 75, Parker 1996:224, Semán 2001a: 55.

127 Parker 1996:200.

128 Ameigeiras 1996:189–190.

129 Parker 1996:107; Ameigeiras 1996:191–192.

130 Other characteristics that are often attributed to popular religion are syncretism and the absence of a moralistic ethic (Mallimaci 2009b: 22; Martín 2007: 75; Parker 1996:263; Semán 1997: 135; Semán 2001a: 57).

daily life and embraces rituals that seek favourable spiritual interventions (eg. prayers and exorcisms). Finally, its church services usually assume a highly expressive and festive atmosphere.

Throughout the post-colonial history of Latin America, popular religion is usually regarded critically by progressive social sectors and often portrayed as an uncultivated relict of the "barbarian" pre-modernity and an obstacle for social progress.[131] Especially the employment of quasi-magical practices is perceived critically by a society that places a high importance on scientific-technical knowledge, as the Argentinean sociologist Frigerio points out.[132]

In the more recent history of Argentina, it is particularly the emergence and success of new religious movements in the 1980s and 1990s that spurs a wave of criticism and rejection of popular religion. Many of the new religious movements, which enjoy a high popularity among the lower class – such as Pentecostalism and Afrobrazilian religions – are labeled as dangerous sects and regarded as a cultural and social threat.[133] These ideas resonate well in the public discourses of a nation in which Catholicism has successfully established itself not only as the standard model of religiosity, but as a crucial element of national identity. Thus, the deviation from the established model of Catholicism is not only experienced as a religious deviation but as a cultural deviation and social threat.[134]

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131   Ameigeiras 1996: 201; Parker 1999: 222.

132   Frigerio 1999: 53–55.

133   Ameigeiras 1998: 384; Carozzi 1993: 14–16; Kruip 2004: 183; Forni 1993: 18–21; Mallimaci 2009b: 26, 37; Wynarczyk 2009a: 179–217; 2009b: 65–67. Especially Afrobrazilian religions were strongly stigmatized and portrayed as dangerous sects (Muchnik 2006: 45–47). The anti-sect discourse in the media is influenced by the Catholic Church, which seeks to delegitimize and stigmatize its new competitors (Parker 1999: 12).

134   Frigerio 1993b: 36. The media discourse about new religious movements can be split in different stages and lines of interpretation. In a first instance until the 1990s, the presence of new religious movement is interpreted as a foreign invasion. Conspiracy theories portray the rise of new religious movements, especially the Pentecostal movement, as a strategy of American imperialism. At the end of the 1990s, there emerges a new discourse that emphasizes the concept of brainwashing. Those who become members of the so called "sects" are depicted as weak individuals who have mental problems and are susceptible for the "brain-washing techniques" of these religious groups (Bianchi 2004: 271–274, 279–280; 288; Carozzi 1996b: 228; Frigerio 1993b: 26–31; 1998: 440–441; Wynarczyk 2009a: 193–198). A third line of interpretation suggests that the affiliation with these groups is a consequence of the problems from which individuals suffer. Frequently, Pentecostalism and Afrobrazilian religions but also popular Catholicism and witchcraft are associated in media debates with poverty and ignorance. They become stigmatized

Although there has been some softening in Argentina's public discourses, popular religion and new religious movements remain a controversial issue. Opinions about popular religion are still critical among dominant sectors and the middle class.[135] Semán states that specifically the educated middle class of Buenos Aires has a negative perception of popular religion: being attached to an ideology of modernity, they perceive popular religion as abnormal, culturally inferior and anti-modern. Popular religion appears to stand in opposition to the social representations of the "modern" urban middle class.[136] Also Parker indicates a conflict between Latin America's educated middle classes and popular religion: popular mentality and religiosity are diametrically opposed to the "cultivated" knowledge of the middle class. He expects the educated urban middle classes of Latin America to pass through a process of religious

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as religions of poverty (Ameigeiras 2008b: 22; Bianchi 2004: 271–274, 288; Carozzi 1993: 14–16; Forni 1986:18; Semán 2004: 12–18). In addition, popular religious practices gain a reputation of being pragmatic and magical: they are frequently associated with the image of the poor seeking immediate deliverance from his/her daily problems (Ameigeiras 1996: 201; Büntig 1968; Carozzi 1986: 64; Forni 1986: 17–19). This last line of interpretation is also spurred by academia which contributes to the stigmatization of popular religion (see also McCloud 2007b: 844). Even in the academic context, popular religiosity is frequently described as an immature form of religion, different from the mature, institutionalized forms of religion(Ameigeiras 1996: 201; Martín 2007). Dussel, for instance, portrays popular Catholicism as a temporal manifestation of Catholicism that can be developed further until reaching a stage of mature religiosity (Dussel 1992: 199). A similar view is shared by Pablo Deiros (Deiros 1992: 128, 132).

135   While there is an extensive body of literature about Latin American and Argentinean popular religion, there are only very few studies referring to the religion of middle classes in Latin America and Argentina. Generally, when referring to the religiosity of the educated middle class, scholars mention the presence of a secularization process often accompanied by a sentiment against popular religion (Forni et al. 1998: 296; Parker 1996: 234, 239; Semán 2006b: 23, 42–44). Adopting the European ideology of secularization, middle classes are thought to appreciate secularity, rationality, and scientific knowledge, as opposed to the allegedly magical worldviews of the lower class. Yet, the aspired secularization process appears to be only fractional within Argentina's middle class. The Conicet survey shows that 84.5% of the interviewees holding a higher education degree believe in God compared to 95.7% of the interviewees without a finished school degree (Conicet 2008). Despite the supposed adherence to the secularization paradigm, the vast majority of this group does not abstain from believing in God. Their attachment to the secularization paradigm seems, however, to have an effect on their religious practice, showing lower levels of overall religious practice and an affinity for types of religion distinct from that of popular religion.

136   Semán 1997: 134; 2004: 12–18,2006b: 23, 42–44.

rationalisation which leads them to more rationalized and moralized types of religion.[137] Being inclined towards the ideal of secularity, middle classes conceive of particular characteristics of popular religion as inappropriate and prefer, instead, more secularized and less "magical" religious practices. A study conducted by Forni et al. provides some empirical insights about the religiosity of university students in Buenos Aires. The study reveals that the secularization of university students leads to a withdrawal from institutional religious practice. Accordingly, educated middle class actors are more likely to abstain from the institutional practice of Catholicism.[138] Taking these insights together, Argentina's educated middle class appears to be mostly inclined towards "nominal Catholicism". A nominal, secularized Catholicism is a highly attractive option since it implies no deviation: neither a religious (and cultural) deviation from Catholicism as the standard model of Argentinean religiosity nor a deviation from the ideology of secularism. In fact, this option brings together two cultural expectations: being – at least formally – Catholic and being modern and secular.

Nevertheless, middle class actors also dedicate themselves to other religious options. Sections of the urban middle class are inclined towards more emotional types of religiosity, such as charismatic Catholicism. In some cases, they even choose highly deviating options, such as Afrobrazilian religions. However, when choosing these options, middle class Argentineans do not totally withdraw from the middle class representations of appropriateness. Instead, they seek to readapt their religious practice to their middle class representations and parade their differentness from popular religion, from the "immature" and "superstitious lower class religiosity".[139]

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137 Parker 1996: 70, 106, 239.

138 Forni et al. 1998.

139 Non-conformance with the "standard model" of nominal Catholicism will be frequent within the middle class. For instance, two religious options that enjoy a high popularity among sections of the urban middle class and deviate from the model of secular Catholicism: Charismatic Catholicism and New Age. Both imply a higher religious involvement and therefore constitute a partial deviation from the ideal of secularization. Especially in the Argentinean capital, in which plenty of religious-philosophical centers are located, the New Age movement attracts the middle class (Míguez 2000; Muchnik 2002; Viotti 2011). Although deviating from the dominant Catholic model, New Age fits well with some of the characteristics often attributed to the urban middle class. New Age underlines the autonomy of the individual and emphasizes personal development and well-being (Carozzi 1996a; Míguez 2000; Muchnik 2002; Viotti 2011). Its cultural affinity with middle class culture as well as its diffusiveness may be the reason for the relatively

4.4   Summary

The aim of this chapter was to sketch an overview of the historical and socio-religious context of middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina. A specific emphasis was placed on the social representations of the middle class and the evolution of the religious field and Pentecostalism.

   The social class representations of the middle class have their early origins in the boundary work of the "gente decente" (decent people). This boundary work is encouraged by Argentina's founding fathers, who depreciate popular culture and endeavor to civilize the "uncivilized masses". Accordingly, the "decent people" draw symbolic boundaries in opposition to the *masas incultas* (uneducated masses). Being descendants of European immigrants and identifying themselves with European culture and its ideal of modernization, the "decent people" perceive Latin America's popular culture and religion as barbaric and a hindrance against social progress. They distinguish themselves from the "uneducated masses" by showing, for instance, a *buena presencia* (good presence): a formal and educated way of expressing themselves, along with a well-kempt, tidy appearance. This boundary work inspires the representations of the middle class, which emerges during the first half of the twentieth century in a context marked by a favorable economic development and massive European immigration. The middle class is imagined – in contrast to the lower class – as being white, European, modern, civilized, well-educated, tidy, ambitious, well-mannered, having a well-groomed appearance, articulating and behaving in a rational and educated way. Middle class actors are expected to behave according to these representations, by reproducing these class boundaries in their daily boundary work. Whenever they act against the principles of appropriateness, they risk losing their peers' approval and being depicted as lower class *negros*. Being afraid of negative judgments, middle class actors strive for disguising and hiding inappropriate tendencies from the glances of their peers. In the following steps of this study, this account of the middle class helps explain, the tensions between Pentecostalism and the middle class, as well as the way in which middle class Pentecostals deal with these tensions. Aside from the middle class representations, another important

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high acceptance of New Age. Further, in contrast to other non-Catholic religious options, it has not suffered a stigmatization in Argentina's public discourses. Whenever, practicing inappropriate religious options middle class individuals appear to develop legitimization strategies, as for instance Muchnik´s study Afrobrazilian religions in Greater Buenos Aires shows (Muchnik 2002: 71, 77; 2006: 35–47, 51–56, 275).

piece for understanding middle class Pentecostalism is the religious field and the legitimacy of different religious options.

In terms of its religious history, Argentina is marked by the dominant position of Catholicism. Catholicism assumes the role of a patron of national identity from which religious deviations are not always welcomed. However, Argentina's religious field experienced a transformative process from the 1980s onwards: more and more religious options emerged and many of the existing non-Catholic options grew numerically. These options compete over the religious "market share" in the field. Despite the rising pluralization of the religious field, the Catholic Church remains the most dominant religious actor in terms of its general public visibility and legitimacy. Catholicism is, by far, the most accepted religious option.

Although other religious options such as Pentecostalism have numerically expanded, their public recognition is still relatively low. Lacking legitimacy in comparison to the Catholic Church, they constitute less accepted options in the religious field. Moreover, non-Catholic forms of popular religion, such as Pentecostalism and Afrobrazilian religions, tend to be stigmatized. This lack of legitimacy renders them comparatively unattractive to middle class actors. For the educated middle class, a nominal, secularized Catholicism appears to be a particularly suitable religious option, as it combines the legitimacy of Catholicism with a secular lifestyle.

Pentecostalism in Tension

A diversification of Argentina's religious field has led to the emergence and expansion of a number of religious options. The religious diversification process offers individuals the possibility to choose between a great number of religious options. At the same time, more and more Argentineans take advantage of this possibility and choose a religious option other than Catholicism. Yet, not all religious options are perceived as equally appropriate. Catholicism remains the most legitimate religious option, whereas some of the deviating options suffer from a low level of perceived legitimacy. Despite its low legitimacy, Pentecostalism has experienced a vast expansion primarily in the lower class. The present chapter gives an overview of Argentina's Pentecostal movement and explores its relationship to the middle class. It will thereby stress in particular the "objective" class position and symbolic status of Pentecostals in Argentina. Exploring the objective class position and symbolic status of the movement, I will reconstruct the tensions between Pentecostalism and the representations of the middle class.

In order to address these topics, the chapter is split into different sections. The first section highlights different aspects of Argentina's Pentecostal movement. It examines the diversity and the unifying institutions of the Pentecostal movement as well as its reputation in Argentinean society. The second section studies the social stratification of its membership and its lack of middle class appeal. The lower class bias of Pentecostalism is explained by a mismatch between Pentecostalism and the representations of the middle class. This mismatch creates a threshold which exacerbates middle class conversions to the movement. Whenever middle class actors become Pentecostal despite this mismatch, they may face tensions in their social environment. These tensions are described in the last section of the chapter.

5.1 Argentinean Pentecostalism between Diversity, Unity and Stigmatization

5.1.1 *Religious Diversity and Competition in Argentinean Pentecostalism*
Today, Pentecostalism is the most influential non-Catholic religious group in Argentina and has become a serious competitor of the Catholic Church.[1] Around

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1 Algranti 2007b: 27; Saracco 1989: 309.

eight percent of the Argentinean population is estimated to be Pentecostal.[2] However, Argentinean Pentecostalism does not constitute a uniform movement. In fact, the movement is highly fragmented and embraces a considerable variety of religious styles, a variety that the simple distinction between Neo-Pentecostalism and traditional Pentecostalism cannot capture.[3]

In the absence of a central and unifying institution, Pentecostal churches can combine different aspects of Pentecostalism. For instance, some churches embrace prosperity gospel but disregard spiritual warfare, whereas others emphasize the gifts of the Holy Spirit and spiritual practices such as faith healing and exorcisms. Some churches adhere to a conservative moral which obligates women to wear dresses and men to dress in suits, while other congregations are rather liberal and try to empower women for emancipation. Differences are also evident in the music. Some congregations prefer Latin American rhythms (such as *cumbia*), whereas others play emotional rock and pop, and still others tend towards classical music and hymns. Each church can create its own Pentecostal identity, adapting and combining different religious styles.

Therefore, in and around Buenos Aires one can observe an enormous variety of Pentecostal churches.[4] In terms of their size, churches can be classified into four categories: mega, large, medium, and small churches. Most of the

2 See Conicet 2008. Wynarczyk (2010: 18) estimates that between 10% and 13% of the Argentinean population is Protestant. Gooren (2010b) referring to Espinosa (2004) states that 11% of Argentineans are Pentecostal. Anderson (2004: 68) supposes that even 19% of the Argentinean population is Charismatic (probably including Catholic Charismatics). Unfortunately, Anderson does not mention any data source. Barrett et al. (2001(1): 72) estimate the number of Pentecostals/Charismatics in Argentina at 8.4 million representing 22.7% of the Argentinean population in the year 2000. This number also includes Charismatic Catholics. This is also illustrated by the proportion of Catholics in the entire Argentinean population which is estimated at 91.2%. The proportion of Protestants is at the same time estimated at 6.2%. According to these estimations the number of non-Catholic Pentecostals has to lay significantly below 10%, probably even below 5%.

3 Neo-Pentecostalism is usually associated with spiritual warfare and prosperity gospel. Yet, many churches which conduct spiritual warfare reject – at least officially – prosperity gospel and vice versa. This raises doubts about the appropriateness of the distinction between traditional Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism. Moreover, many Pentecostal churches have adapted to some of the neo-Pentecostal characteristics: the use of mass media, prosperity gospel, spiritual warfare or post-millenarism. Spiritual warfare and prosperity gospel are widespread in today's Pentecostalism and can even be found empirically in Pentecostal branches which are generally conceived of as traditional Pentecostals (Míguez 1998: 61–62, 68–69; Semán 2001b: 148).

4 It is difficult to estimate the number of Pentecostal churches in the urban area of Buenos Aires since only a small number of them are registered in the registro. In 1992 there were 120

churches in Buenos Aires are, of course, small and medium-sized churches while the number of large and mega churches is limited.

Mega churches are churches with a total attendance of more than 2000 at Sunday services, while large churches attract between 800 and 2000 to their Sunday church services. The most important among them are *Rey de Reyes, Catedral de la Fe, Presencia de Dios, Centro Cristiano Nueva Vida, Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios, Iglesia del Puente* in Quilmes, and perhaps *Manatial de Bendiciones* in Partido San Martin.[5] The success of most of these churches depends strongly on the charisma of their main pastor. Pastors have become important figures in Argentinean Pentecostalism. This is particularly the case for Claudio Freidson from *Rey de Reyes* and Pastor Osvaldo Carnival from *Catedral de la Fe* who today are common names among Pentecostals in and outside of Argentina. Their churches are today the largest Pentecostal churches in Buenos Aires. *Rey de Reyes*, for instance, is estimated to have more than 20.000 members.[6]

The central branches of the large and mega churches have at their disposal colossal main halls with up to 3000 seats and normally include other facilities like cafeterias, bookstores, seminar rooms, and in some cases even multi-storey car parks. Not only do they have a highly developed infrastructure but also

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registered Pentecostal churches alone in the city of Buenos Aires (Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 9). This number does not include those churches that are not registered. Nevertheless, one can try to calculate a very rough estimation of the number of churches in Greater Buenos Aires based on different conditions: the city of Buenos Aires has around 3 million inhabitants while Greater Buenos Aires has approximately 12 million inhabitants. At the same time, the percentage of Pentecostals is supposed to be higher in the poorer areas outside the city of Buenos Aires: while the percentage of Pentecostals in the city can be estimated at around 5%, there are around 20% of Pentecostals in lower class districts. One may suppose an average Pentecostal population of 15% in Greater Buenos Aires. Thus, the amount of Pentecostal churches per inhabitant is (at least) three times higher than in the city. At the same time, the population is around four times higher than in the city of Buenos Aires. Consequently, it can be supposed – not including the non-subscribed temples in the city in 1991 – that the number of temples was $120 \times 3 \times 4 = 1440$ in 1991. This is a rather low estimation since it does not include the churches that were not registered in Buenos Aires City and disregards a potential increase in the quantity of Pentecostal churches between 1991 and today. Hence, one may estimate that the number of Pentecostal temples in Greater Buenos Aires is at least 1500, but probably significantly higher than 2000.

5   See for Rey de Reyes Algranti 2010; for the Iglesia Universal Reino de Dios (IURD) in Argentina Semán 2003; Semán and Moreira 1998; Semán and Oro 2000; for the IURD in general Corten et al. 2003; Freston 1995: 129–132; 1999: 153–160; Luca 2008b: 230–236, 248–251; Ruuth 2001.

6   See Algranti 2010:101.

generally offer a variety of church services, church groups and other activities (workshops etc.) to their members. Besides the main temple, these churches usually have smaller branches called *annexos* in different suburbs of Greater Buenos Aires and across the country and sometimes abroad.

Although the majority of their members are still from the lower class, large and mega churches like *Rey de Reyes* and *Cathedral de la Fe* attract a diversity of social sectors: one can find among their members individuals from the shantytowns and poorer suburbs as well as from the urban middle class. These churches appear to be able to attract different social classes by embracing a variety of religious styles. In these churches, individuals can "consume" numerous religious "goods" of different religious styles – such as different groups, courses and church services.[7] Each member can choose from this variety of styles the one that most fits his/her personal preferences.[8] Due to their public visibility and impact, mega and large churches are common reference points among Argentinean Pentecostals. However, in terms of absolute numbers, smaller and medium-sized churches are more important since the vast majority of Pentecostals in Argentina are members of these churches.

There are plenty of medium-sized churches in Greater Buenos Aires. These congregations attract between 100 and 800 participants to their Sunday church services. Many branches of the *Asambleas de Dios* (AD) and *Unión de las Asambleas de Dios* (UAD) fit into this category. The infrastructure, organization and style of church services vary greatly among medium-sized churches. Some medium-sized churches offer a wide variety of courses and church groups and even contain educational facilities such as kindergartens and primary schools, whereas other churches are supported by a much less developed infrastructure.

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7   In Rey de Reyes, for instance, there are specific groups that focus on young academics, students and professionals. Moreover, there are courses that coach leadership skills to members and prepare young individuals for a professional career. At the same time the church offers courses which provide basic education to adults from less privileged social backgrounds. The style of worship varies from more sober church services to highly emotional church services including faith healing and testimonies of miracles. Smaller churches, instead, cannot offer such a variety. Nevertheless, some well-organized medium-sized churches can still embrace different offers and religious styles. Yet, the differences in style will be less pronounced and rather limited.

8   The internal diversity of large and mega churches renders it difficult to attribute a general style to these churches. Therefore, I focus on small and medium-sized churches which are to a much lesser degree able to embrace different styles and tend to attract preferentially one social sector.

Finally, there are numerous smaller Pentecostal churches which attract up to one hundred members to their Sunday church services. These churches represent the majority of Pentecostal churches in Greater Buenos Aires. Most of these tiny churches are situated in the poor suburban areas of Buenos Aires. Their infrastructure and organization stand in contrast to that of the mega churches. Usually they are the size of a small saloon where between ten and fifty people meet every week for worship. They are often poorly furnished and depend heavily on donations from their community. Sometimes they lack basic facilities such as toilets and running water. Most of them are grassroots churches which appear and disappear overnight. They frequently emerge from rifts in other churches when a group of members splits off and founds their own church.[9]

The plurality of churches creates a manifold Pentecostal "market". Individuals can choose between a vast variety of Pentecostal churches and styles. By affiliating themselves with a church they choose a specific style of Pentecostalism. However, religious switching is frequent among Pentecostals. Even though actors decide on one church and style at one moment in their life, they may change their opinion after a time and later join a different church. Many Pentecostals switch their church every three or four years. In some cases Pentecostals move constantly between two or more churches, combining the religious styles of these congregations.[10]

At the same time, Pentecostal churches seek constantly to recruit new members. They are in constant struggle with one another for the favor of devotees. The reasons are obvious: they depend on their members. The more members they acquire, the more financial and organizational resources and status they gain. Moreover, expanding churches enjoy the reputation of being particularly blessed. They are considered to be churches in which the Holy Spirit acts in a remarkable way. Thus, expansion contributes to their status among Pentecostals and can promote further expansion.[11] However,

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9   See Frigerio 1999: 75–76; Séman 2000: 161; 2006a: 199–202.

10   Despite being affiliated with a specific church many Pentecostals visit other churches from time to time. Pentecostals are generally familiar with a wide range of different churches. Thus, the religious search may continue within the field of Pentecostalism (see also Algranti and Bordes 2007).

11   There are exceptions in which the positive relationship between a rising number of adherents and the status of a church is not valid. One example is the Universal Church of God which despite its high number of adherents suffers a poor reputation among Pentecostals.

also a strong sense for proselytism among Pentecostals contributes to this struggle for souls.[12]

Hence, churches will under normal circumstances try to expand and gain as many members as possible. They apply different strategies to do so. Some churches have developed marketing strategies and use different types of media like flyers, books, radio programs, internet platforms and sometimes even TV programs. Sometimes they organize evangelical events, distribute flyers, and preach in streets and squares. However, the strongest medium of expansion remains personal networks.[13] Most new visitors arrive at churches due to a personal contact with members. They are invited by friends, relatives, or neighbors who are already members of the church. Yet, only a proportion of those who visit a church the first time will join it. Whether they become members of this particular congregation is a matter of their religious choice: they can decide to affiliate with the church, or to join another or no Pentecostal church.

5.1.2   *Unifying Institutions and the Formal Circle of "Evangelical Protestantism"*

Despite the diversity of Pentecostalism and evangelical Protestantism in Argentina, there are several institutions which aim to unify and represent Pentecostalism and evangelical Protestantism: evangelical and Pentecostal umbrella organizations, inter-congregational Biblical seminaries, evangelical mass events, and evangelical magazines facilitate the construction of a common identity for the evangelical movement in Argentina to which people often refer as "los evangelistas".[14] Yet, some of these institutions do not only help to create a shared image of evangelical Protestantism but also constitute a formal and exclusive circle of evangelical Protestantism.[15] This circle does not represent the whole movement, but rather only a – mostly middle class – fraction of it, as will be shown later.

The historical evolution of Protestantism in Argentina has led to the development of several umbrella organizations which seek to represent Protestantism in Argentinean society. The most important umbrella organizations for

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12   The task of gaining and rescuing as many souls as possible for the kingdom of God forms a central aim of the Pentecostal movement. The efforts and the success in accomplishing this aim may be measured in the size and expansion rates of a congregation.

13   See, for instance, Algranti 2010: 151–152,; Míguez 1998: 51–52.

14   See, for instance, Marostica 1994: 8.

15   Algranti (2010: 84–85) describes a formal circle of Pentecostalism which is defined by affiliation to one of the umbrella organizations and registration in the Registro Nacional de Culto.

Pentecostal churches are FECEP (*Federación Confraternidad Evangélica Pentecostal*), ACIERA (*Alianza de Iglesias Evangélicas de la República Argentina*) and to a minor degree FIPA (*Federación de Iglesias Pentecostales Argentina*).[16] These organizations try to establish formal standards and represent Pentecostalism and evangelical Protestantism vis-à-vis politics and the public sphere. Different objectives shape the agenda of these umbrella organizations: improving the image of evangelical Protestantism, gaining formal recognition, providing a public voice to the movement, facilitating the exchange between congregations and pastors, establishing a type of accountability, and influencing the public agenda concerning moral topics such as abortion and same-sex marriage.[17] Thus, organizations like ACIERA and FECEP together with other Protestant umbrella organizations like FAIE[18] engage in political and legal campaigns to gain formal recognition from the state. Their principal goal appears to be to improve the acceptance of the movement within the religious and public spheres in order to become a respectable and legitimate religious option which can compete in terms of legitimacy at eye level with the Catholic Church.[19]

Pentecostal churches can apply for membership in these organizations. Although membership is generally granted to churches that apply, acceptance of the application is not guaranteed. The IURD, for instance, applied for membership and was rejected by ACIERA and FECEP.[20] Membership in FECEP or ACIERA can serve as certificate and seal of approval suggesting that churches affiliated with them meet certain formal standards. Therefore, membership in

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16   While FECEP and FIPA are genuine Pentecostal umbrella organizations, ACIERA represents Pentecostal churches as well as other Protestant churches from the evangelical wing, for instance Baptist churches. ACIERA is often also called FACIERA. Among these umbrella organizations, FECEP is the one that represents the highest number of Pentecostal churches. FIPA particularly represents smaller Pentecostal churches which embrace only one or two congregations (Wynarczyk 2009a: 61–63; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 10–11). Besides these three organizations which represent rather the Biblical fundamentalist wing of Protestantism, there is also an organization which represents historical (liberal) Protestantism called FAIE (Federación Argentina de Iglesias).

17   Interview Pastor Pedro, Part 2; Part 3. These organizations have served also as a legitimation strategy in the context of the anti-sect discourse (Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 11).

18   FAIE – Federación Argentina de Iglesias Evangélicas – is traditionally the umbrella organization which assembles the historically Protestant churches of Argentina. Nevertheless, today there are also some Pentecostal churches integrated in FAIE.

19   See also Frigerio 1998: 447; Maristoca 1994; Wynarczyk 1994.

20   Access to these organizations is not as easy as it may seem. Applicants for an ACIERA membership, for instance, have to be nominated by two member churches. Thus,

these organizations becomes a form of capital which raises the credibility of a church. Churches, on the other hand, which are not affiliated with one of the umbrella organizations are excluded from the circle of formally recognized churches and may suffer a low degree of legitimacy.[21] Hence, umbrella organizations exercise a significant degree of power since they are in the position to formally designate which church is a "decent" evangelical church and which not. Numerically, however, the umbrella organizations represent only a fraction of the Pentecostal movement since the majority of smaller churches are not affiliated with these bodies.

Another important umbrella organization for evangelical churches in the city of Buenos Aires is the *Consejo de Pastores de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires* (*consejo*). This council forms a network of evangelical pastors from the city of Buenos Aires who meet on a regular basis to organize events and develop expansion strategies.[22] Besides the umbrella organizations, there are other institutions which unite the Pentecostal community to some degree: Biblical seminaries, news magazines, and mass events. Although many of the larger churches have their own Biblical seminaries, there are some seminaries which are intercongregational and enjoy an excellent reputation among Pentecostals. These institutions offer theological degrees to future pastors and courses to lay members who are simply interested in studying theology. The most important among them are the *Instituto Biblico Rio de la Plata* and *Seminario Biblico de Fe*.[23] Yet, not every Pentecostal pastor in Argentina has received a formal theological education.

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churches who want to join ACIERA require contact with other churches that are already affiliated with this umbrella organization (Interview Pastor Oscar Part 1/2). Moreover, church leaders must know and care about the affiliation and require the necessary bureaucratic skills and knowledge to manage the enrolment procedure. After having received membership status in one of these umbrella organization congregations, churches can still lose their membership status. A prominent case is the church *Ondas de Amor y Paz* which was expelled from FECEP and ACIERA after its pastor, Hector Gimenez, suffered several public scandals (Interview Pastor Nicolás).

21 See Algranti 2007a: 114; 2010: 84–85.

22 Councils of this type exist theoretically also in different areas of the province of Buenos Aires and are separated into different geographical districts. The council of the city of Buenos Aires is, however, particularly interesting due to its outstanding degree of activity and cooperation between pastors and due to the fact that it forms an important instrument for the coordination between evangelicals in the city of Buenos Aires. Many of the pastors organized in the *consejo* of the city of Buenos Aires cultivate strong friendships and also engage in direct cooperation between their churches.

23 Three of the most famous Pentecostal preachers, Claudio Freidson, Osvaldo Carnival and Guillermo Prein, studied in the Instituto Biblico Rio de la Plata (Algranti 2010: 86). Besides

Many pastors, especially those from the smaller churches in the suburbs, have not attained any type of (formal) theological education. The presence or absence of theological education in the pastoral body is another characteristic which distinguishes the formal circle of evangelical Protestantism. There are two important magazines for the evangelical community in Argentina: *El Puente* and *La Corriente del Espíritu*.[24] These magazines form part of a bigger evangelical media industry which consists of publishers, distributors, TV and radio channels, TV producers, music labels, and event managers.[25]

Finally, inter-congregational evangelical mass events constitute another mechanism which unifies evangelical Protestantism and Pentecostalism. Historical examples are the campaigns of Tommy Hicks and Carlos Annacondia which facilitated the development of a national evangelical

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these two Pentecostal seminaries, there is a variety of institutions that also offer educational training to evangelicals like the IBA, the Seminario Bautista, the FIETT and the ISEDET. Despite also attracting Pentecostal students, these institutions do not necessarily focus on Pentecostal students. The ISEDET, for instance, is one of the main institutions for the training of pastors of historically Protestant churches. Interestingly, the Pentecostal seminaries do not offer degrees that are officially recognized by the Argentinean state. Officially recognized degrees in theology can be only acquired from the ISEDET and the Seminario Bautista.

24   *La Corriente del Espíritu* is a monthly magazine which is dedicated particularly to the Pentecostal community and is distributed in many Pentecostal churches. Instead, *El Puente* is a magazine for the wider evangelical public, but also focuses – due to the predominance of Pentecostals in Argentina – mainly on the Pentecostal movement. *El Puente* and other publications from the same evangelical media group can be acquired at newsstands around the country. Besides El Puente there are other magazines published by the same agency: a magazine focusing on women called Fem and a magazine which focuses on the youth and young adults called Conexiones. *El Puente* appears on a monthly basis and includes news, announcements concerning the Protestant community, as well as articles about different topics about the Christian faith. The magazines are closely related to the umbrella organizations mentioned above. *El Puente*, for instance, dedicates at least two pages to official announcements from the FECEP, ACIERA, and FIPA in each of its releases. Moreover, the articles published in the magazines tend to be from pastors associated with the umbrella organizations.

25   See Algranti 2007a: 123; Marostica 1994: 10–12. Besides TV and radio channels, there also exists a range of famous national music acts closely associated with evangelical Protestantism such as, for instance, *Rescate*. The research has not placed a specific focus on Pentecostal radio and TV productions since they have no major stake in the construction of the formal circle of Pentecostalism and the boundary work of middle class Pentecostalism in Argentina.

identity.[26] Another more recent campaign, for instance, took place during several days in 2008 in downtown Buenos Aires. Luis Palau and famous Latin American artists performed at this event in front of approximately one hundred thousand people.[27]

These institutions – umbrella organizations, Biblical seminaries, inter-congregational evangelical mass events, magazines and other media – help generate a common identity and formalize evangelical Protestantism. They assume the role of publicly representing evangelical Protestantism and thereby allow evangelicals from different denominations to identify themselves as part of the same movement, as well as to transmit the image of a unified movement to the rest of society, often referred to as "los evangelistas". Yet, the entire movement does not participate in these unifying institutions. Many Pentecostal churches are excluded from these unifying institutions. Therefore, the institutions form at the same time a mechanism of exclusion which leaves a wide range of churches out of the circle of institutionalized evangelical Protestantism and Pentecostalism. The churches and pastors engaged in these institutions represent only a fraction – probably a minority – of the whole movement and are dominated by middle class Pentecostals, as will be further discussed below.

5.1.3 *From Dangerous Sects to Tolerable Deviations: The Public Image of Pentecostalism*

Despite the attempts to legitimize and improve the public image of Pentecostalism, its relationship with Argentinean society is still ambivalent. Many of the remaining reservations and prejudices go back to the anti-sect discourse of the 1980s and 1990s.

Particularly at the beginning of the massive expansion in the 1980s and 1990s, Pentecostal churches were perceived as problematic sects. This perception was nourished by media debates describing the rise of new religious movements as an invasion of sects. Alfredo Silletta's (1986) famous publication "Las sectas invaden la Argentina" which became a bestseller in Argentina contributed to this vision.[28] The success of his book helped spread an image of new religious movements as dangerous sects and transformed Silletta into a famous "sect-expert" frequently consulted by the media and even by the Argentinean state.[29]

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26   Saracco 1989: 307–308; Algranti 2007b: 26.
27   See Giménez et al. 2008.
28   Silletta 1986.
29   Frigerio 1993b; Wynarczyk 2009a: 194–197.

Due to its outstanding success, the Pentecostal movement became one of the preferred topics of the anti-sect discourse. The presence of Pentecostal churches on Argentinean soil was initially regarded as an invasion of foreign interests and an expression of US imperialism.[30] Particularly intellectuals and the Catholic Church adopted this vision and stigmatized the Pentecostal movement. Later, they favored other descriptions and portrayed Pentecostal churches in the media as organizations who exploit the needs of their members by promising miracles.[31]

Also historical Protestant churches that were mostly shaped by the middle class partly adopted the anti-sect discourse and applied it to the Pentecostal movement.[32] Seeking to distinguish themselves from the new sectarian Protestantism of the lower class, they joined the public opinion about Pentecostalism. Even those who had an affinity for charismatic Protestantism held a critical view.[33]

The anti-sect discourse triggered two reactions on the side of the movement which were especially virulent among its middle class segments: a political mobilization in the form of political parties and interest groups[34] and a partial adoption of the sect discourse. Threatened by the sect-stigma, Pentecostals sought to attribute the stigma to other religious groups. They attributed the term "sect" to Jehovah's witnesses, Mormons, Pentecostal churches from Brazil, and Afrobrazilian religions. Thus, many Pentecostal churches engaged in a symbolic – and spiritual – war against their religious competitors. Especially Afrobrazilian religions and witchcraft were attacked by some Pentecostal churches as demonic practices.[35]

30   Bastian 1994a: 116; 1997: 21–23; Wynarczyk 2009a: 179–192; Semán 2000: 161.

31   Frigerio 1998: 443.

32   Wynarczyk 2009a: 198–204.

33   For instance, Deiros, a supporter of the charismatic renewal within the Baptist church writes about the Pentecostal movement that it tends towards a superficial gospel and untrue doctrines: "La evangelización es fuerte, pero superficial. La debilidad ética de los creyentes es consecuencia de esto como también de la carencia de un proceso discipulado integral. La falta de líderes preparados y la incapacidad de entrenar rápidadmene a todos los que hacen falta, fácilmente lleva a doctrinas espúreas y prácticas ajenas a una comprensión neotestamentaria de la fe." (Deiros 1992: 176) Another example is Santos (2003: 234) who criticizes the Pentecostal movement indirectly, identifying it with the concept of prosperity gospel.

34   Wynarczyk 2009a; 2010; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 11.

35   Frigerio 1998: 446–450; Wynarczyk 1995; 2009a: 206, 208. In the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu (1971a; 1971b; 1992) one can describe these stigmatization practices as part of a

From the 90s onwards, the attitudes towards Pentecostalism changed slightly. The public discourse became more open with regard to Pentecostalism and its public image improved.[36] Although Pentecostalism did not become a legitimate religious actor, its social staturs changed from an "intolerable" to a "tolerable" religious deviation.[37]

Yet, at the same time prejudices and reservations still exist. The evangelical movement, and in particular Pentecostalism, are usually associated with the lower class and poverty while their religiosity is perceived as immature and inferior.[38] Popular explanations for Pentecostal conversions refer to poverty and deprivation, lack of culture, mental problems, and superstition of those who become Pentecostals. Hence, members of Pentecostal churches are indirectly – or sometimes even directly – described as ignorant, mentally instable, and superstitious.[39] Particularly the urban middle class remains skeptical with regard to the *evangelistas*. The fact that many Argentineans identify TV programs from the *Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios* (IURD) – which they tend to perceive as an exploitation of poor and ignorant people – with the whole evangelical movement does not improve the movement's public image.[40] Also, secular media coverage contributes to a rather critical image of the evangelical movement. Argentinean sociologist Pablo Semán states that the majority of the media portrays evangelicals as religious fanatics.[41] Media contributions tend to depict adherents of the movement as impoverished victims of evangelical conversion strategies and point to its alleged otherness from the Argentinean

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general struggle for hegemony in the religious field. While Pentecostals are attacked by the Catholic Church and other actors in society, they try to delegitimize their religious competitors in order to establish themselves as the legitimate suppliers of religious "salvation goods" in the Argentinean society. Yet, this struggle for legitimacy not only occurs between the representatives of different religions but also within the same religion where different actors try to establish themselves as the legitimate representation of this religion. Argentinean Pentecostalism is no exception. Pentecostals from different branches fight about legitimacy and the appropriate style of Pentecostalism.

36   Míguez 1998: 120.

37   Frigerio 1998: 446–450, 453–455.

38   Semán 2004: 12–18.

39   Frigerio 1998; Semán 2006a: 217.

40   This is an observation which I made with Argentineans who had only a sparse relationship with members of the movement and therefore little knowledge about Pentecostalism. They tended to identify the movement with images from TV programs from the Brazileros, the Brazilians, as they called the IURD.

41   Semán 2004: 17.

society which is experienced as genuinely Catholic. This was the case, for instance, during the evangelical campaign of Luis Palau in 2008 in Buenos Aires. A study from Giménez, Carbonelli and Mosqueira reveals that the Argentinean print media underlines again and again the otherness of the movement.[42]

Another example is the publication of Seselovsky's book "¡Cristo llame ya! Crónicas de la avanzada evangélica en la Argentina".[43] The cover of the book, showing Jesus as a comic figure who receives a call on his mobile phone, already indicates that the movement is no longer perceived as dangerous. By contrast, the author wants to invite his readers to cast an ironic glance at the movement and to laugh at it.[44] Algranti summarizes these tendencies in the following way:

> The media coverage of the March 2008 visit by Luis Palau or the book "Christ Calls Now!" are examples of the way in which informal journalism reinforces common prejudices, which are, in turn, sublimated prejudices of a class that uses poor people's religious practices as a mirror to affirm their social status. This negative symbolic capital impacts society, creating a marginalization effect.
>
> ALGRANTI 2010: 49[45]

Pentecostals tend to be regarded as *desprolijos*, untidy and poor people who hold superstitious beliefs.[46] Thus, the image which associates the movement with "the superstition of the popular masses" and a "culture of poverty" remains. Pentecostalism is depreciated as a lower class culture, as the "uncivilized" Argentina.

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42   Giménez et al. 2008. Vast portions of the media discourse appear to be governed by middle class representations of appropriateness especially concerning the practice of religion. Media communication helps to standardize and stabilize these representations. They are experienced as a normal standard due to which, for instance, it is common to consider Pentecostals as abnormal, as something alien to the Argentinean normality. As in the case of the UK, the dominance of the middle class discourse of appropriateness remains widely unacknowledged and leads to a general depiction of lower class culture as deficient. See Reay 1998; 2005b: 141–143; Skeggs 2004; Savage 2003: 536–537.

43   Seselovsky 2005.

44   For a detailed analysis of the book, see Wynarczyk 2005.

45   The original quote is: "El tratamiento mediático de la visita de Luis Palau en marzo del 2008 o el libro Cristo llame ya! son ejemplos de la forma en que el periodismo informal refuerza los prejuicios del sentido común, que son, a su vez, los prejuicios sublimados de una clase que utiliza a las religiones de los pobres como espejo y confirmación de su posición social. Este capital simbólico negativo impacta en la sociedad, produciendo un efecto de descalificación." (Algranti 2010: 49).

46   Wynarczyk 2005.

Particularly the educated middle class regard manifestations of popular religion such as Pentecostalism with skepticism and tends to perceive it as socially inferior.[47] Their negative perception of the movement appears to be partly fed by their rejection of popular culture and a concept of a modernity according to which "premodern" religious beliefs and practices should diminish.

The negative perception of Pentecostalism renders it less likely to turn one's back on Catholicism and become a Pentecostal. Middle class individuals who convert to evangelical Protestantism may face mockery or even discrimination from their colleagues, relatives or friends. The reluctance and disdain of the middle class with regard to Pentecostalism becomes manifest in the social stratification of the movement which will be outlined in the following section.

5.2   The Social Stratification of the Pentecostal Movement

As the introduction to Argentina's history in the fourth chapter has already shown, the Pentecostal movement has attracted mostly the lower class. Only since the 1990s has Pentecostalism also started to recruit individuals from the urban middle class. However, it is not clear as to what degree the Pentecostal movement has managed to introduce itself into Argentina's middle class. Unfortunately, no study exists which explores the social composition of the Pentecostal movement in detail. Still, there are several studies which refer to the topic and allow some conclusions to be drawn about the social stratification of Argentinean Pentecostalism.

There are two quantitative surveys which were conducted by Conicet researchers and indicate the social position of Pentecostals: the general 2008 Conicet survey and a survey that was conducted in Quilmes, a district in the greater metropolitan area of Buenos Aires.

In addition to questions about the religious belonging, the 2008 Conicet survey also included questions about the interviewees' level of formal education. Figure 4 shows the educational levels of Protestants in comparison to all other respondents. The group of Protestants includes Pentecostals as well as traditional Protestants and other types of non-Pentecostal Evangelicals.[48] Pentecostals form the overwhelming majority among Protestants.[49] Non-Protestants include all the individuals not included in the Protestant group.

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47   Semán 2004: 12–18.

48   This group does not include movements such as Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons.

49   They make up 87.8% of this group. A total of 9% of the informants in this survey define themselves as Protestants while 7.9% of the informants are Pentecostal and form part of the Protestant group. Therefore, 87.78% of the Protestants in this survey are Pentecostal.

They consist, therefore, of Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, adherents of Afrobrazilian religions, Buddhists, and individuals without any religious affiliation.[50]

Almost 80% of the Protestants interviewed have not completed secondary school compared with 60% of all other individuals interviewed. Around 20% of Protestants have completed secondary school and only 2.37% of them have attained a higher education degree (*terciario* or university). Among non-Protestants, by contrast, almost 30% hold a secondary school degree and 11% a higher education degree. Hence, the average formal education of Protestants is significantly lower than that of non-Protestants. The data can be summarized in the following way: the higher the level of education, the less likely it is achieved by a Protestant in comparison to his/her non-Protestant peers.[51]
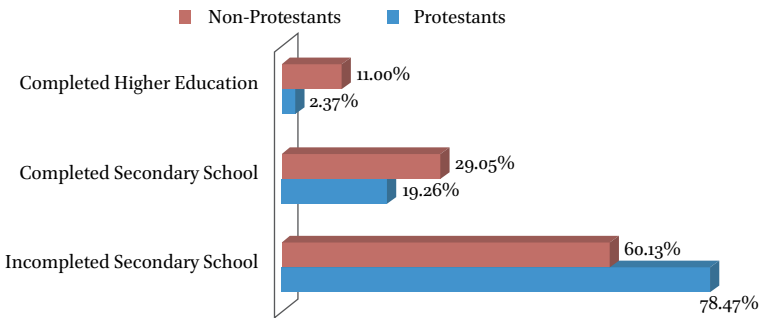
FIGURE 4   *Formal education of Protestants and Non-Protestants in Argentina*
(BASED ON CONICET 2008)

50   See Conicet 2008. The group of Protestants make up just 9% (n = 217) of all informants while the group of non-Protestants includes 91% of the informants of the total sample of n = 2403.

51   As pointed out above, the observed group embraces Pentecostals and historical Protestants. Taking into account that historical Protestants tend to be from the middle class and generally achieve a higher level of education than Pentecostals, it can be expected that the historical Protestants have an elevating effect on the statistics. Thus, analysing the Pentecostals alone, this group might even have slightly lower levels of education in comparison to the non-Pentecostals.

The second quantitative study, which was conducted by the Conicet points to the high presence of Pentecostals in lower class neighborhoods of Quilmes. The study reveals that the percentage of Protestants in lower class neighborhoods of Quilmes is 22%, while the average percentage of Protestants in Quilmes is 10.2%.[52]

Wynarczyk comes to a similar finding by studying the inscriptions in the *Registro Nacional de Culto* (*registro*): the percentage of non-Catholic cults inscribed in the *registro* – mainly Pentecostal churches – is significantly higher in the poorer suburban areas of Buenos Aires than in the city of Buenos Aires, which is on average better off than its surrounding areas.[53] Thus, the socio-geographical distribution of Pentecostalism indicates that the proportion of Pentecostals among lower classes is significantly higher than among middle and upper classes.[54] Wynarczyk refers to another quantitative study: an unpublished study he completed with Johns in 1996. For this study both conducted an empirical survey with a sample of 395 cases in the middle class neighbourhoods of Palermo and Belgrano in Buenos Aires. It turned out that only 3.7% of those holding a higher education degree defined themselves as Protestants. However, in this case, one has to take into account the fact that the group of Protestants also contains historical Protestants who tend to hold higher education degrees than Pentecostals. Thus, the average percentage of Pentecostals among Argentineans holding higher education degrees will even be lower.[55]

Another study was conducted by Pablo Semán in the 90s in the lower class neighbourhood Partidos de Lomas de Zamora where he studied 206 families. 19.19% of his informants were Protestant, mainly from small Pentecostal churches in this neighbourhood. Interestingly, Semán's study comes to a percentage of Pentecostals in lower class neighbourhoods very similar to that of the study completed by the Conicet in Quilmes.[56] Finally, Míguez refers to a study conducted by Roemers at the beginning of the 90s which underlines the predominance of the lower class among Pentecostals.[57]

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52   See Esquivel, Juan et al. 2001.

53   Wynarczyk 2009b: 64–65.

54   See also Mallimaci 1999: 86–87; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 7.

55   The data is based on a study from Wynarczyk and Johns (1996). I had no direct access to the study. The information that I cite here is taken from Wynarczyk 2009a: 53–55, 170–171.

56   Semán 2010.

57   Míguez 2001: 78. The study from Roemers was cited in the following way: "Roemers, G. (1992) Creyentes (ma non tropo), pag. 30". Yet, it was not possible for me to get personal access to the study.

In total, the data indicates that Pentecostalism is more prevalent among the lower than the middle class: while around 20% of the lower class are Pentecostal, in the middle class the proportion remains significantly below 5%.[58] Wynarczyk summarizes these findings in the following way: the higher the social sector, the lower the proportion of Pentecostals in this sector.[59]

In total, the impact of the movement on the middle class remains modest. In particular, members of the middle class with higher education degrees form a small minority in the movement. The movement has so far maintained its lower class character. Similar tendencies have also been observed in other Latin American countries.[60] The lower class class bias of the Pentecostal movement raises the question of why Pentecostalism barely attracts the middle class. In the following, I will submit some explanations for the class bias of Pentecostalism.

5.2.1   *Depriving the Deprived: Pentecostalism as a Consequence of Deprivation*

Various attempts have been made to explain the lower class bias of the Pentecostal movement. The most widespread in the public sphere – which is equally present among scholars of religion – are perhaps deprivation approaches. The deprivation approaches posit that deprivation creates a context conducive for Pentecostalism which is thought to serve the function of a survival (or compensation) strategy for the deprived.

Predominantly attracting deprived and vulnerable individuals, it can be suggested that the social bias of the movement is related to the problems of its adherents. Suffering from diverse afflictions and lacking other means to

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58   Besides these quantitative studies, there are several ethnographic studies which illustrate the occurrence of the movement in the lower class of Argentinean society. Analogically to the quantitative surveys, the ethnographic studies indicate that Pentecostalism is mainly a lower class movement. Each of these inquiries consists of a case study which focuses in general on one church. Míguez (1998, 2001), for instance, studied a Pentecostal church in a lower class neighborhood, Partido de Merlo. Soneira (1994) studied the church Dimension de Fé which is situated on the border of the city of Buenos Aires. Moreover, there are several studies on the church Ondas de Amor y Paz (Wynarczyk 1989; Tort et al. 1993) and studies from Semán (1997, 2000) about the occurrence of Pentecostalism in popular religion.

59   Wynarczyk 2009a. 171. See also Wynarczyk 2010: 19.

60   Anderson 2004: 59, 282; Bastian 1997: 59–72, 61–68, 71, 139–140; Burdick 1993a: 79, 85; Chesnut 1997: 17; 2003: 39–43; Deiros 1992: 175; Fernandes 1992; Freston 1998: 338, 341–342; 1999: 145–146; Höllinger 2006: 267–269; Hunt 2002a; Lehmann 1996: 210–214; 2003: 492; Mariz 1994: 35; Martin 1990: 53; 202; 2002: 1, 20; 78; Parker 1996:154–155; Schäfer 2009a: 48; Stewart-Gambino et al. 1997: 241.

overcome their suffering, they are likely to seek a solution in the sphere of religion. Particularly Pentecostalism is perceived as offering means of easing suffering or even solving problems, such as the famous IURD slogan suggests: "Stop Suffering!" From this perspective, Pentecostalism is regarded as a remedy for the sufferings created by deprivation.[61] Deprivation approaches imply an almost direct causality between deprivation and the choice of a specific solution: particular living-conditions marked by deprivation and poverty are conceived of as leading those who are affected by them to Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism appears as a result of the living-conditions of the deprived. Therefore, deprivation approaches seem to deprive the deprived of an autonomous religious culture: they reduce the religiosity of the deprived to a product or side-effect of their deprivation.

It is evident that the experience of deprivation can stimulate the search for a solution which may indeed end up in the main hall of a Pentecostal church. Regarding the motives that individuals communicate for their affiliation with a Pentecostal church, there is some evidence for deprivation approaches. Many Pentecostals state that they first went to a Pentecostal church due to suffering from a problem.[62] Lower class actors may try to find solutions for their daily problems in Pentecostal churches. However, the bare fact of deprivation alone does not explain why those who are affected by deprivation turn to religion and appear to prefer specific types of religion in order to ease their suffering.[63]

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61   The capacity of Pentecostalism to help individuals cope with poverty-related problems
      was prominently illustrated by Chesnut (1997) and Mariz (1994) for the case of Brazil (see
      for Africa Hesuer 2013). Others like Maristoca (1994: 13) and Bastian (1997: 139–140,
      200–203) point out that Pentecostalism offers a new form of social participation and inte-
      gration for those who are deprived of other means of integration (see also Ruuth 2001:
      122–123). For the case of Argentinean Pentecostalism particularly Algranti (2007b: 26) and
      Míguez (2005: 10) point to its capacity to help individuals in dealing with the social trans-
      formations in the country. Yet, the outcomes of Pentecostalism as a survival strategy may
      be limited as Míguez (1998, 2001) indicates.
62   Algranti 2010: 153; Frigerio 1999: 72–74; Míguez 1998: 119–122; 2001: 80–83.
63   The approaches disregard the fact that every problem may correspond to a variety of solu-
      tions which can be both religious and non-religious. The bare fact of marginal living con-
      ditions does not explain why individuals choose Pentecostalism to deal with their
      problems and not a different cultural option. Numerous individuals who suffer from simi-
      lar problems do not choose Pentecostalism as a strategy to deal with their problems. This
      raises the question of how the absence of a conversion to Pentecostalism in these cases
      can be explained by deprivation approaches. Also, with regard to the low impact of
      Pentecostalism in the middle class, deprivation approaches do not clarify why the middle
      class does not tend to choose Pentecostalism as a solution strategy when facing problems
      similar to those driving the lower class to Pentecostalism: family disruption, depression,

5.2.2   *Cultural Explanations of Pentecostal Growth among the Lower Class*

Other explanations for the growth of Pentecostalism among the lower class refer to cultural factors.[64] Argentinean researchers like Semán, Wynarczyk and Míguez argue that the Pentecostal movement appropriated and re-organized religious ideas and practices which already existed in Latin America's lower classes. In this view, the expansion of Pentecostalism among the lower class is not a pure result of the deprivation of lower class individuals. Instead, the success of Pentecostalism is a product of its ability to re-organize pre-existing socio-cognitive patterns of the lower classes into an appealing religious option which offers convincing schemes of interpretation and solutions for deprivation-related problems.[65] This approach draws attention to the underlying cultural dimension of the relationship between Pentecostalism and social stratification. Succinctly, the lower class appeal of Pentecostalism is explained by a match between popular (lower class) culture/religion and Pentecostalism.

> (…) the growth of Pentecostalism can be explained by the ability of these groups to mobilize and use the existing cultural concepts of those affected by various forms of poverty
>
> SEMAN 2000: 158[66]

Argentinean Pentecostalism integrates important elements of the culture and religiosity of the lower class. It exhibits a festive and emotional style, involves a cosmological world view supposing constant supernatural interventions, and stresses supernatural means to improve daily life. Therefore, Argentinean Pentecostalism can be described as a manifestation of popular religion and an integral part of nowadays popular culture in Argentina.

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drug and alcohol abuse and particularly health problems. For further criticism of these approaches, see also McCloud 2007a; Parker 1996:156; Semán 2000.

64   See also Bastian 1994a: 122–124; Parker 1996:148.

65   See Míguez 1998: 83–74, 141; Séman 1997: 139; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 7. Pentecostalism is conceived of as a rearrangement of religious concepts that already exist in the social memory and cultural habits of the lower class. This pre-existing religious universe may manifest itself in a variety of religious practices and beliefs, as Séman (2000: 167) points out. Examples for other manifestations of this popular religious universe are popular Catholicism and Afrobrazilian religions.

66   The original quote is: „(…) el crecimiento del pentecostalismo puede explicarse por la capacidad que tienen estos grupos para movilizar y combinar los supuestos culturales preexistentes de los grupos afectados por diversas formas de pobreza"(Séman 2000: 158).

In total, the lower class appeal of Pentecostalism can be explained by a combination of cultural approaches and deprivation theories. Taking the deprivation and cultural approaches together, one can assume that different forms of suffering create a stimulus for the search for a solution while cultural affinities and worldviews (popular religion) may guide the search for a solution in the direction of Pentecostalism.[67] The cultural proximity of the lower class to popular religion produces an affinity for Pentecostalism which transforms Pentecostalism into an appealing solution for different types of deprivation-related suffering.

5.2.3   *The Middle Class Mismatch*

This explanation still remains incomplete somehow: in order to explain the class bias of Pentecostalism, also its low success among the educated middle class has to be taken into account. In analogy to the explanation of its success among the lower class, one can contend that its low appeal to the educated middle class is caused by a mismatch between Pentecostalism and the representations of the middle class. There are basically two ill-fitting aspects which seem to be the origin for its low degree of success among the educated middle class: (1) the negative status and conception of Pentecostalism and (2) the cultural patterns of Pentecostalism. Both – the negative conception and the cultural patterns of Pentecostalism – do not fit well with what is regarded as appropriate, legitimate and desirable within the middle class.

As shown above, the social conception of Pentecostalism remains negative. Pentecostalism tends to be mocked and is described as a phenomenon remote from the "real" Argentinean identity. Even though Pentecostals are more tolerated today than in the 1980s, their religious and public legitimacy remains rather weak. Especially among the educated middle class prevail views which regard Pentecostalism as an immature and pre-modern expression of popular religiosity. Moreover, Pentecostalism is depicted as a lower class religion in Argentinean society. Pentecostals are portrayed as deprived lower class individuals who struggle with poverty and become victims of the persuasion techniques of Pentecostal preachers. Being portrayed as a religion of the marginalized does not improve its appeal to the middle class which tries to avoid being identified with a lower class practice, a practice of the *negros* that reflects the precarious "culture of poverty".

In addition, the cultural patterns of Pentecostalism do not fit well with the representations of the middle class: the fire of the Spirit, moments of collective ecstasy, dancing in the Spirit, people trembling, crying and dropping to the

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67   See also Míguez 1998: 121.

ground, others shouting loudly "hallelujah", practices of faith healing casting out demons, prophecy, prayers in tongues, miracles and divine healings – it seems like educated middle class Argentineans could not be in a less fitting place. The holistic worldview, the expressivity and emotionality of its church services as well as the alleged fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism of Pentecostalism do not fit with a middle class who aspires to be cosmopolitan, tidy, sober, highly educated, rational, and scientific in its reasoning. From the viewpoint of an educated middle class which celebrates its attachment to the European ideology of modernity, the practices and beliefs of Pentecostalism appear pre-modern, superstitious, and uncivilized.

The fact that Pentecostalism is mainly a lower class movement does not improve its possibilities of reaching the middle class. Since initial interactions with the Pentecostal movement are generally created through social networks of individuals with close social bonds, the movement – being mainly composed of lower class individuals – faces difficulties reaching middle class individuals.[68]

In sum, the lower class bias of Pentecostalism is not only due to a cultural fit between Pentecostalism and popular religion, but also due a mismatch between Pentecostalism and representations of the middle class.[69] Within a middle class in which popular religion is not absent but not well accepted, Pentecostalism does not constitute the most appropriate religious option.

5.3 From Conformance to Deviation: Experiencing Inappropriateness

(...) an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that

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68   Moreover, middle class individuals engaging in Pentecostalism often face trouble finding class peers who share similar cultural affinities in the movement, as some middle class informants described in the interviews. Finally, the lower class bias of the movement creates a lower class image which is not appealing to the educated middle class. Ironically, being a lower class movement appears to contribute to the lower class bias of the movement. Consequently, the lower class bias appears to be at the same time both a cause and a product of the lower class bias.

69   Particularly public discourses and the resulting conceptions of Pentecostalism appear to contribute to this ill fit and hinder educated middle class Argentineans from passing through the entrance of a Pentecostal church.

> his other attributes have on us. He possesses a stigma, an undesired dif-
> ferentness (....).
>
> GOFFMAN 1963: 5

The picture sketched out so far is a picture of religious practices that fit to the class representations: it is a generalized picture of individuals who dedicate themselves to religious options that match their class representations. This picture fits well to the common conception of a lower class deeply involved in popular religion and Pentecostalism, and a middle class avoiding the "supersti-tious" religious practices of the popular masses.

However, the empirical activity of individuals does not always correspond to the prevailing social representations. The practices and attitudes of indi-viduals may be mismatched with the social representations of the group to which they belong: one can find educated middle class *Porteños* who practice popular religion as well as lower class Argentineans who reject popular reli-gion. Contrary to what concepts of popular religion seem to suggest, consider-able sections of the lower class communicate doubts with regard to the possibility of supernatural interventions and have a comparatively low affin-ity for popular religion and Pentecostalism.[70] Also among the educated mid-dle class there is non-conformance: highly educated professionals who engage in witchcraft, Afrobrazilian cults or Pentecostalism. They deviate to some degree from the social expectations and cultural aspirations of the middle class. Highly educated middle class Pentecostals are examples of these devia-tions. Their religious choice does not fit well with the representations of the middle class.

A conversion to Pentecostalism can have deep consequences for the social life of the middle class convert. The new Pentecostal identity may lead to experiences of uneasiness, rejection or open discrimination in the social environment of the convert. Often, tensions arose in the social environment of middle class interviewees: friendships, family and work relations suffered. Longstanding friendships fell apart, as in the case of Alberto. When he told his friends about his conversion to Pentecostalism they called him crazy and brainwashed. Only one of his old friends maintained contact with him. In some cases, interviewees faced tensions at work. Andrea, for instance, was harassed by her boss due to her religious affiliation. Other interviewees from middle class families experienced tensions with their relatives who had

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70   Míguez 1998: 121, 141. Nevertheless, the general tendency towards popular religion appears
       to be more pervasive among the lower class than the middle class.

negative perceptions of Pentecostalism. One example is Horacio: after his conversion to Pentecostalism, Horacio lost contact with his father who completely rejected Horacio`s decision to become Pentecostal and refused to speak to him for years.

On one occasion, an interviewee related to me how he tried to rescue his wife from Pentecostalism. Much to Carlos' chagrin, his wife had converted to Pentecostalism. In order to "rescue" her, he accompanied her to the Pentecostal church:

> (…) the first time I went, I saw a bunch of crazy people. I saw them and I laughed, I laughed hysterically…'They are all crazy!' I said to myself. They were very passionate Pentecostals. They would come over to me and say "I'll pray for you," and I would send them away saying, "No, thank you," because I thought they were all crazy. Of course I wanted to get Silvia out of there, (…)
>
> INTERVIEW CARLOS

His first reactions illustrate the middle class rejection of the movement. Despite having experimented with different kinds of alternative religions before this visit, he experiences the movement as a "manga de locos", a bunch of crazy people, which he ridicules and from which he has to rescue his wife. However, after accompanying her several times to the church service his attitude changes. He starts to accept his wife's new religious affiliation and finally also converts to the movement.[71]

The tensions between representations of the middle class and Pentecostalism also become evident during the interviews I conducted: middle class Pentecostals laugh loudly about what they see when watching videos of Pentecostal churches and their practices of faith healing. They seem to be embarrassed by Pentecostalism, their own religious faith, and seek to differentiate themselves from what they see. This is accomplished partly by outright criticism and mockery of the style of Pentecostalism or more subtly by including mild forms of self-criticism. Thus, Alejandra, a lawyer, states: "Somos un poco desprolijos."[72] She describes her religious community, including herself, as untidy and laments that the Pentecostal movement does not correspond to what is perceived as *prolijo* (tidy). This comment illustrates the conflict

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71   In general, middle class interviewees were very aware of their exceptional status: they know that they form a minority within the movement as well as among the educated middle class. They lamented the low proportion of professionals in the movement.

72   Interview Alejandra Part 2.

between the middle class ideal of tidiness and the conception of the Pentecostal movement. Indirectly, she sets tidiness as a general standard to which the movement should adapt itself and portrays her religious practice as deficient in comparison to this standard.

Criticisms which regret the non-conformance of the movement to some "civilized" standards and call, directly or indirectly, for some kind of adaptation to these standards illustrate the tension between the movement and what is regarded as appropriate within the Argentinean middle class. Another example is Laura who states that she dislikes "el tumulto" (the turmoil) in Pentecostal churches because the turmoil would lead non-Pentecostals to perceive them as crazy.[73] She explains later in the interview that she is afraid of bringing her ex-fellow students to her church and feels embarrassed due to the inadequate behavior of her peer members. Another interviewee, watching a video with a pastor shouting into the microphone, states:

> You can't bring anyone here, like a colleague or someone you are dating, because they would say to you: 'Everyone is loony here. They are all crazy. What is this?' Do you know what I mean?
>
> INTERVIEW CAMILA

Camila criticizes that it is not possible to bring non-Pentecostal peers to this type of church because its practice would be perceived as crazy. These statements from middle class Pentecostals illustrate that they have a clear idea about what is experienced as normal and appropriate by their middle class peers. They know that Pentecostalism may violate the middle class standards of appropriateness. They view and evaluate Pentecostalism from the viewpoint of their non-Pentecostal class peers and contemplate what they would regard as inappropriate. Laura and Camila appear to almost rationally calculate that an "unadapted" religious practice will lead them to uncomfortable situations in which they risk embarrassment. Instead of facing shame they want their religious practice to be socially acceptable.

In situations in which the boundaries of what is perceived as appropriate are crossed, middle class Pentecostals are afraid of being identified with "inappropriate" practices. They are afraid of losing face with their middle class peers and being regarded as different from the "decent middle class". Being a Pentecostal means potentially crossing the fragile symbolic boundaries of the middle class.

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73   Interview Laura.

5.4   Summary

The aim of this chapter was to present an overview of Argentinean Pentecostalism and to discuss its relationship with social class order in general and the middle class in particular.

The chapter began with a brief overview of the diversity and competition within Pentecostalism in Argentina. Despite the diversity of the movement, there are some institutions that unify evangelical Protestantism such as evangelical umbrella organizations, theological institutes, and evangelical mass events. Although these institutions fulfill a representative function vis-à-vis Argentinean society, they represent only a fraction of the movement. The majority of smaller Pentecostal churches, predominantly located in lower class neighborhoods and slums, are not represented by these institutions. Therefore, the institutions constitute a formal circle of evangelical Protestantism from which many churches are excluded. The endeavors of these institutions to improve the public image of Pentecostalism seem to have had – together with the massive expansion of Pentecostalism throughout the population – a softening impact on existing prejudices against Pentecostals. The public image of Pentecostalism has somewhat improved from that of a dangerous and intolerable sect aggressively invading Argentina to that of a tolerable religious deviation. Nevertheless, stigmatization and mockery remain prevalent. Pentecostalism tends to be portrayed as a movement to which the "downtrodden and ignorant" convert and at which people can laugh. The continuing stigmatization of the movement has an impact on its popularity within the middle class and contributes to the lower class bias of Argentinean Pentecostalism. Exploring the social stratification of the Pentecostal movement, it becomes evident that Pentecostalism remains predominantly a lower class movement in Argentina. It was argued that the lower class bias of Pentecostalism is related to (1) the fit between Pentecostalism and popular culture and religion and (2) the mismatch with social representations of the middle class. A religious practice that implies miracles, speaking in tongues, practices of faith healing, and a highly expressive and emotional atmosphere does not fit well with the representations of a middle class which aspires to be sober, modern, European, rational, decent, and well educated. Nevertheless, there is a small group of highly educated middle class *porteños* that is involved in Pentecostalism. Their religious practice may be experienced by peers as inappropriate and can create tensions in their social relationships. Given these tensions, their presence in the movement raises the question of how they became Pentecostal. How do middle class actors come to choose such an "inappropriate" religious option? This question will be tackled in the following chapter.

Becoming a Middle Class Pentecostal: Biographies, Backgrounds, and Beliefs

> *When Fabian, a young bank employee from an upper-middle class background, converts to Pentecostalism, he starts to face pressure from various sides: he loses his old friends and the material support – cars, housing, and money – from his father who regards Pentecostal pastors as swindlers dedicated to the exploitation of their members. Moreover, his colleagues at work laugh at his new Pentecostal identity and begin to harass him. He states that he feels in these situations often like the evangelical character Ned Flanders from the famous cartoon series The Simpsons.*[1]

As in the case of Fabian, many of the middle class Pentecostals that I interviewed experienced some type of tension related to their Pentecostal identity. They were expelled from their secular peer-group, suffered conflicts with their parents or spouses, or were mocked at work and felt embarrassed for being a Pentecostal. These tensions illustrate that Pentecostalism is not well accepted among the middle class. Pentecostalism clashes to some degree with what is expected from the educated urban middle class. This raises the question how middle class individuals become Pentecostals. What factors drive them to walk through the entrance hall of a Pentecostal church and convert to such an "inappropriate" faith?

This chapter tackles this question by exploring 44 in-depth interviews with Pentecostals: 30 middle class Pentecostals and a control group of 14 lower class Pentecostals. With respect to the small sample of middle class Pentecostals, the chapter does not endeavor to offer a comprehensive explanation of middle class religious conversions. Instead, it attempts to provide some clues that may help to understand which factors facilitate the conversion of educated middle class Argentineans to Pentecostalism.

The chapter starts with a brief description of the religious practices and beliefs of the interviewees. It is followed by a section discussing their social class background and another section describing their religious backgrounds. The chapter ends with a reflection about the factors that contributed to middle class conversions to Pentecostalism.

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1 Interview Fabian Part 1.

6.1   Religious Belief and Practice among Middle Class Interviewees

Despite the "inappropriateness" of their faith, the middle class Pentecostals that I interviewed present themselves as firm believers and practitioners of Pentecostalism. They do not shy away from the potential stigma and deny their Pentecostal identity and beliefs. However, when communicating their faith to friends, relatives or colleagues they may face limits and sometimes even open discrimination.

All interviewees – lower and middle class interviewees – describe themselves as Pentecostal. They are affiliated with Pentecostal churches and attend services on a regular basis. Many interviewees even participate several times a week in different activities of their congregation such as church services, Bible groups, courses and workshops.

Concerning their beliefs, all interviewees share the basic Pentecostal belief in the experience of the Holy Spirit and reception of its gifts. Surprisingly, middle class interviewees show no significant differences in their religious beliefs from those of lower class interviewees. When I started my research, I supposed that educated middle class Pentecostals would tend to be more skeptical with regard to some Pentecostal beliefs. However, this is not the case. All interviewees share the similar pool of beliefs. First and foremost, they believe that the supernatural intervenes in daily life: supernatural interventions take place in the form of the Holy Spirit, curses, demonic possessions, faith healing, spiritual gifts, etc. Hence, in the mindset of my interviewees the supernatural and empirical spheres are deeply intertwined. Moreover, human beings are believed to be able to receive specific supernatural gifts, *dones*, which may, for instance, enable them to heal other individuals from lethal diseases. The belief in faith healing and exorcism as well as the blessings of the Holy Spirit and miracles is ubiquitous among the interviewees. They also believe that non-Christian religious actors are able to "manipulate" supernatural forces in order to alter empirical reality. In particular, *Curanderos, Brujos* and Afrobrazilian religions are regarded as potential suppliers of such spiritual services. Interviewees do not deny that these actors may relieve their clients from suffering, but rather describe them as receiving their spiritual power from satanic forces. Consequently, interviewees reject these types of religious practice as satanic and dangerous.

Middle class informants are not more secular in their beliefs than the lower class informants of the sample. There are no indicators that middle class Pentecostals believe less in the supernatural and its empirical manifestations in daily life than their lower class peers. Both middle and lower class interviewees share the same holistic worldview. Whilst the holistic worldview is generally

described as a feature of popular religiosity which is attributed to the lower class, the sample group of this study includes highly educated middle class individuals who show a strong attachment to the holistic worldview. However, the expectation exists that the educated middle class is more secular and rational, and less "superstitious" than the lower class. Pentecostal beliefs in demons, divine miracles and the gifts of the Spirit do not represent the typical characteristics one would expect to find among the educated middle class of Buenos Aires. This raises the question of how they became Pentecostals. As will be discussed in the following sections, the belief in the concepts of popular religion and the conversion to Pentecostalism are closely interrelated. In particular, religious upbringing appears to play a crucial role.

6.2   Social Positions and Class Backgrounds of Interviewees

This section describes the "objective" social background and current status of the interviewees. This description delivers a general overview of the sample of interviewees on which this study is based.[2] The insights into the social background of middle class interviewees will enable us at a later point to suggest an explanation for the conversion of middle class Pentecostals.

Figure 5 represents a social space displaying the interviewees' current social positions and some of their professions. This space combines the variables of household income per capita in Argentinean pesos and education in the form of education degrees. The red dots indicate the social positions of lower class interviewees and the blue circles the social positions of middle class interviewees. This space serves as an illustration of the "objective" class differences within the sample. Lower class interviewees are located at the lower left of the space, whereas middle class interviewees are situated at the upper right.

The majority of lower class informants work in unstable, informal work relations. Two of the interviewees are unemployed and live under uncertain circumstances working from time to time in casual employments. Other interviewees work as domestic employees, hair dressers, painters, cleaners, food sellers, and forklift truck drivers. All lower class informants have a formal education lower than completed secondary school: four left primary school before finishing, five finished primary school without having ever started secondary school, four started secondary school but dropped out before finishing and one was restarting her secondary school studies.

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2   The same sample will be used in the eighth chapter to describe the taste of middle class Pentecostals.
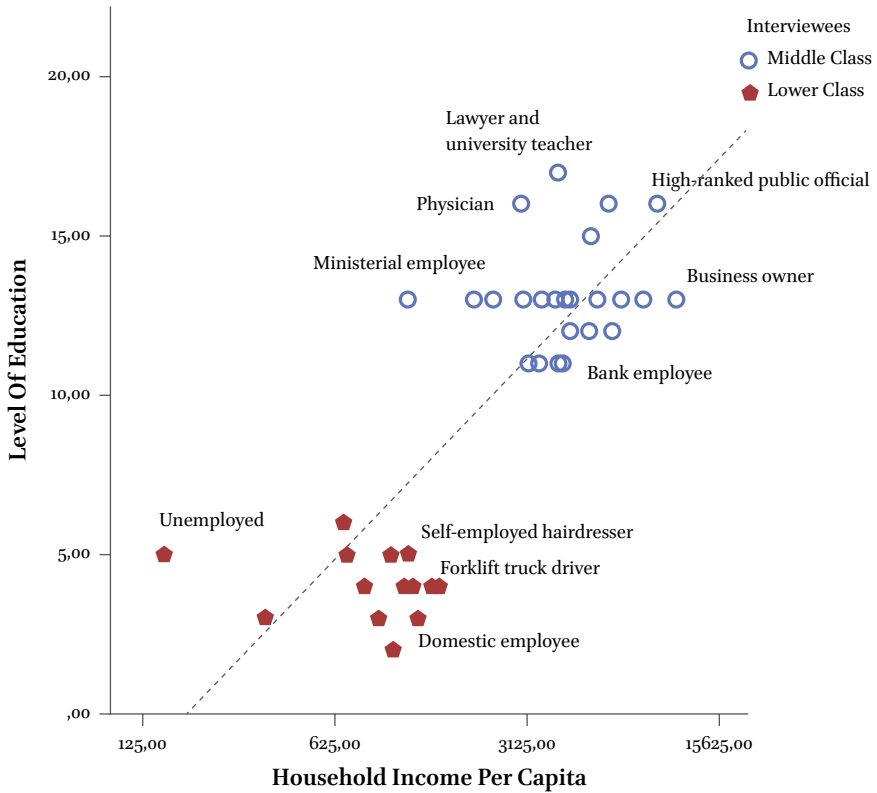
FIGURE 5   *Social positions of interviewees*[3]
                (OWN SOURCE)

The most frequent job occupations in the middle class group are lawyers, phy-
sicians, architects, public officials, and business owners.[4]

    The educational composition of the middle class interviewees is shown in
table 1. The majority of interviewees in this group (76.6%) holds a completed

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3   This social space is constructed on the basis of data from the interview partners and is not
     representative of Argentinean society. The vertical axis which shows the education degrees
     of interviewees starts at illiteracy (0) and ends with a completed PhD degree (18). In order to
     integrate all informants into the space, the horizontal axis showing household income per
     capita was compressed with a logarithm of five. Consequently, the income per capita in the
     scale does not rise in a linear manner, but logarithmically. For interviews conducted during
     the second wave of interviews in 2011 the household income was multiplied by 0.75 to coun-
     terbalance the effect of rising incomes.
4   The economic situations of middle class informants vary significantly. The highest house-
     hold income per capita was at 10825 Argentinean pesos per month almost ten times higher

TABLE 1   *Educational degrees of middle class interviewees* (own source)

	N	%
University student	4	13.3
Completed *Terciario*	3	10.0
Completed university	18	60.0
Postgraduate student	1	3.3
Completed postgraduate	3	10.0
PhD student	1	3.3
Total	*30*	*100.0*

university degree or higher. The lowest formal education level is "university student" while the highest is "PhD student".

In general terms, the middle class interviewees are part of the educated middle and upper middle class of Buenos Aires city. Besides their elevated cultural and economic capital, they share some other features: they are homeowners who frequently employ domestic servants, own at least one (in many cases brand new) car, and send their children to private schools.

Also with regard to the "objective" class backgrounds during childhood, there are some differences between the two groups. The social backgrounds of lower class interviewees are illustrated in table 2. The table shows the social position of the parental household during the individual's childhood: it combines the educational degrees of the parents – in this case the highest of the two degrees – and the economic position of interviewees during their childhood.[5]

The parental household of lower class interviewees can be described in the majority of cases as lower class. Seven of them grew up in poverty while five had a rather stable lower class background. In two cases, informants have a lower middle and middle class background. The main segment of lower class interviewees faced different hardships during their childhood such as economic

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than the lowest at 1154 Argentinean pesos. Yet, the lowest income is an exception among the group of middle class interviewees and there are doubts with regard to the correctness of the income data of this informant. The majority of household incomes per capita range between 3000 and 7000 Argentinean pesos per month in the middle class group.

5   The economic class statuses were summarized for this table and the subsequent tables: the categories "absolute poverty (misery)" and "poverty" were combined as "poverty", "lower class" and "stable lower class" to "lower class", and "upper middle class" and "upper class" to "upper middle class".

TABLE 2　*Social background of lower class interviewees during childhood* (own source)

		Parents' education									
		Incomplete primary		Completed primary		Completed secondary		Completed higher education		Total	
		N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Economic	Poverty	3	21.4	4	28.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	50.0
Upbringing	Lower Class	0	0.0	4	28.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	28.6
	Lower Middle Class	0	0.0	1	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	7.1
	Middle Class	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	7.1	0	0.0	1	7.1
	Upper Middle Class	0	0.0	1	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	7.1
	Total	*3*	*21.4*	*10*	*71.4*	*1*	*7.1*	*0*	*0.0*	*14*	*100.0*

deprivation, hunger, domestic violence, psychological and/or sexual abuse. In many cases, they migrated as teenagers or adolescents from rural areas or small towns to the urban area of Buenos Aires where they expected to have a better future. For some of my interviewees this hope became true, particularly for those who grew up in misery. They experienced an absolute improvement in their life: hunger or other types of serious material deprivation disappeared from their daily reality. In relative terms, however, they are located close to – or even at – the end of the social hierarchy.[6]

The "objective" class backgrounds of the middle class informants are more mixed with a majority of interviewees coming from the middle class. Some of the middle class informants were raised in an upper middle or even upper class environment. Table 3 displays the "objective" social positions of the parental homes of middle class interviewees.[7]

6　Yet, not all lower class interviewees experienced social improvement: two interviewees who came from middle class backgrounds suffered social decline. Their loss of social status appears to be partly a product of dysfunctional family backgrounds.

7　The table shows that seven of the middle class interviewees grew up in a home where the economic situation was lower class or lower middle class and the parents held less than a

TABLE 3　*Social background of middle class interviewees during childhood* (own source)

		Parents' education									
		Incomplete primary		Completed primary		Completed secondary		Completed higher education		Total	
		N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Economic Upbringing	Poverty	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	*0*	*0.0*
	Lower Class	1	3.3	4	13.3	3	10.0	0	0.0	*8*	*26.7*
	Lower Middle Class	1	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	0	0.0	*3*	*10.0*
	Middle Class	1	3.3	1	3.3	3	10.0	1	3.3	*6*	*20.0*
	Upper Middle Class	0	0.0	2	6.7	8	26.7	3	10.0	*13*	*43.3*
	Total	*3*	*10.0*	*8*	*26.7*	*15*	*50.0*	*4*	*13.4*	*30*	*100.0*

None of the middle class informants grew up in poverty or misery and only a small group among them had a clear lower class background. This picture was also confirmed in the narratives about their childhood: unlike lower class informants, most middle class informants stated that they experienced a happy and carefree childhood without any type of deprivation or abuse. Instead, their parents and grand-parents were the ones who had suffered economic hardships. All middle class interviewees are descendants of European immigrants, most of them from an Italian or Spanish background. Many told me that their grandparents had migrated from Europe to Argentina in order to

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secondary school degree. These cases can be described as lower class backgrounds. Seven other cases are located on the border between lower and middle class: in four cases the parents held school degrees lower than secondary school but the household is economically integrated in the middle class, and in three other cases one of the parents had at least a secondary school degree but the economic situation of the parental household was lower class. The remaining sixteen cases – which form 53.3% of my middle class interviewees – have a middle class background with one of the parents holding at least a secondary school degree and an economic situation of at least lower middle class. Among this group are eleven interviewees that were even raised in upper middle class households.

escape poverty. Newly-arrived in Argentina, they started as unskilled workers and lived under poor material conditions, but managed to gradually improve their situation through hard work. Due to these improvements they were able to provide their children an economically more stable background and access to education. Aspiring to upward social mobility, the parents of my interview partners enhanced their "objective" social position through educational training. They became skilled workers, white collar employees or even opened their own businesses. Many among them finally achieved middle class status. Thus, in most cases, the parental household of my middle class informants was already marked by upward social mobility. Similar to their parents, interviewees strive for further improvements. Many experienced an improvement, whereas in other cases they maintained their social position.[8]

The preferred strategy for realizing social enhancement was education and hard work: many middle class informants stressed the hard work and sacrifices they made in order to finish their studies and reach their current social position. Particularly important was education. Middle class informants usually reached higher levels of education than their parents. While at least one of their parents generally held a secondary school degree, most of the middle class interviewees had achieved a higher education degree. Moreover, many middle class informants continued to study in some educational program after having finished their higher education degree. Several interviewees, for instance, frequented Bible institutes or some type of postgraduate program. Middle class informants tended to stress the importance of education, personal development, and progress – ideals which fit well to the representations of the Argentinean middle class.[9]

The fact that most middle class interviewees have a middle class background and have therefore grown up in a social environment which was framed by the

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8   In particular, interviewees with lower and lower middle class backgrounds enhanced their social position, while those with middle class backgrounds maintained or slightly improved their position. Only in two cases there appears to have occurred a slight social decline since the economic background of the two individuals was potentially upper class.

9   From the 1980s onwards, the Argentinean middle class has experienced a partial fragmentation process which is believed to have caused a dichotomization into economic winners and losers. Although there are significant differences in the incomes of the middle class sample – including some interviewees who may have benefited from the social transformations and others that were negatively affected – the vast majority of the interviewees belong neither to the winners nor the losers of the social transformation. By contrast, most of the informants make up part of a relatively stable middle class. Moreover, all middle class interviewees from the sample had a positive perception of their future and believed that they would experience further economic improvements within the following five to ten years.

representations of the middle class will help us to form an explanation for their conversion to Pentecostalism in the following sections.

6.3 Religious Backgrounds and Trajectories

The following paragraphs explore the religious biographies of the interviewees and deal with the question of what factors made the middle class interviewees susceptible to becoming Pentecostal.[10] The emphasis is on the middle class interviewees. Their religious upbringing will be discussed together with the trajectories that drove them to become Pentecostals. One can distinguish between five types of religious upbringing: popular Catholicism, orthodox Catholicism, non-active (or nominal) Catholicism, evangelical Protestantism, and a mixed (evangelical and catholic) upbringing.

Table 4 displays the religious upbringing of lower and middle class informants. Religious upbringing is defined here as the religious practice in which the given actor is involved during his/her childhood. Although the religious practice of most actors is shaped by that of their parents, in a few cases informants practiced a religion different from that of their parents. Sara, for instance, grew up with Catholic parents who sent her to Catholic Church. But at the same time she participated in a Pentecostal church to which she was more committed than to the Catholic Church. Consequently, her upbringing is defined in the table above as evangelical and Catholic.

The religious biographies of lower and middle class interviewees show some differences: most lower class respondents grew up in an environment of popular Catholicism while the sample of middle class respondents exhibits a greater variety. Notably, many of the middle class interviewees had early contact with evangelical Protestantism.

6.3.1 The Religious Biographies of Lower Class Interviewees
The religious upbringing of the majority of lower class informants is shaped by popular Catholicism. Eight of the fourteen lower class informants grew up in a religious environment of popular Catholicism. Rather than by regular participation in

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10   The religious conversion studies of the informants will however not be the focus of this study. This is due to two reasons. First, religious conversion is not the topic of this research. Second, Pentecostal conversion is an extensively studied topic (cf. Gooren 2005; 2007; 2010a; Steigenga and Cleary 2007). There exist already a vast number of studies about conversion to Pentecostalism. Therefore, the conversion careers of the interviewees are only briefly addressed.

TABLE 4   *Religious upbringing of lower and middle class interviewees* (own source)

	Popular catholicism		Orthodox catholicism		Catholicism, not active		Evangelical and catholic		Evangelical		Total	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Lower Class	8	57.1	0	0.0	1	7.1	3	21.4	2	14.3	14	100.0
Middle Class	7	23.3	5	16.7	6	20.0	2	6.7	10	33.3	30	100.0
Total	15	34.1	5	11.4	7	15.9	5	11.4	12	27.3	44	100.0

Sunday mass, their religious practice was characterized by the devotion to Catholic saints and the Virgin. In addition to the devotion to saints and virgins, they often accompanied their parents to witches or faith healers.

The case of Carolina exemplifies how some lower class individuals become familiarized early in life with popular religiosity. Carolina grew up together with 15 siblings on a farm in a rural area of Paraguay. Her parents did not frequent the Catholic Church but instead had numerous figures and images of virgins and saints in their house. Her mother even installed small cots with candles for the saints on the street. Moreover, Carolina was frequently sent with her siblings to a faith healer in order to perform faith healing practices with fabric belonging to her ill mother. The faith healer received food in exchange for his services.[11]

Three lower class interviewees were raised in a mixed environment of popular Catholicism and Pentecostalism. Besides experiencing popular Catholicism, they also had an intense relationship to Pentecostalism during their upbringing. Andrés, for instance, was brought up in a family in which the father practiced popular Catholicism while the mother tried out numerous non-Catholic religious options and finally ended up in a Pentecostal church. Due to the influence of his mother, he learned early about the Pentecostal faith.

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11   Interview Carolina Part 3.

The majority of lower class interviewees grew up in an environment of popular Catholicism: saints, the Virgin, witches, and faith healers shaped their religious universe. They were born as Catholics and converted from Catholicism to Pentecostalism. From their conversion onwards most of them disaffiliated and affiliated with different Pentecostal churches.

6.3.2 *The Religious Biographies of Middle Class Interviewees*

The religious biographies of the middle class interviewees are different from those of the lower class. Popular Catholicism is less prevalent. Many middle class informants had from early on some contact with evangelical Protestantism. In the following, I discuss each type of religious upbringing separately.

6.3.2.1 Middle Class Pentecostals with Evangelical and Mixed Backgrounds

In ten cases, middle class informants grew up in an evangelical household and were involved from early on in the practice of Protestantism. This group forms – with 33.3% of middle class interviewees – the biggest group within the middle class. Their families were affiliated with evangelical congregations and practiced their faith on a regular basis. In addition, there are two cases in which interviewees practiced evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism during their childhood.

Remarkably, most interviewees in this group have a middle class background.[12] Hence, the majority of individuals in this group were already raised in families that deviated from the representations of the middle class and the general picture of lower class Protestantism. Among this group are many interviewees whose families have a long standing evangelical tradition.

Moreover, the majority of the interviewees in this group are born into a family with a Pentecostal tendency.[13] One example is Eduardo. He grew up in a Pentecostal household and was familiarized early with the Pentecostal faith. His upbringing was deeply shaped by the continuous practice of Pentecostalism. The family of his father has a long Protestant history.[14]

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12 Only in three cases, interviewees with an evangelical background come from a lower class background. In two cases, parents of the interviewees hold even higher education degrees and in five cases they come from upper middle class or even upper class backgrounds.

13 Only in one case was an interviewee raised in a non-charismatic evangelical church: Andrea went with her parents to a traditional church of the Plymouth Brethren and switched later in her life with her husband to a Pentecostal church. In the remaining eleven cases interviewees participated from early on in Pentecostal churches.

14 Interview Eduardo.

Different from the pure Protestant upbringing is the mixed religious upbringing in Catholicism and Protestantism. Two middle class informants practiced Catholicism and Protestantism during childhood. I have already mentioned the case of Sara who despite growing up in a Catholic household joined a Pentecostal church and was forced at the same time to participate in the religious activities of the Catholic Church. The other case is Emilia. Her Catholic mother frequently took her to Catholic mass on Sunday mornings, while Sunday evenings she attended with her Protestant grandmother a Pentecostal congregation. Thus, Emilia participated almost every Sunday in a Catholic and a Pentecostal church service. Moreover, she visited a Catholic private school.[15]

Individuals with an evangelical background were raised in at least a partly evangelical environment and participated on a regular basis in evangelical church services. At some moment during their youth – generally between 15 and 20 years of age – interviewees decided to stay in the movement and were baptized. They became Pentecostal. In some cases they had previously experienced a type of conversion process, in other cases it was just a change of status within the community. At some point in their life after their conversion they switched their congregational affiliation. All informants switched their church at least once, in some cases even several times.

The religious conversion to Pentecostalism in this group raises few questions. Those who grew up in a Pentecostal environment are also the most likely to join the movement and become Pentecostal. However, with respect to the middle class Pentecostals who have not experienced an evangelical upbringing, the conversion to Pentecostalism is less evident.

Besides the twelve cases that were mentioned here so far, there are also other interviewees who experienced an evangelical influence during their childhood but have not been attributed to the "evangelical group". They participated from time to time in the church services of evangelical congregations during their childhood.[16]

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15   Interview Emilia.

16   Despite having a close relative who was Protestant, these interviewees did not practice Protestantism on a regular basis. I attributed the cases to other categories due to the absence of a regular practice of evangelical Protestantism. Two examples are Luis and Fabian. While their mothers were active Pentecostals, the official religion of Luis and Fabian was Catholicism. Nevertheless, both of them practiced neither Protestantism nor Catholicism during their childhoods. Therefore, they are defined as non-active Catholics.

6.3.2.2   Middle Class Pentecostals with Religious Backgrounds in Popular Catholicism

Besides Protestantism, Catholicism in its manifold manifestations was in various cases an important factor during childhood. In seven cases, middle class interviewees grew up in a popular Catholic environment. They form the second largest group among the middle class interviewees.

Popular Catholicism consists of a variety of practices: petitions and promises to the saints and the Virgin, the consultation of faith healers, the use of wristbands for spiritual protection, etc. Alberto, for instance, reports that he made promises to the saints, went to the faith healer, and used different types of wristbands as a spiritual protection against envy. Moreover, the parental household of those who grew up in popular Catholicism were often marked by the presence of images of the Virgin and saints. Further, their parents took them on pilgrimages to saints and the *Virgen de Lujan.*

Popular Catholicism constitutes part of the religious universe of popular religion. It is based on a holistic world-view which supposes that supernatural beings influence the empirical life of individuals. The universe of popular religiosity and Pentecostalism are closely interrelated. Therefore, those who grew up in popular Catholicism are likely to also have an affinity for other types of popular religion such as Pentecostalism.

Sharing a similar worldview and similar practices, Argentineans who grew up in popular Catholicism may find appeal in Pentecostalism particularly when they face problems. In fact, the middle class interviewees from this group converted to Pentecostalism when they faced a crisis in their life. Most of them became Pentecostals in the course of a depression or life crisis. At the same time, they had a friend or relative who was already involved in the movement and facilitated their first contact with a Pentecostal church. One example is the case of Pedro who suffered from panic attacks. He was afraid to die and leave his family alone. His wife who had recently become a member of a Pentecostal church invited him to visit the consultation program of the church. After participating in the initial consultations, Pedro started visiting the church services and finally converted to Pentecostalism.

6.3.2.3   Middle Class Pentecostals with Non-Active Catholic Backgrounds

Another widespread form of Catholicism consists of a nominal, non-active Catholicism. In six cases, middle class interviewees reported to me that they were raised in Catholic families but abstained from any type of regular religious practice. They were baptized as Catholics, but practiced Catholicism neither in a popular nor in an orthodox fashion.

Only in one case was an interviewee dedicated to a regular religious practice during childhood: Mateo and his family were officially Catholic, but practiced a form of spiritism in the *escuela espiritista*. He describes the practices of this group as quite similar to those of Pentecostalism. Later he experienced his first contact with Pentecostalism due to a relative, but did not convert immediately to Pentecostalism. In the context of a crisis in his business career, he started visiting a Pentecostal church and finally converted to the movement.

In the remaining five cases in this group, interviewees did not practice any type of religion on a regular basis during their childhood. Although some of their parents were believers and even practicers of a religion, the interviewees stayed away from any type of active religious affiliation. Nevertheless, four of them visited from time to time Pentecostal church services. Two examples are Luis and Fabian. While their mothers were active evangelicals, the official religion of Luis and Fabian was Catholicism. Both of them sometimes went to Catholic and evangelical church services but did not practice evangelical Protestantism or Catholicism on a regular basis. Despite the fact that these interviewees were not dedicated to a regular religious practice in their childhood, they had established some type of relationship to Pentecostalism and were familiar with the movement and its belief system. Later in life, in the face of personal hardships they became active members of a Pentecostal church. Luis, for instance, was reluctant to become an active member of the Pentecostal movement until he experienced a deep depression. In the context of the depression he started to visit his mother's church on a regular basis. He experienced an improvement in his well-being and finally became an active member of the church. Again, having social bonds with a Pentecostal and suffering a personal crisis appear to be central factors for converting to the movement.

6.3.2.4 Middle Class Pentecostals with "Orthodox" Catholic Backgrounds

A different style of practicing Catholicism is defined as "orthodox" Catholicism. This style is marked by regular participation in the Catholic Sunday mass. In five cases, middle class interviewees claimed to have attended Sunday mass on a regular basis during childhood.

Nadia, for instance, went each Sunday to mass. In most cases, she went alone to the Catholic Church which was located close to her parental home while her mother was more engaged in popular Catholicism and the consultation of faith healers and witches. However, Nadia's grandmother was Pentecostal. Her grandmother's religious affiliation allowed Nadia to become

familiar with Pentecostalism. Later, Nadia and her mother together converted to Pentecostalism.[17]

Other middle class interviewees participated together with their parents or were obligated to attend Catholic masses regularly by their Catholic boarding school. Maria, for instance, grew up in a very Catholic household and went to mass every Sunday. At the same time, her parents were also engaged in popular Catholicism. Later in her life, her husband started to visit a Pentecostal church due to a crisis. His business had burned down and he sought relief in a Pentecostal congregation to which some of his relatives belonged. After his conversion, Maria joined her husband and started participating in the congregation. Yet, in the beginning she was not convinced and remained Catholic. Only after several years of engagement did she experience a conversion in an evangelical mass event and became a Pentecostal.

In other cases, contact with evangelical Protestantism already existed during childhood. Camila and Isabela practiced orthodox Catholicism during their childhood, while their mothers were active Pentecostals and took them to Pentecostal church services. Camila and Isabela disaffiliated later in their lives – after childhood – from the Catholic Church and began regular Pentecostal practice.

6.4   Explaining Middle Class Conversions to Pentecostalism

Informants converted at different stages in their lives to Pentecostalism: some relatively early under the influence of their family, others at a later time in their life.[18]

In the majority of cases, the conversion to Pentecostalism was motivated by a problem and facilitated by contact with Pentecostalism.[19] Most informants suffered from problems such as loneliness, depression, health issues and family strife. Facing these problems, they visited a Pentecostal church in search for relief. In addition, interviewees generally had contact with a person who facilitated their contact with the movement during the crisis. This person was in most cases a relative, partner, or a close friend.

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17   Interview Nadia.

18   After converting and participating for a time in a congregation, most informants switched to other churches and arrived at one point in their lives at their current church. The number of religious switches varies among my informants: some were affiliated with just one different church; others had tried several religious options before joining their current church.

19   See also Gooren 2010; Rambo 1993.

Hence, social contacts with the movement as well as the experience of a crisis facilitated the conversion of middle class interviewees. Both factors have already been explored by other studies and are generally regarded as crucial factors for the conversion to Pentecostalism among the lower class.[20] However, an additional ingredient appears to be important for explaining the conversion of middle class actors: early contact with popular religion. While this ingredient is usually assumed to be given in the lower class, its presence is more problematic in the educated middle class. Interestingly, the vast majority of middle class interviewees had experienced early contact with popular religion in the form of popular Catholicism or Pentecostalism. This is evident in the cases of those who were raised in evangelical Protestantism and popular Catholicism, but less evident for those who were raised as nominal or "orthodox" Catholics. However, even among nominal and "orthodox" Catholics the majority of middle class interviewees had experienced early contact with some type of popular religion, in most cases Pentecostalism. Hence, the vast majority of middle class interviewees have become familiar with the concepts and worldview of popular religion during their upbringing.[21] Being familiar with popular religion, they have a predisposition for religious options that include elements of popular religion.

Besides their contact with popular religion, middle class interviewees were also socialized in the context of the *porteño* middle class: visiting universities, living and working in close contact with (non-Pentecostal) class peers, they are familiar with the representations of the middle class to which they adapt their behavior and judgments. Thus, they are situated in an ambivalent position between popular religion and the representations of the educated middle class which aspires to be decent, secular, rational, and sober.

The presence of popular religion among middle class interviewees may be traced back to what Bourdieu calls the hysteresis effect. Bourdieu's concept of the hysteresis effect supposes that unadapted behavior is the product of a mismatch between the habitus – which developed in adaptation to a specific context – and a new social environment. Due to its inertia, the habitus does not immediately adapt to new social environments. The mismatch between the habitus and a new context leads to a discordance between the practice generated by the habitus and the requirements of the new social environment:

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20   See, for instance, Algranti 2010: 151–152; Míguez 1998: 51–52; Smilde 2005; 2007.

21   The affinity for popular religion appears to be a product of primary socialization. Thus, Semán (1997: 135; 2000) points out that the religious worldview and practices of popular religion are generally imparted by primary socialization within the context of the family. Popular religiosity is (re)produced and spreads within in the bonds of social networks.

the practice appears inappropriate.[22] For the case of middle class Pentecostals the concept of the hysteresis effect would assume that middle class Pentecostals experienced upward social mobility and that their religious habitus has not yet adapted to the new class position and its representations. Having been shaped by the cultural and religious universe of the lower class, their habitus has maintained its predispositions for popular religion and has not yet developed more "appropriate" religious predispositions. That said, the hysteresis effect can explain the interview cases that experienced upward social mobility from the lower to the middle class. However, explaining interview cases that had already grown up in the middle class is more difficult with this approach. An explanation based on the hysteresis effect infers that maintaining middle class status in the long run leads to the disappearance of popular religion and the incorporation of an appropriate middle class habitus. However, with regard to the sample this seems not to be the case. Those who grew up in the middle class – the majority of the interviewees – also grew up in contact with popular religiosity.[23]

A more compelling explanation can be drawn from Lahire's concept of multiple socializations and Schäfer's concept of the habitus as a complex network of dispositions.[24] According to these approaches, actors are socialized in a variety of social environments which often imply different and sometimes even conflicting cultural standards and affinities. Participating in a variety of social environments in the course of their socialization, actors develop different and sometimes even conflicting dispositions.

This approach can be applied to the case of middle class Pentecostalism: despite having been raised in the context of the middle class and its

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22   Bourdieu 1979: 122–126, 157–159; 1987b: 111, 116–118. For a critique of the hysteresis concept see King 2000: 427–428.

23   Particularly regarding the group with evangelical backgrounds an explanation based on the hysteresis effect appears to be misleading. The majority of the interviewees in this group are from middle class backgrounds. Many of them have a long-standing evangelical family and middle class history. According to the hysteresis effect one would expect that second generation middle class families would finally adapt to the middle class representations and withdraw from their "unadapted" practices and beliefs of Pentecostalism. This does not seem to be the case, however.

24   Lahire (2003; 2004/2006; 2010) explains the deviations of actors from their class representations by referring to the presence of multiple socialization channels. In modern, plural societies individuals are subject to various socializations which lead individuals to assume contradicting values and concepts. Schäfer (2005, 2015) describes the habitus as a complex network of dispositions. This network is in many cases rather loosely integrated and may comprise dispositions that contradict each other.

representations, middle class interviewees were also socialized in the "lower class" context of popular religion in which they developed "inappropriate" religious predispositions.[25] These "inappropriate" predispositions become mobilized by the simultaneous presence of two conditions: the experience of a life crisis and contact with a Pentecostal. Facing a life crisis and being persuaded by a Pentecostal peer, middle class actors are more likely to comply with their inappropriate religious predispositions.[26]

Due to its representations, the educated middle class tends to regard popular religion and Pentecostalism critically. The critical attitude towards Pentecostalism increases the threshold for converting to the movement. Two elements that appear to decrease the threshold – aside from early contact with popular religion – are close social contacts to members of the Pentecostal movement and the suffering of a crisis. If these elements – early contact to popular religion, social contacts in the Pentecostal movement and the experience of a crisis – come together, middle class individuals are more susceptible to convert to Pentecostalism.

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25   Another potential explanation of deviating tendencies can be facilitated by McPherson's (2004) concept of niche overlap. McPherson proposes the concept of the Blau space. The Blau space is a social space which consists of different social niches. He states with regard to the niche overlap: "Blau space explains the fact that a single individual may often hold conflicting attitudes: individuals in the overlap of two 'logically inconsistent' attitudes are likely to possess both attitudes" (McPherson 2004: 277). According to the concept of niche overlap, socialization in different cultural universes is due to the overlap of different social niches in the life of the individual: the individual participates in different social niches and incorporates different – partly contradicting – social concepts and expectations. Interviewees were raised in different social niches: in the middle class niche and the niche of popular religion. Both niches embrace different and in part mutually exclusive concepts and discourses. The socialization in different social niches led middle class informants to develop an affinity for popular religion but also to adapt to the representations of the educated middle class.

26   The development of predispositions for popular religion may not be a rare exception in the Argentinean middle class. Popular religion may be more prevalent than the conception of the middle class suggests. Particularly regarding the popularity of New Age and Charismatic Catholicism – which also include aspects of popular religion such as the holistic worldview – it can be argued that socialization in popular religion is not an exception in the middle class. The presence of these groups in the middle class illustrates that some members of the middle class resist the pressure to be secular and "sober". As Viotti (2011) points out, there seems to be a rejection of the ideal of rationality and secularity. The presence of popular religion in the middle class points to a potential dissonance between the representations of the educated middle class and its actual religious

6.5   Summary

Analyzing the tensions that middle class Pentecostals experience due to their religious affiliation raises the question of how they come to choose a religious option that will probably be perceived by their middle class environment as inappropriate. This question was tackled in this chapter by analyzing the data from qualitative interviews with Pentecostals. The analysis reveals that the interaction of three factors in the life of the middle class interviewees has in many cases facilitated their conversion to Pentecostalism: (1) early contact with popular religion, often in the form of Pentecostalism, (2) a life crisis, and (3) a contact to a Pentecostal member during this life crisis. The early contact with popular religion seems to have shaped the religious predispositions of these actors. They are sensitized for popular religions. Facing a crisis and coming – through a Pentecostal acquaintance – again into contact with popular religion in the form of Pentecostalism, they are more likely to grasp and appreciate the religious concepts behind this practice than other middle class actors. Hence, the interaction between a religious predisposition and a conducive context – consisting of a life crisis and the contact to a Pentecostal acquaintance – appears to facilitate middle class conversions to Pentecostalism.

However, when converting to Pentecostalism, middle class actors may experience the inappropriateness of their religious practice in the form of tensions and frictions. In order to deal with these tensions they have to develop strategies.[27] A strategy for negotiating the (in)appropriatenessof their religious practice is boundary work, as will be seen in the following chapters.

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beliefs and practices. Nevertheless, conclusions about the prevalence of popular religion among the educated middle class have to be drawn carefully since it is difficult to estimate its impact in this segment of the population.

27   The middle class may develop strategies towards the public and political sphere to gain symbolic capital and improve the social position of the movement thereby lowering the tension. These macro strategies have already been described by Wynarzcyk (2009a; 2009b; 2010). This study stresses, instead, the meso and micro level forms of coping with the ill fit: on these levels, I emphasize religious taste and style. Both allow for establishing symbolic boundaries with regard to the lower class image of the movement.

Symbolic Boundary Work in Pentecostalism: Two Pentecostal Churches

> Las gentes, estiradas, vigilaban sus gestos, pensando en que los otros las observaban con hostilidad.
>
> MANUEL GÁLVEZ, Hombres en soledad, Buenos Aires, 1957:140, quoted in ADAMOVSKY 2009: 106[1]

The previous chapters of this study have painted a general picture of Pentecostalism and its social context in Argentina. It was revealed that the Pentecostal movement mainly attracts Argentina's lower class and it was argued that this appeal to the lower class is related to its proximity to popular culture and religion, while its low appeal to the educated middle class was explained by a mismatch with the representations of the middle class. Nevertheless, Pentecostalism is not exclusively a lower class religion. There also exists a small group of highly educated middle class Argentineans engaged in the movement. Their religious affiliation stands in tension to their middle class representations. The presence of middle class actors in the Pentecostal movement raises a number of questions: how do they deal with the mismatch between their class representations and their religious affiliation? What type of Pentecostalism do they develop?

The present chapter addresses these questions by exploring the cases of two Pentecostal churches: *God Is Love* (GIL) and *Assembly of Christ* (AC). Both churches are medium-sized, with around 400 active members, and are situated in middle class neighborhoods of the city of Buenos Aires. Each church attracts its members primarily from one social class. *God Is Love* is predominantly a lower class congregation, whereas *Assembly of Christ* recruits its members mainly from the middle class. Aside from their social composition, the case studies of these churches particularly stress their religious style. The religious style of a church includes a variety of characteristics: its symbolic recognition, the way in which its church services are performed, as well as the configuration of its physical infrastructure and organization. The analysis of

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1   "People, all stretched out, were mindful of their bodies, thinking that everyone else was looking upon them with hostility" (Manuel Galvez, Hombres en soledad, Buenos Aires, 1957:140, quoted in Adamovsky 2009: 106).

these characteristics undertaken in the following sections of this chapter will reveal stark differences in the religious styles of the two churches.

Analyzing the two Pentecostal churches and their differences in a detailed manner, the present chapter can be treated as an excursus, introducing the reader to the boundary work of Pentecostal churches. It forms a prelude to the following chapter, which will study the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals more extensively. Therefore, the contribution of the present chapter consists in granting in-depth insights into two Pentecostal churches. The chapter is structured as follows: the first two sections portray each of the two churches in terms of their physical location, membership structure, and religious practice. The descriptions of the churches are followed by a comparison in which I directly compare the social composition and religious styles of the churches. The comparison provides some insights into the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals and therefore sets the stage for the following chapter.

7.1   A Lower Class Church in a Middle Class Neighborhood: *God Is Love*

> *A middle aged woman dressed in a long skirt stands in front of the pastor. The pastor asks her about her problems. In a sorrowful voice, she tells him that she has serious difficulties falling asleep and often wakes up during the night. After her description, the pastor begins a faith-healing procedure, starting with the laying of one hand on her forehead and the other on her shoulder and speaking a prayer. The woman starts to tremble and screech. Her face turns into a grimace and her voice becomes deep. The pastor shouts: "Demon! Speak! Who are you?" No response. He thunders: "Answer, demon!" The woman cries out loudly, trembles and finally drops to the ground. "Leave this body, demon!" commands the pastor who stands above her. He calls the audience to shout with him "Fire of God! Demon burn!" An antiphony between pastor and audience starts both shouting "Demon burn!" The woman on the ground is shaking and crying. Later, she slowly calms down. Finally the pastor proclaims that she is healed. She lays on the ground some minutes longer. After standing up, the pastor asks her how she feels and she explains that she feels relieved.*

This section of the study explores the case of the church *God Is Love* (*Dios es Amor*). The description above portrays a faith healing practice, which was carried out during a church service of *God Is Love* (GIL). This type of practice is very typical for *God Is Love*, as will be seen in the following subsections.

The description of GIL is particularly fruitful since, to some degree, it represents the style of Pentecostalism from which middle class Pentecostals seek distinction. Because the form of Pentecostalism promoted by GIL clashes with the representations of the middle class, middle class churches such as *Assembly of Christ*, which will be described in the following section, draw boundaries in opposition to this style of Pentecostalism.

Empirically, the description is based on a large amount of empirical material consisting of ethnographic observations, qualitative interviews with members and two GIL pastors, and a quantitative survey of 75 GIL members.

The following description of *God Is Love* is structured thematically. First, I describe the geographic location, the history, and the architecture of the church. The next subsections discuss the organization, and the social composition of the church. After this, I explore the religious practice and atmosphere during church services. The case study ends with an explanation for the lower class bias of the church.

7.1.1   *Geographical and Religious Context of God Is Love*

The church *God Is Love* (GIL) is situated in Flores, a middle class district of Buenos Aires city. Flores is one of the bigger districts of the city of Buenos Aires and counts around 150,000 habitants. The church is located in the central plaza, and its entrance is front facing. As such, this public place is embedded in a fairly busy zone. It is surrounded by restaurants, stores, and bus stops, and located along Rivadavia – one of Buenos Aires' most important, noisy, and stressful avenues, highly frequented by traffic. By contrast, the adjacent plaza of Flores constitutes a small recreational area with trees, grass zones, benches, and a little playground. Here, people gather together to relax for a short time or to meet friends. They sit on the benches drinking their *Maté,* talk, read a newspaper or simply loiter. Some homeless people sleep on the benches. From time to time, one can listen to Pentecostal preachers standing in the middle of the plaza, preaching and seeking to evangelize their occasional audience. They come from different churches and are not necessarily related to *God Is Love* or any other Pentecostal church in Flores.

God Is Love is situated at the calmer extreme of the plaza opposite the noisy avenue and the huge Catholic cathedral of Flores, the basilica of *San José de Flores*. The church building is surrounded by a Chinese store and a restaurant on the left side, and a Methodist church and a drug rehabilitation center on the right side.[2] As the zone is quite busy, there are always many pedestrians

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2   Interestingly, the Methodist church next to God Is Love does not only show a very different religious style but also attracts a very different type of religious clientele which consists mainly of middle class individuals with a rather academic profile.

crossing the doorsteps of the church. In fact, this is a strategic position for attracting potential members. But the area is not free of religious competitors. In addition to the Methodist and the Catholic Church and the frequent presence of Pentecostal preachers on the place, one can perceive numerous advertisements for witchcraft and sorcery on the bus stops and lamp posts around the plaza. Still, this imparts only a partial impression of the religious competition in Flores. Leaving the plaza but staying in the same area, there is a variety of Pentecostal competitors within the radius of only a few blocks: a five minute walk brings one to the illustrious church *Cristo la solución* (*Christ The Solution*) which broadcasts its own TV-program and has a highly sophisticated branding. The church counts around a thousand members in this branch, and several thousands in different branches around the world. Its head, the famous preacher (Apostle) Juan Crudo, is known as one of the leading figures of prosperity gospel in Argentina. Aside from *Cristo la solución*, there are at least two more important churches: a large branch of the *Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios* (*Universal Church of the Kingdom of God*) is located just three minutes away on the avenue of Rivadavia and a branch of the *Assembly Of God* is a ten minutes' walk. Furthermore, there are numerous smaller Pentecostal and Protestant churches. Apart from the Protestant competition there are several Catholic parishes and at least one Umbanda temple. Hence, *God Is Love* is situated in a socio-geographic space, surrounded by religious competitors offering religious alternatives and seeking to expand their number of attendees.

7.1.2 *Origins and History of God Is Love*

The church *God Is Love – Igreja Penteostal Deus é Amor* – has its origins in Brazil, where it was founded by the preacher David Miranda in 1962.[3] Today, *God Is Love* constitutes a wide network of congregations all over the world. One can even find congregations in Germany and France. However, the majority of its members are still concentrated in Latin America where its congregations are highly diffused. The center of the network is situated in Sao Paulo, Brazil. In Brazil, GIL forms part of the circle of the most influential Pentecostal churches and is the most virulent competitor of the *Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios*.[4]

In Argentina, GIL is not as pervasive and powerful as it is in Brazil. Nevertheless, it counts around two hundred branches in the country and some 60 branches in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, especially in poorer neighborhoods and slums. The church arrived in 1989 in Argentina. Shortly

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3   According to Pastor Mario the church was founded June 3rd, 1962 (Interview Pastor Mario).
4   Chesnut 1997: 38; Freston 1995: 128; Salas 1998: 19.

after its arrival, it opened the branch at the plaza in Flores in 1991, which constitutes the Argentinean central of *God Is Love* today. Pastors of GIL describe the 90's as a great success for *God Is Love* in Argentina. In the wake of the Pentecostal boom, *God Is Love* attracted many new members, though the growth slowed down at the start of the new century. Despite some fluctuations during the last years, the number of members in the central branch in Flores remains more or less stable and totals around four hundred active participants.[5]

7.1.3   *Infrastructure and Organization*

7.1.3.1   Architecture and Infrastructure

From the outside, the church building resembles a stereotypical Asian super market in Buenos Aires. The facade consists of glass windows and an entrance in its middle. Above the entrance the name of the church "Dios es Amor"

FIGURE 6   *Church front of GIL*
             (OWN SOURCE)

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5   This information is based on interviews with members and pastors of God Is Love (Interview
    Pastor Jorge, Interview Pastor Mario, and observation).

("*God Is Love*") is written in big letters and on each side of the church name, the description "Iglesia Pentecostal" (Pentecostal church) blares in colorful letters.

The interior of the church building similarly resembles a former industrial or super market hall. After entering, one stands directly in the main hall, a very long hall with white wands from which ventilators and speakers bulk. While the entrance is situated at one extreme of the main hall, the pulpit is situated at the other. Thus, one has to cross the hall in order to arrive at the pulpit. The hall is equipped with very simple white plastic chairs, the number of which is normally adapted to the amount of visitors. Thus, during the week, only half of the hall is equipped with plastic chairs, and the space at the end of the hall close to the entrance stays empty. The main hall is very sparsely decorated. There are no video screens or projectors as in other Pentecostal churches of this size. At the left hand of the pulpit, there is a small cabinet. This cabinet serves as an information and purchase point, which is normally occupied by an elderly female church usher.[6]

FIGURE 7
Main hall of GIL
(OWN SOURCE)

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6   The church interior was renewed in 2010, so the interior is more organized today. The descrip-
    tion here corresponds to the time period in which I conducted my empirical research in the
    church.

7.1.3.2   Organization of the Church

God Is Love is not integrated into the formal circle of evangelicals in Argentina: the church is not affiliated with any of the official evangelical umbrella organizations, nor do their pastors participate in the meetings of the *consejo* in Buenos Aires. In these circumstances, churches are generally treated with skepticism by pastors from the formal circle. Thus, from the perspective of the formal circle, GIL has a low legitimacy in the field of Pentecostal churches. Still, pastors of GIL appear not to care much about the formal recognition of their church. Pastor Mario stated to me that GIL would not have, nor would they seek contact with any other Pentecostal church in Argentina.[7] I will discuss the legitimacy of Pentecostal churches and the field of Pentecostalism in greater detail below.

The church operates seven days a week from approximately 9 am till 11 pm, and offers between two and three church services every day.[8] Each day of the week is dedicated to a specific topic: Tuesday, for instance, stresses Bible teachings, Fridays are dedicated to liberation (exorcism), and on Sundays, the church performs spiritual campaigns which focus on different areas of life, such as family, health, economy or work. The most visited church services take place Fridays and Sundays and each attracts from one hundred to four hundred participants. Spiritually, these are the most intense services, and include a high number of faith healing practices and exorcisms. Less popular are the Wednesday church services, which are dedicated to Bible teachings. They attract only twenty to fifty participants.

The congregational activities of the church are largely limited to church services. For normal members or visitors, there are no courses. Also, there is an absence of church groups for members. Pastor Mario from GIL explained the lack of other organizational offers by the fact that the congregation would rather emphasize spiritual practices and miracles over the organizational structure and offers of the church.[9]

Several pastors are responsible for the GIL-branch in Flores. At the head of the church is the main pastor. Not only is he in charge of this branch, but also of the whole congregation in Argentina. According to the standards of *God Is*

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7   Interview Pastor Mario.

8   Some days during the week it opens even earlier or closes later, such as on Fridays, when it remains open almost the whole night for prayers.

9   Interview Pastor Mario.

Love, the position of main pastor rotates at least once a year: after having fulfilled his year, he will be sent to another country and substituted by a new pastor, who assumes the position of the main pastor in Argentina for one year.[10]

In addition to the main pastor, the central branch in Flores counts nine other pastors, who are subordinated to the main pastor. These pastors are more bound to the branch in Flores. Many of them have been in this branch for more than five years. Despite the high number of pastors, only two or three of them – the ones that conduct church services – are available on a daily basis for visitors of the GIL branch in Flores. The remaining pastors are dedicated to administrative or other tasks or have a secular work life, and therefore do not conduct church services.[11] Despite the high number of pastors, there are often staff shortages among pastors, resulting in problems finding a pastor to conduct the church service.[12] This problem is also partly due to the fact that responsibilities of pastors are not assigned clearly. The loose organizational structure of the church perpetually creates small emergencies and leads to the assignment of pastors or ushers to different tasks, which they assume as allrounders.[13] This arrangement also has a disadvantage: those who fulfil a task are often only scarcely trained in it, as shown by the example of the poor quality of music that will be discussed below.

Most pastors have a lower class background. In fact, many GIL pastors have worked or still work as construction workers, though there are also exceptions: Pastor Mario, who is dedicated mainly to the administration and radio program of the church, once started studying chemistry, but never finished his studies due to his involvement in the church. The training of pastors is carried out by other GIL-pastors, who teach occasional courses for future or recent pastors. However, the educational training of Pastors is not regarded as essential: longstanding experience, particularly the experience of the Holy Spirit, as Pastor Jorge states, is seen as more important than formal educational training.[14]

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10   Interview Pastor Jorge; Interview Pastor Mario.

11   Pastor Mario, for instance, is in charge of the radio and administration. He does not conduct church services and is hardly present in the main hall.

12   For instance, during one of my interviews with a GIL pastor, an usher approached us several times in order to ask the pastor to conduct the afternoon service because there was no other pastor in the church. The pastor resisted and said that an usher should start the service.

13   Interview Pastor Mario.

14   Interview Pastor Jorge.

The leadership of *God Is Love* carries a specific concept of membership. Pastors differentiate between participants and formal members, as tithing and regular participation in the church activities are far from being the only conditions for becoming a formal GIL member. Promotion to formal member requires an application from participants for this status. This application is evaluated by pastors over the course of a minimum of several months, and only if the conduct fits to the moral standards of *God Is Love*, will the participant be conferred the new status of formal member. Only a minority of those who participate each week in the services of *God Is Love* hold the formal membership status. This may be due to high costs that the status involves: formal members are required to have a sinless life style. They are supposed to reject the secular world and live detached from many of its amenities. Television and cinema, dance and non-Christian music as well as the consumption of alcohol are prohibited. Also fornication and relationships outside matrimony are strictly forbidden. Nudeness is disapproved of even within the family: married couples are expected to sleep in long clothing. Women are not allowed to wear trousers (pants), put on cosmetics, use jewelry, depilate, color their hair, or cut it short. Men are asked to wear short hair, no beard, and to dress formally for church services. Weekly assistance in Sunday church services, daily prayer, and fasting are an obligation.[15] Those who are formal members or applying to become formal members have to agree to and meet these standards of conduct. To this end, they will be observed by church leaders. Only if the pastors see that the applicant obeys and appears to be spiritually prepared, will s/he be allowed to participate in the baptism and acknowledged as an official member.[16]

After receiving the formal member status, the status can be withdrawn by pastors if the devotee in question appears to act against the moral standards of the church. The formal status "member" is an outstanding status among regular participants. Only approximately 80 participants are formal members of GIL. Numerically, regular participants – or non-formal members – form a much larger portion of GIL. Despite the fact that they do not hold the formal status of members, they tend to call themselves members of "God is Love". Therefore, I will use a broad definition of members, transcending the formal membership concept of GIL, and define

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15   Interview Carolina Part 3.
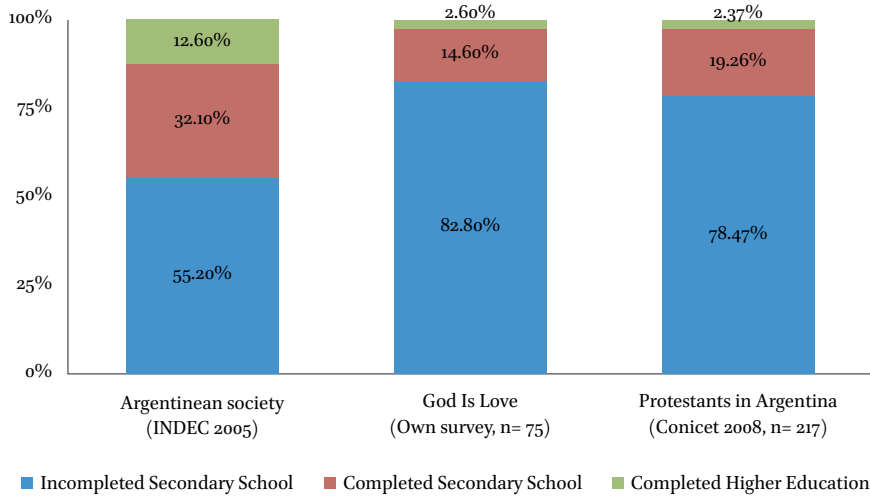16   Interview Matias.

FIGURE 8   *Level of education: Argentinean society, members of GIL, and Protestants*
(OWN COMPOSITION BASED ON CONICET 2008, INDEC 2005,
AND OWN SOURCE)

members as individuals that participate on a regular basis in the church
services of GIL and define themselves as members of GIL. Applying this
definition, the number of members in this central branch can be esti-
mated at approximately four hundred.

7.1.4   *Social Class Background of Members*

The number of members that frequent the GIL branch in Flores on a regu-
lar basis can be estimated to be approximately four hundred, around two
thirds of which are female. Astonishing is also the low presence of adoles-
cents in this figure. The vast majority of members fall under the ages of 40
and 70 years. However, more important for the topic of this study is the
social class background of members. As mentioned above, a survey was
conducted in order to determine the "objective" social class position of
members. For this purpose, data concerning the formal education, house-
hold income, number of household members, and job occupation of
members was collected.

Formal education is a central determinant of class position. Figure 8 shows
the formal education of GIL members in relation to that of Argentinean society
(according to the INDEC 2005) and Protestants in Argentina (according to
Conicet 2008).

The bar in the middle of the figure demonstrates the educational degrees of the 75 interviewed GIL members. One can compare the educational composition of GIL to that of the Argentinean society, shown in the first bar: while 55.2% of Argentinean society does not hold a secondary school degree, the proportion of those who do not hold a secondary school degree is 82.8% among GIL members, showing lower levels of formal education than the average Argentinean population. Moreover, comparing the educational composition of GIL to that of Protestants in Argentina, shown in the right bar, it is evident that the educational composition of GIL is fairly similar to that of Protestants.

The second crucial variable to determine the social position of an actor is his/her economic capital. This study uses household income per capita in order to determine the economic capital of an actor. Figure 9 compares the household income per capita of GIL members and the Argentinean society along four income groups.[17]

Of the interviewed GIL members, 60% are in the group that receives the lowest household income per capita in Argentina. They live in poverty or close to poverty. The next group embraces 21.33% of GIL interviews. Combining the proportion given in the two lowest income groups, one can estimate that at least 81.33% of GIL members are economically situated in the

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17   The data for the Argentinean society is taken from the INDEC (2015) and represents the distribution of household income per capita in the Argentinean society in the second quarter of 2009. This corresponds with the time in which the surveys in GIL and *Assembly of Christ* (AC) were conducted. The data that is normally given in deciles and was summarized in four income groups illustrated by the blue bars: the first group embraces the 30% of the Argentinean society with the lowest household incomes per capita. Households in this group receive a household income per capita below 552 pesos (equalizing approx. 155 US Dollars based on an exchange rate of 3.55 Arg. Pesos per US Dollars). These households can be defined as poor or close to poverty. After this group follow two groups which each represent the next 20% of the Argentinean society: the first income group can be defined as an economically more or less stable lower class (552–820 Arg. Pesos; equalizing approx. 155–231 US Dollars). The next income group is located on the boundary between middle and lower class and can be defined in economic terms as the lower middle class (820–1300 Arg. Pesos; equalizing approx. 231–366 US Dollars). Finally, the last 30% receives the highest household incomes per capita with more than 13001 Argentinean pesos each (equalizing approx. 366 US Dollars). This income group embraces the established middle and the upper class.
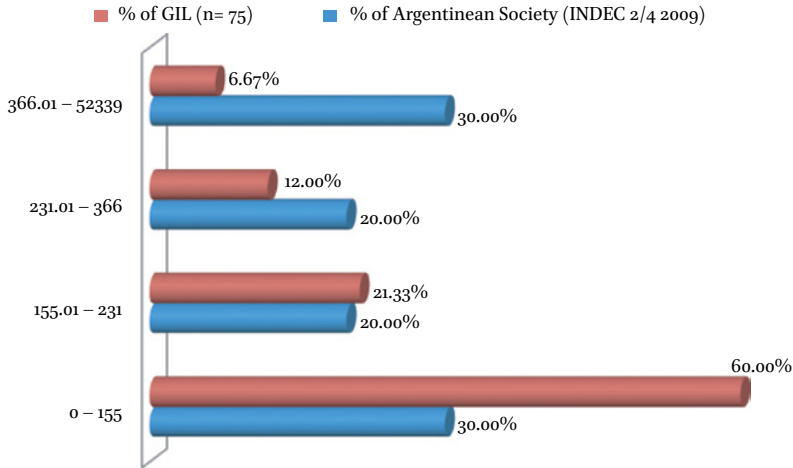
FIGURE 9   *Household income per capita in US-Dollars: GIL and Argentinean society*
            (OWN COMPOSITION BASED ON INDEC 2009 AND OWN SOURCE)

lower class.[18] A comparison between the bars illustrates the disproportions between the household income of GIL members and the Argentinean society: members of GIL are highly overrepresented in lower income sectors and underrepresented in higher income sectors. Put simply, members of GIL have lower economic means than the average Argentinean population.

A variable that contributes additional information about the social status of members is job occupation. Many members stated that they are unemployed and make a living from *chamba*, casual jobs. Those who have work are mainly occupied in the unstable, informal economy. Typical employments of female church members are domestic assistants, domestic nurses, and self-employed sellers of home-prepared food in the streets of Buenos Aires. Male members are often caretakers and doorkeepers of middle class buildings, construction workers, painters, and assembly line workers.

Taking all these variables together it becomes clear that *God Is Love* mainly attracts individuals from the lower social positions of the Argentinean society: GIL members tend to be poorer, less educated, and work in lower-status jobs than the average Argentinean. Despite its location in a middle class suburb,

18   12% of GIL members are situated on the boundary between lower and middle class and just 6.67% are economically positioned within the established middle class.

the social composition of the church is dominated by the lowest ranks of the Argentinean society, raising the question of why the church attracts mainly the lower class and appears to have no appeal to the middle class. Besides the already discussed structural and organizational features, the religious practices may play an important role for explaining the lower class bias of the church.

7.1.5   *Religious Practice*

> The devil has stolen your wealth. The devil has stolen your peace. The devil has stolen your family. He has torn down your hopes. This mission continues to defeat evils. Stop your mourning. You will defeat the spirit of death, the spirit of cancer, the spirit of sickness. God will defeat them. God gives you authority.
>
>> GIL Church service 22nd May 2009 00:20:41-4-00:21:20–9

Church services are the most important and basically the only regular congregational practice of GIL. The church offers at least two church services each day, seven days a week. The most important church services take place Sundays: the two services attract up to 800 visitors, many among them first or second time visitors and members of other GIL branches visiting the central branch. The second most important church services, in terms of numerical attendance, take place Friday and emphasize spiritual warfare. Due to their importance, I will stress Sunday and Friday church services in the following description.

Church services last between three and six hours and vary in their structure and opacity. Although there appears be no fixed or repeating structure, one can nevertheless try to draw a rough picture of the general structure. Church services start generally with prayers and music. The subsequent principal part of the church service consists of the pastor speaking, performing prayers as well as different types of spiritual practices, offerings, singing, and testimonies. The church service ends with prayers, laying on hands and the blessing with oil.

Many of the practices take place several times and are mixed with each other. During the main part, the pastor might suddenly switch between different practices: he may, for instance, switch from preaching to singing, come back to preaching, announce a prayer without carrying it out, sing again, and start a prayer which ends up in an exorcism. Hence, the structure appears to mainly depend on the intuition and experience of the pastor.

7.1.5.1   Musical Praise

Musical praise generally takes place at the beginning and several times over the course of the church services. Background music also frequently accompanies the pastor while he is carrying out prayers, declarations, and other spiritual practices.

The church has no orchestra or band; the only musical instrument is a keyboard situated on the pulpit in combination with a microphone. As such, the keyboard player regularly assumes the role of the main singer. A small church chorus also occasionally performs short concerts during Sunday church services. Nonetheless, the singing accompanied by the keyboard normally constitutes the bulk of the musical program. The keyboard is played by ushers or pastors, who neither are very well-trained piano players nor are they singers. Despite playing rather simple rhythms, they tend to play unevenly and may miss a note from time to time or sing off-key.

Typical types of music are ballads and cheerful, folkloric Latin-American rhythms that frequently resemble *cumbia*. Often, the pastor will suddenly animate the audience after a prayer or during his sermon to sing some short and repetitive refrains.

> A song that is very typical in GIL is the emotional ballad "Gracias". The refrain says "Gracias, Gracias Señor, Gracias mi Señor, Jesús, Gracias, Gracias Señor, Gracias mi Señor, Jesús." Participants raise their arms while singing. During more empowering songs, participants clap their hands and sing loudly.

There is a notable difference in the emphasis on music, especially in comparison to other medium-sized churches that generally have at least a small band with a drummer and guitar player. GIL places less emphasis on musical praise than other Pentecostal churches, justified by pastors by the lack of organization and trained staff, instead focusing on other practices such as spiritual healing and exorcisms.[19]

7.1.5.2   The Sermon

Pastor Mario estimates that the maximal length of sermons is 15 minutes.[20] Taking the full length of the church service into account, often lasting between

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19   Interview Pastor Jorge.
20   Interview Pastor Mario.

four and five hours, the length of sermons appears as extremely short, comparatively speaking.[21]

Sermons generally begin with a short citation from the Bible. After this, the preacher starts his sermons, though he does not necessarily focus on the Bible quote. Frequently, the sermon consists of a narrative of a life experience that exemplifies the work of God in everyday life. The narratives include a lesson about the power of God and may illustrate how devotees can receive God's blessing – a blessing that potentially means an end to the empirical afflictions and an improvement of the daily life. The subject of sermons is often related to the concepts of prosperity gospel and spiritual warfare.

The religious discourse alludes heavily to the action of evil and divine forces in the empirical world. The pastors' language is dominated by a vocabulary of struggle with these evil forces and their eventual defeat. Words like "fight", "combat", "war", "victory", "defeat", "justice", "enemies", "power", "Satan", and "demons" are highly recurrent in the preaching. The enemy is defined as Satan and his dark forces including demons, bad spirits – particularly spirits of *macumba* and *umbanda* – and those who follow them. Devotees are located in the center of this war between divine and evil, where their suffering and daily problems are attributed to malicious spirits. Individuals affected by problems like alcoholism, disease, or unemployment are described as victims of these forces. Thus, empirical afflictions are regarded as the product of spiritual afflictions.

According to the discourse of GIL, only God – and more particularly the power of the Holy Spirit – can break the spiritual affliction and open a new path. Furthermore, God might not only eradicate the root of evil in the life of the individual but grant him/her prosperity and realize his/her desires. Sermons announce the immediate beginning of a new and better life, a life free of afflictions, a life of well-being. To reach this new life, the chains that bind one's fate to the will of Satan must be cut.[22] The most important instrument for cutting the evil chains is thought to be the expulsion of the dark forces that keep the devotee imprisoned in his/her suffering by means of spiritual practices. These practices refer to the power of the Holy Spirit and its gifts, as will be shown below.

The atmosphere during the sermons is rather expressive. The pastor may shout from time to time and participants exclaim frequently in a loud voice

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21   Yet, there are often several contributions during one church service that may be also described as sermons. Due to the frequent combination of preaching and spiritual practices, it is difficult to classify these parts of the church service as sermons.

22   See, for instance, GIL Church service 07th June 2009.

FIGURE 10   *GIL offerings "El voto"*
                    (OWN SOURCE)

"Gloria a Dios." These exclamations occur particularly when the pastor narrates a divine miracle or explains the central lesson proclaiming the divine victory over evil forces. Moreover, the pastor integrates the participants actively into the sermon by asking repeatedly, *"Cuantos dicen Gloria Dios*?" to which the audience responds, *"Gloria a Dios*!".

7.1.5.3   Offering and Tithing

Offerings and tithing are important parts of the service. The pastor may ask up to three times during a church service for different types of economic contribution. Of particular importance are the so-called *votos*. The *voto* is a donation in a specific paper envelope and represents a contract-like request to God. One example of a *voto* is exhibited in figure 10.

> The voto in figure 10 was used for one of the spiritual liberation campaigns on a Friday. The voto has the form of a sword and shows the image of a chain getting disrupted. Apart from the name of the church and the indication of the day (Friday), the phrase "Destronando las maldiciones" ("Dethroning the curses/afflictions") is written on the voto and below, in smaller letters, "La espada que derrota a Satanas y abre el camino para tu prosperidad" ("The sword that destroys Satan and opens the way for your

prosperity.”). On the back, there is a space where the devotee can indicate the amount of money put in the voto and another part where s/he is supposed to write down his/her request to God. The image of the voto is quite clear: this sword and its content (the offering) are supposed to fight and destroy the spiritual afflictions that cause the empirical afflictions in daily life. The chains on the voto illustrate that the 'ataduras' (knots that spiritually bind the devotee to his/her afflictions) are believed to be disrupted and that the devotee will be relieved with this voto from the spiritual barriers in order to prosper.

Every week, the color, shape, and lettering of the envelope changes, and they are usually they titled with phrases that refer to the destruction of demonic forces. The envelope has a free space wherein the adherent should write down his/her requests to God.[23] Devotees will write their request in the free space, indicate the amount of money that they sacrifice for their request to God, and put the amount in it. After retrieving the *voto*, pastors bless the envelope again and perform a strong prayer.

Votos are believed to have a spiritual dimension. They form a type of spiritual contract with the supernatural. The devotee expects a specific spiritual service for the payment. This spiritual service will usually be a divine miracle requested on the overleaf of the *voto*. The procedure and discourse of GIL suggest that the higher the donated amount, the higher the effectiveness of the *voto* and the probability of fulfillment of one's request.

7.1.5.4   Spiritual Practices

The majority of the church service is dedicated to a mix of preaching and spiritual practices. Spiritual practices are practices that aim for an improvement of the empirical reality through an intervention of the supernatural. GIL shows a high emphasis on spiritual practices, particularly on those involving miracles and faith healing. Because of this focus, the church is often described as a "spiritual emergency room".

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23   *Votos* get distributed one week in advance and are collected with the offering in the following week. Before they are distributed among participants, they are blessed with oil and a prayer. For the distribution of *votos,* pastors call out amounts of money starting with high amounts – such as one hundred Argentinean pesos – and decreasing the requested amount during the distribution. Devotees who want to donate the requested amount are asked to come to the pulpit and get the *voto*. The lower the requested amount becomes, the more devotees approach the pulpit to get the *voto*.

Spiritual practices refer to a wide variety of practices. The most common of them in GIL are prayers, declarations, prophecies, blessings, laying on hands, faith healing, and exorcisms. I will briefly discuss each of these practices in the following paragraphs.

Prayers are an important spiritual practice in GIL. They usually request specific favors from God. These requests are related to the economy, health, harmony of family or general wellbeing of devotees. Prayers are often carried out in an authoritative and demanding form. Pastors may shout loudly while participants raise their arms, start to tremble and speak in tongues.[24]

Prayers are frequently combined with prophecy, a very prevalent practice among GIL pastors. Prophecies generally concern the future but also past or present states of individuals in the audience. Thus, often pastors name the afflictions of individual participants present in the church. In this case the pastor may announce, for instance, "There are three persons with heart problems present in the church." However, he will not directly indicate the afflicted individuals; instead, they must declare themselves. After naming an affliction and a number of individuals affected by it, the pastor asks the affected individuals to raise their arms and to approach the pulpit, where he blesses them with oil, lays hands on their foreheads, and performs a prayer or even exorcism with them. After this, he announces the next affliction and the number of persons suffering from it calling, for instance, three unemployed participants to the pulpit.

A major part of the church service is dedicated to techniques of spiritual healing. These techniques consist of laying on hands, blessing the person with oil, faith healing, or performing exorcisms. The difference between these practices is often not clear, and often they melt into one another. The pastor may start, for instance, with laying on hands on the forehead of a participant and perform a prayer. The participant starts to tremble and the pastor states that the individual is possessed by a demon. In this case, the practice will turn into an exorcism, in which the pastor will shout loudly exclamations such as "*fuera demonio!*" ("demon leave!") and "*quema demonio en el nombre de Dios!*" ("demon burn in the name of God!"). At the same time the participant in question may manifest him-/herself in different ways, such as shouting, trembling, and/or

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24 The style and atmosphere of declarations is similar. However, declarations form, rather a mix of a prayer, a promise, and a prophecy. Declarations announce the existence of a (new) state. This may be, for instance, a change in the life of the individual. In order to perform a declaration, the pastor asks the participants to stand up, raise their arms, and repeat what he will say. These declarations may last several minutes announcing the power of God and the change to one's life.

dropping to the ground. The exorcism generally ends with the participant lying quietly on the ground. After resting on the ground for several minutes, s/he will stand up again and the pastor may ask him/her to testify how s/he feels and if s/he thinks that the suffering has disappeared.

Frequently, pastors also perform strong prayers involving spiritual warfare and merging with exorcisms. During these prayers participants stand in their places. They are asked to raise their arms or put their hands on their heads. While the pastor performs the prayer in the front, shouting "*fuera, fuera, fuera!*" ("leave, leave, leave!"), participants start to tremble, ushers move through the rows of seats in order to lay on hands, and some participants drop to the ground.

Another very important practice is the blessing with oil. The pastor puts the oil on the forehead of the devotee and intones a short prayer. Then, the next devotee follows. There may be various blessings with oils for different areas of life during one worship. Similar to other spiritual practices, they can easily convert into practices of faith healing or exorcisms when a participant manifests signs of a spiritual possession.

Spiritual practices do not only integrate the body of participants, but frequently also objects that participants bring to the church service: pictures of relatives, keys, wallets, pieces of cloth from relatives, contracts or certificates of debt, and bottles of water are often combined with spiritual practices. Bottles of water and pieces of cloth from ill relatives are placed close to the pulpit, where they are supposed to get blessed. Wearing the blessed cloth and drinking the blessed water is believed to cure the ill and protect the healthy. By contrast, items such as pictures of relatives, keys, wallets, or contracts are raised during prayers. By raising these items, participants present a request related to the item. Raising a wallet implicates, for instance, a request for the protection and/or prosperity of the economy of the household. Pastors may also ask participants to raise their keys and pray with the participants for the spiritual protection of house and family. This technique is believed to protect the home and inhibit the entrance of evil spirits.

Another, very prevalent type of practice in GIL is that of repetition. Practices of repetition are specific practices that the pastor or preacher asks the audience to perform. These practices may consist of a physical movement, the repetition of a phrase or word, or a combination of both. Pastors ask the audience, for instance, to recurrently raise their arms, to wave their hands, to trample with their feet on the ground, to hug themselves, to put their hands on their heads, or to say a phrase to their neighbor. These practices are performed over and over again during the whole church service.

7.1.6   *Explaining the Class Bias: GIL as a Popular Style of Pentecostalism*

Although GIL is embedded in a middle class district of Buenos Aires, it attracts predominantly the lowest ranks of the Argentinean society. Its class bias raises the question of why it attracts predominantly the lower class and not the middle class. The central factor that contributes to an explanation of its social composition appears to be GIL's religious style. Features of the religious style of a church are its infrastructure, organization, and religious practices.

The church building of GIL is a rather simply decorated building, resembling an old industrial hall. Regarding its relationship to the formal circle of evangelical churches in Argentina, the church is not affiliated with any of the evangelical umbrella organizations nor does it seek the interchange with other Pentecostal churches. Moreover, the organization of GIL is not very developed and the assignment of tasks is described as rather chaotic. GIL does not offer courses, groups, or other activities to its members and focuses, instead, on providing a high number of church services. Thus, church services basically form the only congregational practice of GIL. The religious practices during church services stress the afflictions of participants, tracing them back to malicious spirits. The spiritual treatment of these afflictions assumes a major importance in GIL, which enjoys the reputation of being a spiritual emergency room. The spiritual treatment is carried out by different practices such as praying, offering, blessing, faith healing and exorcisms. In order to perform these practices, pastors frequently raise their voice and shout, while participants might cry out, speak loudly in tongues, tremble, and fall to the ground. Hence, church services assume a very emotional and expressive atmosphere, where throughout the church service, participants experience emotional ups and downs. Thus, for an outsider observing, the church service may appear like an emotional roller coaster ride.

Characteristics that are usually portrayed as typical for Pentecostalism are very pronounced in GIL. Most of them are related to the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, driving out demons, etc. Also, the emotionality and expressivity during church services and the belief in the action of supernatural forces in daily life are strongly emphasized in the practices and discourses of GIL. Apart from spiritual warfare, one can also observe elements of prosperity gospel. Although pastors criticize other Pentecostal churches – such as *Cristo La Solución* – for their focus on prosperity gospel, GIL does not abstain from employing these concepts.[25]

Remarkably, some of the practices of GIL strongly resemble those of popular Catholicism. This cultural proximity becomes particularly evident when

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25   Examples for this are spiritual practices that are believed to improve the economic situation of devotees.

examining the prayers with objects, such as keys, photos, and the blessing of water. Similarly, the idea of sacrifice – or payment – for divine "services" in GIL, which is very pronounced in the offering with *votos,* also strongly resembles requests to the *Santos* in popular Catholicism where devotees seek favorable spiritual interventions for a "payment".

The practices in GIL appear not only to be shaped by popular Catholicism but also by popular culture and religion in general. As described above, the style of GIL embraces many characteristics that are generally attributed to popular religion. These overlaps are not limited to religious pragmatism, which focuses on resolving empirical problems by spiritual interventions, but also encompass the festive and expressive atmosphere of church services, and the holistic worldview. Further, this includes the style of the music, which is rooted in popular culture.

The accentuation of popular religion and culture in the style of GIL may explain its appeal to the lower class. Still, this does not necessarily explain why the Argentinean middle class abstains from GIL. Apart from the match between the church style and popular religion, there seems to be another reason for the social composition of GIL: its "inappropriateness." In the interviews, I showed videos from GIL to middle class Pentecostals. They reacted sometimes with mockery, sometimes with indignation, but always with a type of rejection. The reactions indicate that there is a mismatch between what is regarded as appropriate by the middle class and the religious style of GIL. This could explain GIL's low appeal to the middle class, who prefers churches with styles that they experience as more appropriate. One of these churches is *Assembly of Christ,* which will be portrayed in the next section.

7.2   A Case Study of a Middle Class Pentecostal Church: The *Assembly of Christ* in Villa Devoto

This section explores the case of the middle class church *Assembly of Christ* (Asamblea Cristiana). The case of *Assembly of Christ* (AC) illustrates the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals. By developing a distinguished style of Pentecostalism, AC sets itself apart from other Pentecostal churches. In an analogy to the previous section, the empirical data is based on ethnographic observations, qualitative interviews with members and two AC pastors, and a quantitative survey of 87 AC members. The section is structured as follows: the first subsections describe the physical location, history, organization, and the social composition of AC. This is followed by a subsection portraying the religious practice of AC, and the last subsection summarizes the attributes that AC employs in its boundary work.

7.2.1   *Geographical and Religious Context of Assembly of Christ*

The *Assembly of Christ* (*Asamblea Cristiana*, AC) is located in the southwest of the Argentinean capital, in the middle class neighborhood of Villa Devoto. Devoto is a calmer and less busy metropolitan district than Flores. Instead of tall, multi-storied buildings, the panorama is dominated by small buildings and family houses. Situated a bit remotely from the main plaza and the shopping area, in a rather quiet residential part of Devoto, the church is not strategically located to attract many curious passersby. The church lies on a broad street and is surrounded by two- to three-story apartment buildings and family houses. The median strip of the street is planted with grass and small trees, contributing to the calm atmosphere of this area of the capital. Behind the church passes a city highway that surrounds the capital. A bridge connects this part of the capital with some lower class districts of Buenos Aires province.

There are several religious competitors in the surroundings of the *Assembly of Christ*. Aside from the ubiquitous Catholic competition, there are various smaller and medium-sized evangelical churches, for instance the *Iglesia Cristiana Biblica, Ministerio Ebenezer, Christo El Rey, Iglesia La Puerta Abierta,* and a branch of the *Assembly of God.* One of the pastors of AC estimates that there are around 10 Protestant churches in a radius of 10–15 blocks around the AC.[26] Apart from the Protestant and Catholic competition, there are other religious competitors like a new age faith center located at one end of the street leading to AC. Furthermore, walking down the roads in *Villa Devoto,* one can see from time to time an advertisement for spiritual services on lamp posts.

Despite the presence of these competitors, the religious competition is, in fact, not as intrusive as in the case of the church *God Is Love* (GIL), which is closely surrounded by religious rivals.

7.2.2   *Origins and History of Assembly of Christ*

The *Assembly of Christ* was founded in 1907 by Italian immigrants in Chicago, USA. Missionaries from this congregation arrived in 1909 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The first congregational activities in Villa Devoto began in 1916. In the subsequent time, members started to organize regular meetings with a growing group of participants in different locations in Villa Devoto. The continuous growth of the congregation culminated in the construction

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26   Kravetes 2008; Saracco 1989: 43–54; Stokes 1968: 17–19; Interview Pastor Victor Part 2.

of the church building from 1923 onwards. Today, this temple functions as the headquarters of *Assembly of Christ* in Argentina, including in its jurisdiction hundreds of temples and approximately ten thousand members in Argentina.[27]

Due to its early arrival in Argentina in 1909, the *Assembly of Christ* movement stands at the very beginning of Pentecostalism and marks the commencement of the first wave of Pentecostalism in Argentina. In fact, for its centenary in 2009, the church received a distinction from the *Argentinean Secretary of Cults,* a governmental institution, recognizing it as the first Pentecostal church in Argentina. Another central characteristic of AC is its Italian background: until the 1960s the congregation was dominated almost exclusively by Italian immigrants.[28] However, in the last decades, the congregation has undergone significant changes in its leadership and the form of its administration. According to one of the pastors, Pastor Victor, the old leadership was marked by a lack of education. Many of the leaders were even illiterate. During this time, the church was shaped by an old-fashioned style of Pentecostalism that placed an emphasis on religious experience, the Holy Spirit, and religious traditions. The new leadership substituted this old style with a new style, which has established a more liberal order and focuses on education and Bible teaching. Not everyone welcomed the changes. Many of the old-established Italian families who had marked the founding of the church left the congregation.[29] During its evolution, the membership of the church became increasingly middle and upper-middle class. Some of the existing members experienced upward social mobility, while many of those who affiliated as new members came from a middle class background.[30]

In 2010/2011 the pastors estimated that the church had approximately 500 active members.[31] According to my own estimations the number of active members who participate in the church services on a regular basis is a bit lower, approximately 300 to 400. The majority of members are from the middle class. Therefore, the social composition of the *Assembly of Christ* in Devoto is exceptional for Pentecostalism in Argentina, as will be shown later.

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27   Interview Pastor Nicolás.

28   Kravetes 2008: 99–100; Saracco 1989: 52–54.

29   See Interview Pastor Victor Part 1; Interview Pastor Nicolás.

30   See Interview Pastor Nicolás.

31   See Interview Pastor Victor Part 1; Interview Pastor Nicolás.

FIGURE 11   *AC church building*
(OWN SOURCE)

7.2.3   *Infrastructure and Organization*

7.2.3.1   Architecture and Infrastructure

Knowing that the *Assembly of Christ* in Devoto is one of the Pentecostal churches with the highest socioeconomic compositions in Buenos Aires, one would expect perhaps a modern building with luxurious, glamorous inner architecture, comfortable furnishings, and highly advanced electronic equipment. This is, however, not the case. The church, though not particularly shabby, poorly equipped, or minimalist, is definitely less glamorous and less well equipped than some of the lower middle class churches in Buenos Aires, like for instance the Neo-Pentecostal church *Cristo La Solución*, which has highly modern electronic equipment and very modern inner architecture. The furnishings and inner architecture of AC seems to reflect its religious discourse, which argues against the focus on outer appearances, particularly material wealth, and fights prosperity gospel, as will be discussed later. Nevertheless, AC is still better equipped than *God Is Love* and most other Pentecostal churches.

The temple of *Assembly of Christ* is a three-story, building in a square, bulky shape. The facade of the temple is built with bricks and cement, and a sign above the main entrance indicates in big letters "*Iglesia Evangélica*".

In contrast to *God Is Love,* the building was originally constructed as a church. Entering the building, one stands in the entrance hall. On the left hand side is a shop with a wide range of merchandise, such as Christian books, calendars,

FIGURE 12   *AC church orchestra playing during a marriage*
             (OWN SOURCE)

music and DVDs as well as different evangelical magazines. On the wall, there are three golden plaques commemorating the 100th anniversary of AC in Argentina. One of them is the official recognition from the *Argentinean Secretary of Cults*, defining AC as the first Pentecostal church in Argentina. On the right hand side, one sees different notice boards with official church announcements, advertisements for special events as well as announcements of church members.

Crossing the entrance hall, one arrives at the main hall. The main hall has the appearance of a theatre. It has the shape of an oval and consists of two levels. The lower level accommodates four rows of cushioned, comfortable chairs capable of accommodating around 250 people. Instead of air-conditioning, some old looking ventilators protrude from the walls into AC's main hall. The upper part offers seating space for another 200 people on less comfortable plastic chairs, installed as seating rows that resemble those of a soccer stadium. The pulpit is located on a large stage, offering a broad space for the church orchestra. A large curtain hangs across the back of the stage. In its center is written the phrase *"Dios es Amor"* ("God is love") in huge cursive, above which is positioned a big white screen for video projections.[32] In the upper part of the church, there are

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32   "Dios es amor" ("God is love") is a religious expression which has in this case no relationship to the church God Is Love.

administrative offices and meeting rooms for church groups (and two locations for the audio-visual team). The cellar of the church accommodates a large cafeteria with sporadic hours of operation. From the back, the church is connected to a modern building where the church runs its primary school and kindergarten.

7.2.3.2   Organization of the Church

The church is enrolled in the two most important umbrella organizations of evangelical Protestantism in Argentina, FECEP (*Federación Confraternidad Evangélica Pentecostal*) and ACIERA (*Alianza Cristiana de Iglesias Evangélicas de la República Argentina*). The main pastor of AC holds the chair of the FECEP, and was previously second chair of the ACIERA. In addition to this position, he is the head of the theological institute *Seminario Biblico de Fe* which has – according to its webpage – around 80 branches in and outside of Argentina.[33] Moreover, he is enrolled in the Buenos Aires city council of pastors (*Consejo de Pastores de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*), where he maintains close contact with other important figures of charismatic Protestantism in Buenos Aires. Consequently, AC is deeply integrated into the formal circle of evangelical Protestantism in Argentina. Its strong integration into the formal circle of evangelical Protestantism, the position of the main pastor and the fact that AC is the oldest Pentecostal in Argentina confers a high status upon this church.

The church has three pastors: at the top of the inner church hierarchy is the main pastor. When the main pastor is not present because of his various commitments in different religious organizations, the second line of pastors in charge which consists of a businessman and an accountant who dedicate their leisure time to the church.

The church is organizationally split into different ministries, each constituting a group of members headed by a leader. One of AC's pastors estimates around 125 operational ministries in the church, since every ministry includes other ministries. Some of them are, of course, less active than others.

The most important of these groups are the *discipulados* (disciple groups). *Discipulados* are groups of four to ten members, split according to sex, age, and family status. There are groups for men, women, the youth, families and young couples. In these groups members meet on a regular basis to read and discuss passages of the Bible, pray, and talk about particular difficulties in their lives. In addition, they may organize worships and special church events from time to time.

Another organizational feature of the church is its primary school. The church runs a state recognized school, which provides primary level education

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33   See Interview Pastor Victor Part 1; Interview Pastor Nicolás.

to children from Protestant families. Since the school has a good reputation and charges comparatively low school fees, even Protestants from other churches send their children to this school. In 2010 a new, three storied school building was inaugurated at the back-side of the church.

Christian education for children and teenagers is conducted in the dominical school, which consists of different classes and often contributes with performances to the Sunday church services. Additionally, the church works in close relationship with the *Seminario Biblico de Fe*. Many of its members study in this Biblical institute and some of its courses take place in the church building.

AC is also engaged in different social projects. For instance, the church sends cloth, school equipment and food into poorer provinces in the north of Argentina.[34] Laura, a member of AC, is very enthusiastic about the social projects of AC, though the social help projects of AC, she explains, are closely bound to the socio-economic positions of its members.[35] Social projects appear to enable AC to exhibit its exceptional social position and to receive in return for its social engagement social recognition.

Concerning its presence on the internet, AC has three internet-pages: the official one from the church (http://www.asambleacristiana.com.ar/), a *Facebook* page from the church (https://www.facebook.com/AsambleaCristiana Devoto) and another *Facebook* page maintained by the youth group (https://es-la.facebook.com/jovenes.ac).[36] The official page includes information about the church's history, the school of the church, and the Bible institute *Seminario Biblico de Fe*; it does not contain information concerning church events or news. The *Facebook* page for the youth group is maintained on a more regular basis and includes information about past and coming events from the church youth.

Summarizing, the AC branch in Devoto has developed an extensive organizational body given its quantity of members. The organizational structure is manifested in a wide range of activities and services. In addition to the ordinary church services, the church supplies a range of different religious and secular services to members and non-members. Education plays an important role in AC's organization and culture.[37] The value that is attributed to education exhibits itself in AC's strong connection to the theological

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34   See Interview Pastor Nicolás; Interview Pastor Victor Part 1.
35   Interview Laura.
36   Internet links last accessed at 9th April 2015.
37   See also Interview Pastor Nicolás.

seminary, its school, the wide range of courses that are offered in the church, the dominical school, and also in the rhetoric of pastors and its members.

7.2.4   *Social Class Background of Members*

The majority of the approximately 400 members are situated socially in the middle class and upper middle class. In a few cases, members are even from the upper class.

A glance at the level of education of *Assembly of Christ* members, as compared to the average Protestants in the Conicet survey,[38] illustrates the exceptional social position of AC-members among Protestants.

Figure 13 exhibits the education level of the 87 interviewed AC-members, as compared to those of Protestants from the Conicet survey conducted in 2008 and to the general educational distribution among the Argentinean population taken from the INDEC 2005. The figure shows that members of *Assembly of Christ* tend to have higher levels of formal education than their Protestant (and particularly Pentecostal) peers: only 36.6% of the interviewed members of AC state that they have not completed a secondary school degree versus the almost 80% of Protestants in the Conicet survey. With regard to the general distribution of educational degrees in the Argentinean society, AC members still show a higher average education: while 55.2% of the Argentinean population do not hold a secondary school degree, only 36.8% of the AC informants do not have a secondary school degree. Thus, on average, AC members not only
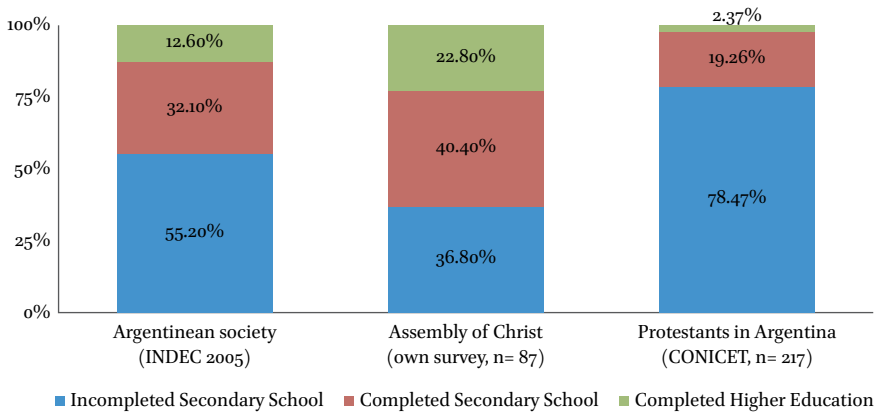

FIGURE 13   *Level of education: Argentinean society, members of AC, and Protestants*
(OWN COMPOSITION BASED ON INDEC 2005, CONICET 2008, AND
OWN SOURCE)

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38   See Conicet 2008.

■ % of AC (n= 87)   ■ % of Argentinean Society (INDEC 2/4 2009)
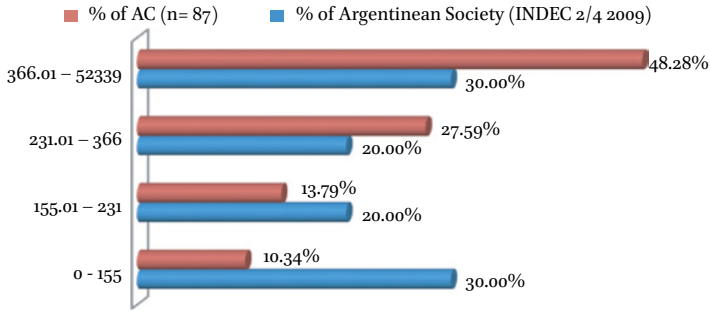

FIGURE 14   *Household income per capita in US-Dollars: AC and Argentinean Society*
             (OWN COMPOSITION BASED ON INDEC 2015 AND OWN SOURCE)

hold higher educational degrees than their Protestants peers, but also than the average Argentinean.

Another indicator for the elevated social position of AC members is their economic income. Figure 14 compares the distribution of household income per capita among AC members with the distribution of household income per capita among the Argentinean population. The figure exhibits, for instance, that thirty percent of the Argentinean households have a household income per capita of less than 552 Argentinean pesos per month, while only ten percent of the interviewed AC members have household incomes in this range. The other extreme is the group of those who perceive a household income above 1300 Argentinean pesos per capita. These are the better off among the Argentinean population. Almost fifty percent of AC members are from this group while this is true of only thirty percent of the total Argentinean population.[39] Hence, higher income sectors are overrepresented while lower income sectors are underrepresented in AC. In other words: AC members are generally wealthier than the average Argentinean.

Occupations of Assembly Christ members are mixed: one can find some manual workers – like taxi drivers, mechanics, or butchers – and many professionals and independent business-men such as physicians, engineers, lawyers, managers, school and university teachers, merchants, and business owners.

39   One also can read the figure in a different way: only 10% come from the 30% of the Argentinean society who have a household income per capita of less than 155 US-Dollars, while almost 50% of AC form part of the richest 30% of the Argentinean population. This part of the population has a household income per capita of more than 366 US-Dollars in 2009. When supposing that the 50% of the Argentinean society who perceive the highest incomes together form Argentina's middle class and upper class in terms of income, one can then conclude that almost 80% of AC members are from this group.

The majority of members work in formal, well paid, white-collar occupations and are generally white and well educated.

In sum, the social composition of *Assembly of Christ* is not entirely homogenous but widely dominated by the middle class. In contrast to *God Is Love* its members are not situated on the margins of the society, but form the majority of the established middle class.

Pastors and members of AC do not ignore the fact that they are mainly a middle class church. Members define their church as a middle class Pentecostal congregation and are aware of the fact that the social composition of AC is exceptional for a Pentecostal congregation. With regard to the comparatively low proportion of lower class members, Pastor Victor mentions in an interview that the congregation may have a problem with attracting and binding lower class individuals. According to his observations, individuals from poor social backgrounds sometimes visit AC but do not end by affiliating with the congregation. After participating in one or two church services they do not come back.[40]

7.2.5   *Religious Practice*

The following description of AC´s religious practices stresses the church service, as it forms the core of the collective religious practice in AC.[41] The church service follows a general structure, beginning with a long praise (*alabanza*) which lasts at least half an hour and is intercepted by prayers and organizational announcements. It follows a more extensive prayer that is again followed by praise. Then, the service continues with tithing, accompanied by a prayer. Again, the congregation sings a song, and this leads to the main sermon, which will last between half an hour and an hour. After the sermon, the church service ends with a prayer and praise. Additionally, at the end, there is sometimes a call to the pulpit for those who want to pray for a specific concern. The whole church service has a duration of between two and a maximum of three hours. Praise and sermon are the most prevalent practices during the church service.

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40   See Interview Pastor Victor Part 1.

41   Sunday church service is the collective practice that involves the highest proportion of members and that assumes the highest importance for members. Therefore, the church service is the practice that most characterizes the identity of AC. Besides the church services, there are also several church groups, as described above. According to Pastor Victor only 50% percent of church members participate in some way in church activities that are not related to the Sunday church service. The low involvement of many church members becomes particularly evident regarding the group for adult male members. Only around 10 male members are engaged in this group.

Church services take place Wednesday evening, Saturday evening, and Sunday morning. The Wednesday evening is the smallest meeting, with only around fifty attendees. This meeting appears to be rather flexible and attendees are free to step forward to the pulpit to relate personal experiences, stories, or reflections. Saturday worships are normally organized by one of the church groups – the youth, the women, or the men group – and attract around one hundred participants. Here, each group can shape the service according to its preferences and style. The youth group, for instance, organizes between one and two Saturday services each month. These church services are inclined to Christian rock music and assume a slightly more emotional style than the "average" church service in *Assembly of Christ*. By contrast, the Sunday morning church service is the most important church meeting. Around three hundred members frequent this service each week. It starts officially at 10 am and ends generally between 12 am and 12:30 am.

The schedules for church services are fixed. They begin punctually with the praise section, during which most participants arrive. Members are dressed in different ways since there is no official doctrine with regard to physical appearance. Many members arrive in leisure sports cloth, shorts, and polo shirts and young women may even be dressed in close fitting dresses. Many of the elder women sport colored short hair. Still, a few members dress in a rather traditional and conservative way, wearing suits or in the case of women long dresses.

Arriving members are welcomed with a warm handshake or hug by church ushers and the main pastor in the entrance hall. After talking to ushers, a pastor, or other members, participants take a seat in the main hall and listen or sing to the praise music.

7.2.5.1   Musical Praise

The praise consists of different types of music depending on the church service. The church orchestras are equipped with well-trained musicians and several gifted singers who play a wide variety of styles from classical to Christian pop music. The orchestra generally consists of a singer and four background singers, a piano, drums, guitar, bass, violin, and at least one wind instrument (saxophone, trumpet). Due to the high quantity of musicians in AC, the composition of the orchestra or the whole orchestra may vary during the same church service. The musicians play Christian rock and pop-music, ballads, hymns, gospel, classical orchestral music, and even jazz pieces. From to time, one of the musicians also plays or sings a solo. However, the majority of songs are soft pop ballads and hymns. In comparison with other Pentecostal churches, the music

is slower, rather quiet, and less overwhelming, though the musical quality is higher. The text of the songs frequently address God's Love and expresses adoration for God. The lyrics are projected on a wall above the pulpit, so every member can join and sing with the orchestra. The sound and video projections are arranged by two audiovisual engineers, who, situated in the upper part of the church, make use of sophisticated electronic equipment for their duties.

The musical praise is the most repeated and prevalent practice of church services. Aside from the beginning of the church service, praise is played several times during the worship and may therefore fill more than the half of the total duration of the church service.

Despite its large presence and importance for the church service, the audience acts comparatively quiet during the praise. Some participants may sing and clap their hands to the rhythm of the song, but many stand still and prefer not to join in the singing. In contrast to other Pentecostal churches, members show less physical and emotional involvement. They do not raise their hands up, move their bodies, or even dance to the songs.

7.2.5.2   Praying and Tithing

The prayer is another important religious practice. In smaller church services, particularly on Wednesdays, prayers assume a more interactive form. The member in charge of the prayer asks the audience for motives and contents for the following prayer. On these occasions, participants stand up and explain their requests to the audience. The most popular topic is health and in particular the healing from illness or disease. Other topics are, for instance, alcoholism, economic security, crime, finding the right way ("*no apartarse*"), receiving wisdom and strength, etc. In addition to the type of prayers that contain concrete requests of members, there is another, more general form of prayer, which is more prevalent and asks for more general "goods", like salvation, forgiveness, or wisdom and expresses gratitude by worshipping God. Both types of prayer assume a quiet and contemplative form. The praying individual speaks quietly and does not shout while the audience stands and inclines their heads. Some may raise an arm during the prayer. But none of the participants prays loudly, trembles, or yells during the prayer.

Offering and tithing are carried out before the sermon and take place only once during a church service. Although offering and tithing are financially important for the organization, they play a minor role. A member at the pulpit asks the congregation for their offerings. Then, ushers pass between the seat rows to collect the offering, while a member at the pulpit says a prayer. After this, the church service continues with a song.

7.2.5.3   The Sermon

At the heart of every AC church service lays the sermon which is regarded as the most important practice of the service.[42] Besides the main sermon, there may be one or two shorter, sermon-like contributions during the same service. Members are highly involved in the preaching. They may conduct shorter sermons or even the main sermons in the Wednesday and Saturday service. The main sermons on Sundays are, however, normally reserved to the main pastor or an invited guest preacher. The style of preaching is comparatively calm. Preachers may emphasize parts of their sermon by speaking more resolutely and raising their voice, but they do not shout or yell. Furthermore, preachers do not ask members to perform particular corporal practices, like raising their hands up or putting them on their head during the sermon.

The sermon consists normally of an exegesis of a passage of the Bible and its reconnection to daily life. The preacher reads or refers to a longer part of the Bible and interprets it. Sometimes preachers may even raise different interpretations and approaches, and compare them with each other in order to identify the most appropriate interpretation.

Finally, the preacher brings the Bible narrative back into the context of daily life by addressing a problem of the society as a whole or a challenge in the daily life of modern individuals (suffering, sin etc.). Frequently, the preacher relates these topics to the general question of real Christian faith. When applying the message of the Bible, preachers often indicate how Christians can deal with their problems or act morally in the context of modern society.

The sermons are realized in an accentless, white collar Spanish. The elaborate, often pompous, way of communicating makes the sermons sometimes resemble a university lecture. The frequent application of metaphors and a theological way of interpreting the Bible and its argumentation contribute to this impression. The pastors call this style of preaching *predicación expositiva* (expositive preaching). They stress that "expositive preaching" is a key factor for the identity and success of the church and distinguishes it from the old-fashioned, spiritual Pentecostalism that emphasized the experience of the Holy Spirit. Instead of the experience, the intellectual comprehension of the Bible stands at the center of the religious practice.[43]

Sermons address different topics: troubles of Argentina or the world; spiritual and moral growth; the criticism of other churches; the moral obligation of

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42   See Interview Pastor Nicolás; Interview Pastor Victor Part 1.

43   See Interview Pastor Nicolás; Interview Pastor Victor Part 1.

being a role model to the society and to contribute to its improvement; the moral purification of one's life; obtaining wisdom; the afterlife; and last but not least, the real Christian faith. In addition to these over-arching themes, preachers frequently refer to the current society and its problems. Typical issues that are addressed are insecurity and crime, social inequality and poverty, the disruption of the ecological system, and the crisis of the economy. Society is critiqued for its egoism and lack of faith. Real Christians are expected to distinguish themselves from society, and to involve themselves at the same time in the society in order to transform it. This transformation plays an important role in the church's discourse, where the church wants to assume an active role in the transformation of the society and "hacer historia" ("make history"), as the preachers claim. Subsequently, members are asked to engage themselves actively in the transformation process of the society through social projects and donations: the love for God should not only express itself in the praise for Him, but also in the moral behavior of the individual, particularly loving and helping needy others.

In contrast to *God Is Love*, evil forces and their impact on the empirical reality of daily life are not a topic of religious discourse. Satan and demons are not mentioned in the sermons. Only on a few occasions, did I hear references to miracles or divine interventions in the daily life of members. Due to this lack of references to supernatural action, sermons appear to be more secular than that of *God Is Love* and other Pentecostal churches.[44]

A striking moment that appears from time to time in the sermons is the criticism of other styles of Pentecostalism. In one of his sermons, the pastor of AC criticizes, for example, that many Pentecostals pursue easy and fast solutions for their daily problems in Pentecostal churches. According to the pastor, they tend towards religious fetishism and a secular gospel and their only concern is to escape the suffering.[45] Such a secular gospel is described as limited to the daily, empirical world and as not reaching out to the afterlife.[46] This accusation of religious pragmatism is a frequent critique against other Pentecostals. Miracles and this worldly improvement are not regarded as a legitimate objective of one's religious practice. Instead the afterlife is seen as the principle aim of religious practice and belief.[47]

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44 However, the possibility of divine healing and supernatural forces acting in the human sphere would not necessarily be denied by church members.

45 This is an allusion to the IURD and their phrase "Paré de sufrir!".

46 Instead, the real believer is thought to focus on what follows after the secular existence: eternity. See church service 3rd May 2009.

47 Interview Pastor Victor Part 2.

Other criticisms center on the prosperity gospel and idolatry in the Pentecostal movement. Prosperity gospel is seen as a false doctrine that stresses superficial materialism and distracts the believer from the important objectives (topics) of faith. This criticism goes hand in hand with denouncing Pentecostal pastors as "false prophets" who lie to their members and exploit them while preaching secular wealth. Pastor Victor states with regard to prosperity gospel:

> The issue of prosperity, aren't we getting off track? Aren't we changing the purpose? Is it the Church's goal that a brother should get a new car, or give 100 pesos and get one hundred times more? Is this the message of the harvest—that you plant 100 pesos and you get 10,000 back? We're missing the point. That´s why I say this. But I think that our church in Argentina is hurt – I´m not saying it´s dead, because I trust in God. But we are not experiencing a revival here, or anything like it. And you read the books that come from the United States about a revival in Argentina, but it never really happened. There has never been a revival in Argentina, never ever. What we saw was a church that grew and then that was able very successfully to sell a product.
>
> INTERVIEW PASTOR VICTOR PART 1

The distinction from other styles of Pentecostalism that are experienced as wrong or inappropriate, plays an important role for the identity of *Assembly of Christ*.[48] Many of the criticisms raised by AC could be intuitively directed against *God Is Love*, since they concern a religious style that is practiced in GIL. *God Is Love* fits into the bogeyman image of the AC discourse. The AC discourse refuses a religious practice centered on the improvement of the daily life. Regarding its criticism of the earthly orientated Pentecostalism, one may conclude that the only concern of *Assembly of Christ* is moral purification and the afterlife. This is, however, not the case. Despite the importance that the AC discourse assigns to the afterlife and eternity, daily life also assumes an important position in AC's religious practice and beliefs. As previously mentioned, members pray for daily causes (e.g. illness). Moreover, they seek to contribute directly to the transformation of the world. They do not withdraw from society and accept their fate waiting for the end to come. Instead, they want to shape the society.

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48   His critical position with regard to other Pentecostal churches raises the question of why the main pastor officially represents Pentecostalism as a head of an umbrella organization like FECEP. The contradiction between his opinions about other Pentecostal churches and his position in the field is partially undermined by the fact that the umbrella organization he represents is particularly bound to the middle class, as will be shown below.

Thus, their attitude seems to be ambivalent: while they emphasize salvation and afterlife as the principle objective of their religion, their practice does not only center on the afterlife. It includes also the search for an improvement of daily life through social action and religious practices.

In any case, AC members comprehend their religious practice as less orientated towards the improvement of daily life and less pragmatic than the practice of other Pentecostals. According to their religious discourse, eternity and the unconditional love for God should be the essential cause of Pentecostal practice and belief, instead of earthly concerns.[49]

7.2.5.4 Spiritual Practices and Expressivity

The religious practice during the church service is shaped by oral discourses – such as sermons – rather than by physical and emotional involvement. There are no exorcisms; preachers do not ask the audience to perform specific physical movements or to repeat phrases; nor do participants speak loudly in tongues, dance or tremble in the Spirit. Moreover, religious practices that include objects, such as the blessing of items, are totally absent. Members do not bring cloth, photos, keys, or bottles of water to the pastor to bless them, as these practices are regarded as fetishism.[50]

The only religious practice that integrates the body in a more significant way is a specific prayer, which occasionally takes place at the end of church services. Members who want to pray for particular causes in a more concerted way can step forward to the pulpit. Here, they will kneel down and pray while the orchestra plays calming music. Meanwhile, pastors and selected ushers pass through the line of kneeling members, speak to them, lay hands on their shoulder, and display affection. The atmosphere remains calm and any kind of emotional outburst is absent. Sometimes some of the kneeling members cry quietly and receive hugs from the pastor or ushers. This is the most emotional and corporal practice in AC; however, it involves only a very small part of the congregation.[51]

Typical manifestations of the Holy Spirit which one can often observe in Pentecostal churches such as faith healing, exorcisms, and miracles are absent in AC. In none of my visits did I observe an exorcism, faith-healing, or any similar practice. Nevertheless, AC's pastors inform me that cases of individuals

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49   See Interview Pastor Victor Part 2. See also Kravetes 2008: 101.

50   Interview Pastor Victor Part 2.

51   Pastor Victor described this prayer as different from the practice of laying on hands on the forehead and the blessing with oil, which is very rare in AC. See Interview Pastor Victor Part 2.

appearing to be demonized were not totally absent. However, pastors stated that they would not perform exorcisms in front of the whole congregation. In the very rare occasions of someone acting "strange," the pastor and ushers would take the person aside to a more private space in the church. Here, they would seek a dialogue and try to calm the person down. According to Pastor Victor, only in very few cases, individuals are actually possessed and need more spiritual attention.[52]

Expressions of physical and emotional involvement are hardly visible in AC. On no occasion did I observe people dropping to the ground, tumbling in ecstasy, or crying out loudly; nor was there the subsequent shouting of "*Gloria a Dios!*" or similar exclamations. Participants show far less emotional and physical engagement than those of *God Is Love*. During the songs, many participants are reluctant to sing and clap their hands and, in many cases, they appear to limit and control their physical expression.

Only very few members show an emotional involvement or speak quietly in tongues. The few members who showed more involvement – such as raising hands during the praise – were from lower class backgrounds. Interestingly, two lower class AC members explained during narrative interviews that they liked more expressive styles. In contrast to middle class interviewees from AC, they showed no rejection of exorcisms and strong spiritual manifestations during church services and even claimed that it would be favorable for the congregation to integrate these practices into the church service.[53]

Glossolalia forms are a controversial topic in AC, and pastors are generally critical of its practice during the church service. Pastor Victor, for instance, argues harshly against it: in cases of participants sticking out by speaking loudly in tongues, he would take them aside after the service, and recommend them to stay quiet if there is no translation. Speaking in tongues and other strong comportments that can be interpreted as emotional are regarded as a disturbance.[54] The following statement from the pastor demonstrates how practices such as faith healing, testimonies, and glossolalia are viewed in AC:

> How does God feel when you write "Miracles and Healing meeting today" on a sign? What if God doesn't want to heal today? Who are you to say that today God is going to heal? Is God not sovereign? God heals when

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52   In his whole career as a pastor, Pastor Victor remembers having seen only three severe cases, in which the individuals were probably possessed. See Interview Pastor Victor Part 2; Interview Pastor Nicolás.

53   See Interview Simón Part 2; Interview Andrés.

54   See Interview Pastor Nicolás.

He wants to, and when He doesn't want to, He doesn't heal. A lot of the testimonies people give are false, and some of the testimonies that say "I walked, I walked, I walked," is just adrenaline. I've seen it. Later, that same woman has the same problem. How much of the healing that occurs is documented by doctors? Why is that? Because you put your own attitude into these experiences. God never said that. He told us to go forth and preach the Gospel, and those who believe will see the signs. I am not saying that God does not heal. If I get sick, the first thing that I'm going to do is to ask God to heal me. But our testimony should not be focused on that. Jesus said that disbelievers demand a sign. So when the church service is based on that, we are getting it wrong (...). Why at church do people scream in tongues, 20 or 30 people speaking in tongues at the same time? When that happens here, where we usually have one or two, we try to take them aside at the end of the service and tell them, "Brother, if you see that there is no practical interpretation, please don't speak." Because they are focused on the experience. And falling down—why does God need us to throw ourselves to the ground? I think these are religious practices that take away from the true purpose of a service, which is worshipping God, preaching the Word, and breaking bread.

INTERVIEW PASTOR VICTOR PART 1

This statement emphasizes the position of the church with regard to manifestations of the Holy Spirit and more specifically concerning glossolalia. Speaking in tongues and other spiritual manifestation are not welcomed in the context of the church service. Interestingly, however, some members mentioned to me that they would speak sometimes in tongues at home while they refused to do so in the public sphere of church services.[55]

7.2.6   *Towards a Socially More Adapted Style of Pentecostalism*

The religious practice of AC does not include any significant manifestation of the Holy Spirit and appears to be barely Pentecostal. Nevertheless, pastors and members believe in the Holy Spirit and its gifts. That is to say, they do not neglect the possibility of miracles and divine healing, and supernatural interventions in daily life are regarded as possible.[56] Thus, they do not differ from other Pentecostal and charismatic congregations when it comes to the religious

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55   See, for instance, Interview Luis.

56   See Interview Pastor Nicolás; Interview Pastor Victor Part 1, Interview Simón; Interview Luis; Interview Laura; Interview Isabela.

belief in the Holy Spirit.[57] At the same time, there is little emphasis on practices that involve the supernatural, including the gifts of the Holy Spirit – like faith-healing, exorcism, speaking in tongues, the blessing of items or prophecy. Instead of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, other practices are emphasized, like the sermon, the teaching and interpretation of the Bible, and the praise. Pastor Victor argues that the most prevalent gifts of the Holy Spirit in AC are the gifts of preaching, teaching, and science.[58] Consequently, *Assembly of Christ* is marked by oral and intellectual rather than corporal and emotional practices. The official discourse and practice of *Assembly of Christ* is notably more secular than *God is Love* and situates it in proximity to the practice of traditional Protestant churches.

In total, AC represents a controlled, softly charismatic and socially more acceptable type of Pentecostalism. Although being socially more adapted, non-Pentecostal middle class Argentineans may still perceive the church and its practices as strange. One example for the remaining tension between what is experienced as appropriate by the middle class and AC's religious style are Alberto's first experiences in AC. Alberto converted in AC to Pentecostalism. Before his conversion, he was a nominal Catholic who grew up in a middle class family in *Devoto*. His "conversion career"[59] started when his new girlfriend, a member of AC, invited him to AC's church services. Visiting AC the first time, Alberto experienced its religious practice as strange ("*loco*") and could not stand to stay during the whole time of the church service. However, encouraged by his girlfriend, he stayed a bit longer each time and finally converted to Pentecostalism. Another example for the remaining deviations from the middle class representations is the fear of embarrassment in sharing one's faith: Laura, for instance, chose AC because she felt that this church would offer lower chances of feeling embarrassed when bringing friends to its services, but she is still afraid of fellow members behaving inappropriately.[60]

Hence, despite being more socially adapted than GIL, AC appears to still represent a deviation from what is regarded as appropriate. Nevertheless, middle class interviewees who were not members of AC were very open to the videos I showed them from the church. The fact that it represents a more appropriate and adapted form of Pentecostalism seems to explain AC's social

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57   However, Pastor Victor seems to be skeptical regarding the degree of supernatural involvement in daily reality: miracles do not occur always and everywhere, and it is not prudent to rely on their occurrence. Interview Pastor Victor Part 2.

58   Interview Pastor Victor Part 1.

59   Gooren 2005, 2007.

60   Interview Laura.

composition. It provides a type of Pentecostalism that is experienced as more appropriate by the middle class and is, therefore, able to recruit its members from this social segment.

7.3   Comparing the Social Composition and Religious Styles of GIL and AC

The previous sections of this chapter have described the two churches *God Is Love* and *Assembly of Christ*. In these descriptions it became evident that each church mainly attracts a specific social class and demonstrates a particular religious style. However, these churches have, so far, not been directly compared. Therefore, this section compares the social composition and the religious styles of both churches. The comparison of their styles illustrates the boundary work of AC.

AC and GIL recruit the majority of their members from different social classes. The class differences between the memberships of both churches become clear when comparing the education and income of members. Figure 15 compares the data from GIL and AC with general data about the educational composition of the Argentinean society and the educational composition of Protestants in Argentina.
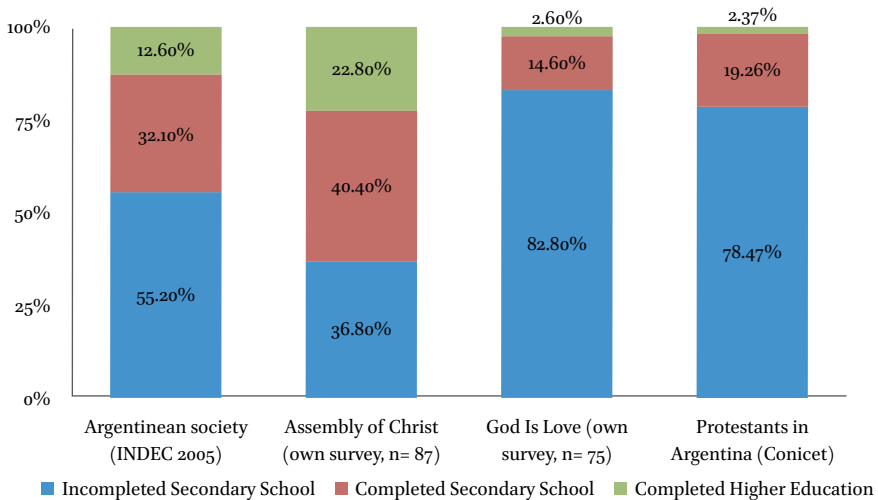
FIGURE 15   *Education: Argentinean society, AC, GIL, and Protestants in Argentina*
              (OWN COMPOSITION BASED ON INDEC 2005, CONICET 2008,
              AND OWN SOURCE)

The first row shows the educational distribution of the Argentinean society, while the last row shows educational distribution of Protestants. The two rows in the middle exhibit the educational distribution of AC and GIL interviewees. The general differences in the educational distribution between Protestants and Argentinean society were previously discussed. What is of interest here is that the educational distribution of GIL closely resembles that of Argentinean Protestants in general, whereas it shows significant differences to the educational distribution of Argentinean society and even stronger differences to AC. With respect to its educational distribution, GIL can be treated, to some extent, as a typical case of Protestantism, showing levels of formal education that are significantly below the average Argentinean. Regarding AC, it is striking that the educational distribution is not only exceptional for Protestants, but even with regards to the Argentinean society: the average formal education of AC members is still considerably higher than that of Argentinean society. One can determine substantial differences between both churches, not only in the educational distribution of both churches, but also in the distribution of incomes. Figure 16 compares the distribution of household income per capita between AC, GIL and the Argentinean society in the second quarter of 2009:

Here also, the differences between both churches are more than apparent. Almost half of the AC interviewees (48.28%) are among the wealthiest 30% of the Argentinean population, while only 6.67% of GIL interviewees are from this group. In contrast, 60% of GIL interviewees are from the 30% of the Argentinean population with the lowest household income per capita, whereas
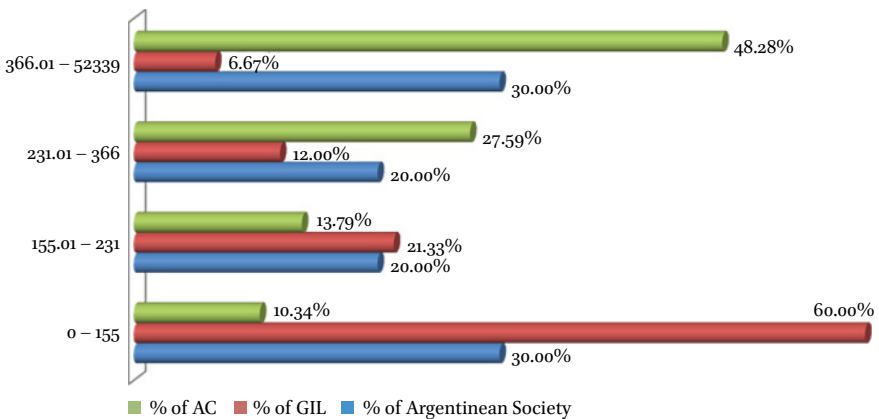

FIGURE 16   *Household income per capita in US-Dollars: AC, GIL, and Argentinean Society*
(OWN COMPOSITION BASED ON INDEC 2015 AND OWN SOURCE)

only 10.24% of AC interviewees are from this group. This comparison not only shows that both churches recruit the main part of their members from different income strata, but also that the income composition of both churches differs significantly from that of Argentinean society in general. AC tends to recruit its members from social strata with household incomes per capita that are above the Argentinean average, while GIL recruits its members mainly from social strata with household incomes per capita that are below the Argentinean average.

The description of GIL and AC has already revealed that the religious style of both churches substantially differs: despite the fact that both churches are Pentecostal and share the same Pentecostal beliefs, they show significant differences in their infrastructure, organization, symbolical recognition, religious practices, and discourses. These differences are related to different types of symbolic boundaries.

First, both churches differ considerably in their infrastructure and organization. These differences can be described as structural and organizational boundaries. AC cultivates its distinctiveness by developing a more sophisticated organization and infrastructure than other Pentecostal churches.

Furthermore, the two churches also show differences with regard to their integration into the formal circle of evangelical Protestantism and their symbolic recognition. AC is deeply integrated in the formal circle of evangelical churches in Argentina. By contrast, GIL is not affiliated with any of the umbrella organizations of Argentinean Protestantism nor is it integrated in any way into the formal circle of evangelicals. Additionally, Pentecostal churches with a Brazilian background like GIL tend to be perceived critically.[61] Regarded from the viewpoint of the formal circle of evangelical Protestantism, the symbolic recognition of GIL is low. One can speak of "legitimate" boundaries, meaning boundaries that are drawn on the basis of legitimacy and symbolic recognition.

Besides these differences, there are also similarities. Both churches define themselves as Pentecostal. Members and pastors of both believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit: they believe in miracles, the gift of tongues, prophecy, faith-healing, and exorcisms. Although both churches are Pentecostal and seem to share basic beliefs of Pentecostalism, they show significant differences in their

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61 Evangelical churches with a Brazilian background like GIL suffer from being confounded with IURD or classified in the same categories as IURD. Thus, they are often regarded among the Argentinean population and evangelicals as money-making businesses which exploit their members by providing questionable spiritual services.

religious practice which become evident in the style of their church services. Remarkable differences conern the style of the musical praise and the involvement of spiritual practices. Spiritual practices such as faith-healing, exorcisms, prophecy, laying on of hands, and speaking loudly in tongues are ubiquitous in *God Is Love*, but widely absent in AC. Moreover, the style in which spiritual practices are performed also exhibits major differences. The religious practice in GIL is expressive, involves the body, and seeks improvements in daily life. Its discourses circle around demons, miracles, and supernatural interventions. In AC, these characteristics are almost or totally absent. The religious practice of AC is less expressive than in GIL: members do not speak loudly in tongues, raise their arms, or shout out. The atmosphere stays quiet and sober. Physical expressions and emotions are restricted to a degree that is experienced as appropriate. The body is widely excluded from the congregational practice, and instead the intellect is emphasized. The differences in the practice of both churches point to the drawing of expressive boundaries.

AC rejects religious pragmatism, which its pastors believe to witness in other Pentecostal churches. Instead of spiritual intervention practices and rituals, AC relies on an oral intellectual discourse that culminates in the sermon, which consists of an intellectual interpretation of passages from the Bible. As such, AC's sermons often stress problems of the (post)modern society and the duty of moral purification. But unlike GIL, AC does not try to enforce moral purification on its members by establishing harsh rules of conduct. Instead, AC relies on the autonomy and inner control of the individual. For these reasons, AC seems to apply "soft" strategies such as acculturation and education. Thus, education and (intellectual, spiritual and personal) development are emphasized in AC. GIL, in contrast, does not stress education and intellectual development. These differences point to educational and moral boundaries. AC draws symbolic boundaries by stressing education and personal development and emphasizing a morality that is different from the alleged pragmatism of lower classes.

In total, AC's style represents a softened and "rationalized" Pentecostalism. The congregation knows that AC's style is different from the majority of Pentecostal churches and cultivates these differences. Pastors proudly emphasize the distinction of AC from other Pentecostal churches while criticizing "mass Pentecostalism" for being fake and superficial. The fact that harsh criticism is directed against Pentecostal styles that resemble those of GIL illustrates the boundary work of AC and the contrast between both churches. GIL and AC represent two different styles of Argentinean Pentecostalism. The style of GIL widely corresponds to Latin American popular culture and religion. AC, by contrast, seeks to distinguish itself from popular religion by drawing upon

different types of symbolic boundaries and developing a softened, more socially adapted style of Pentecostalism.

7.4   Summary

The objective of this chapter was to study the example of two Pentecostal churches: *God Is Love* (GIL) and *Assembly of Christ* (AC). The analysis of these churches provided detailed insights that illustrate the boundary work of Pentecostal churches. The two churches described in this chapter attract different social sectors and represent highly contrasting styles of Pentecostalism.

GIL predominantly attracts the lower class. Its religious style emphasizes characteristics that are often associated with Pentecostalism, such as spiritual intervention practices, an expressive and emotional atmosphere, a mostly under-developed infrastructure and organization, and a spiritual focus on the improvement of daily life. This style of religion does not fit well with middle class representations of appropriateness. Many of the practices of GIL, such as exorcisms and speaking loudly in tongues, appear inappropriate or even shocking to the middle class. Therefore, middle class Pentecostals are likely to draw boundaries in opposition to this type of Pentecostalism.

AC, which predominantly attracts the middle class, distinguishes itself from this style of Pentecostalism by drawing upon several types of boundaries. AC abstains from many practices involving the Holy Spirit, such as exorcisms, faith healing, and speaking in tongues. Despite believing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the possibility of supernatural intervention in daily life, the gifts of the Spirit are not as present as in other Pentecostal churches. Physical manifestations and experiences are rare. At the same time, the atmosphere is less expressive and appears to be more controlled than in other Pentecostal churches. Being bound to the representations of the middle class, these middle class Pentecostals cannot accept Pentecostalism in its "inappropriate" form. In order to feel more comfortable with their religious affiliation, they adapt Pentecostalism to their class representations. They "civilize" Pentecostalism by developing a specific style that draws boundaries in opposition to the "inappropriate" characteristics of Pentecostalism.

Based on the empirical findings, one can distinguish five types of boundaries employed to mark a difference: structural and organizational boundaries, legitimacy boundaries, expressive boundaries, educational boundaries, and moral boundaries. Drawing upon these boundaries, AC develops a more socially adapted and softly charismatic style that distinguishes itself from GIL

and many other Pentecostal churches. Representing a religious style more acceptable to the middle class, middle class actors are more likely to affiliate themselves with this type of Pentecostalism than with a GIL-like style of Pentecostalism.

This study has so far only considered the Pentecostal styles of two churches. Other lower and middle class congregations may exhibit different characteristics. For this reason, more Pentecostal churches will be introduced in the analysis of the following chapter.

Crafting a More Appropriate Pentecostalism: Five Symbolic Boundaries

Great differences may arise between lower and middle class churches. The comparison conducted in the preceding chapter presented the cases of two Pentecostal churches that display significant discrepancies with regard to their social composition and religious style. The empirical comparison between these two churches highlighted potential boundaries between lower and middle class Pentecostalism. The comparison remains limited, however, insofar as it considers only two churches. Therefore, this chapter will broaden the perspective by taking into account a variety of Pentecostal churches in and around Buenos Aires city and the in-depth interviews which were conducted with middle class pastors and Pentecostals from different churches.

The central objective of this chapter is to explore the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals along with their religious taste and style.[1] The religious taste and style described in this chapter are that of a middle class majority: a taste and style which are predominant among the middle class churches and interviewees of the sample.[2] As will be shown, both the style and taste of the churches culminate in a tendency towards a more "appropriate" Pentecostalism that draws symbolic boundaries in opposition to other Pentecostals. Observing the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals, one can distinguish five types

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[1] The notion of religious taste refers to the religious preferences that devotees manifest, while the notion of religious style refers to the visible expressions of their religiosity. The exploration, analysis, and description of religious styles and tastes were originally carried out in two separate parts. However, during the analysis there turned out to be vast overlaps between the religious styles of middle class churches and the tastes of middle class devotees. In order not to render this study too redundant, both will be discussed together.

[2] Middle class churches are considered to be churches in which the majority of members are from the middle class. The definition of social classes follows the technical definition given above. Thus, the majority of members in middle class churches will have completed a secondary school degree. They live in stable economic situations and have an income that is above average for the Argentinean population. Typical occupations among this group are qualified technical or service employees, professionals, teachers, small and medium-sized business owners, and free-lancers. Finding Pentecostal churches with a pronounced middle class membership is not an easy task in Argentina. There are, however, a few churches that include a high proportion of middle class individuals. I will call these churches "middle class churches".

of boundaries: legitimate, structural and organizational, educational, expressive, and moral boundaries. The classification into these five types of boundaries is not based on clear cut distinctions. Empirically, boundaries often overlap and are combined. For instance, educational boundaries also become apparent as organizational boundaries in the form of educational facilities in middle class churches. Nevertheless, classification into these five boundaries allows for a rough differentiation between different types of boundaries that are drawn in opposition to other Pentecostals. Each of the five boundaries will be described in a specific section. Particular emphasis will be placed on expressive boundaries, since they lend themselves well to portraying the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals.

8.1   Legitimacy and Power: "Legitimate" Boundaries

The first boundary concerns the institutionalization and legitimacy of Pentecostal churches. During the field research it became evident that middle class churches are highly integrated into the formal institutions of evangelical Protestantism. These institutions were created in order to generate a common identity and to legitimize evangelical Protestantism. The most important among these are evangelical umbrella organizations, educational institutions, and evangelical newspapers. Middle class churches are not only highly integrated in these institutions; they even tend to control them. By creating a formal type of Pentecostalism, they draw boundaries of legitimacy in opposition to other Pentecostals.

Algranti proposes the notion of "formal circles of Pentecostalism" in order to distinguish between institutionalized, formal types of Pentecostalism and informal circles of non-institutionalized Pentecostalism. He applies the notion of formal circles of Pentecostalism to churches that are registered in the *Registro Nacional de Culto* (*registro*) and affiliated with ACIERA and/or FECEP. In opposition to the formal circles, the informal circles of Pentecostalism consist of churches that are neither registered in the *registro* nor affiliated with an official evangelical umbrella organization.[3] This notion of formal circles is helpful to distinguish different degrees of institutionalization and legitimacy among Pentecostals.

I adopt this concept, but instead of "formal circles", I use it to refer to a single "formal circle" and add more elements to it. While the *registro* and the enrolment in ACIERA and/or FECEP are basic requirements for entering the formal

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3   See Algranti 2010: 84–85.

circle, participation in the *Consejo de Pastores* (*consejo*), the educational training of pastors, and their activity in a Bible institute and/or an evangelical newspaper form additional features that attribute formal recognition and legitimacy to a church. The greater number of these conditions a church meets, the deeper its integration in the formal circle and the higher its degree of formal recognition and legitimacy. Thus, features like enrolment in ACIERA and/or FECEP, participation in the *consejo*, educational training of pastors, and potentially the activity of pastors in a Bible institute and/or an evangelical newspaper define the degree of institutionalization and legitimacy of a church from the viewpoint of the formal circle. Churches that do not meet these requirements are instead not integrated into the formal circle and have a rather low degree of formal recognition. They are – willingly or unwillingly – excluded from the formal circle. Examples are churches such as IURD, *God Is Love*, *Cumbre Mundial de Los Milagros*, and many small and medium-sized churches situated in lower class neighborhoods in the surroundings of Buenos Aires. These churches are neither affiliated with ACIERA and FECEP, nor do their pastors participate in the *consejo*. Their pastors usually have not received theological training from one of the recognized institutions nor do they participate in evangelical newspapers such as *El Puente*. Moreover, countless smaller churches located in poor neighborhoods and slums are not even registered in the *registro*. Instead of participating in formal Pentecostalism, they constitute a Pentecostal "black market": from the viewpoint of formal Pentecostalism these churches are barely legitimate.[4] Hence, the unifying effect of evangelical institutions functions at the same time as a mechanism of exclusion. The formal circle with its institutions does not represent the whole movement, but only a fraction of it.

The following paragraphs tackle the particular relationship that middle class churches have with the formal circle. This relationship is characterized by an intimate proximity – if not an almost complete overlap with the formal circle – since middle class churches are highly engaged in the formal circle.

The middle class churches that I studied in Buenos Aires are involved in the official umbrella organizations of evangelical Protestantism. They are affiliated

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4 Knoblauch (2007) also uses the term "black markets of religion". He applies the term, however, for non-organized or fluid forms of religion which are not religious in the narrow sense of the term. Thus, the term as applied in Knoblauch's approach refers rather to modern, non-institutionalized and partly individualized – or in Luckmann's (2000/1960) terminology, "invisible" – forms of religion. I use the term "black market of religion", instead, in order to distinguish between organized religious actors that assume a type of legitimacy and those that are regarded as less legitimate or illegitimate.

with at least one of the umbrella organizations, many of them even with
both – ACIERA and FECEP.[5] Moreover, pastors from middle class churches are
enrolled in the *Consejo de Pastores de la ciudad de Buenos Aires*.[6] Interestingly,
in addition to the formal networks there exists in these bodies a more exclusive
network of close personal bonds between middle class pastors. Middle class
pastors in the city of Buenos Aires reported to me that they maintained close
friendships with each other. They stay in close contact, meet on a regular basis,
and invite each other to preach in their churches.

ACIERA, FECEP, and the *consejo(s)* represent the core institutions of the for-
mal circle. Middle class pastors are not only actively engaged in these organiza-
tions, they also tend to control them by assuming leadership positions in these
organizations. The majority of chairs and official positions in these organiza-
tions are usually held by pastors of middle class congregations. Therefore,
middle class Pentecostalism controls the core institutions of the formal circle.

Another factor contributing to the formal recognition of a church is its rela-
tionship to the *registro*. Middle class churches not only keep to the legal stan-
dards and are enrolled in the *registro*, but some of them such as AC and *Iglesia
del Libertador* even received official acknowledgements from this secular body
which they exhibit in their entrance halls.

While middle class churches are enrolled in the *registro* and participate in
the umbrella organizations of evangelical Protestantism, many – if not most –
non-middle class Pentecostal churches are neither inscribed in the *registro* nor
enrolled in ACIERA or FECEP and do not participate in an organization like the
consejo.[7] This does not mean that these churches are intentionally excluded
from these bodies. Nevertheless, affiliation with these organizations is not as
simple as it may seem since a church that wants to enroll (1) has to know and

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5   Moreover, many middle class churches form part of one of the traditional Pentecostal bodies
    in Argentina such as the Asamblea de Dios, Unión de las Asambleas de Dios, Asamblea
    Cristiana or the Asociación de la Iglesia de Dios.

6   The Consejo de Pastores de la ciudad de Buenos Aires is a network for pastors from the city
    of Buenos Aires. The pastors who form part of the consejo meet on a regular basis to discuss
    organizational topics and strategies. Pastors from churches located outside the city of Buenos
    Aires can participate in other consejos. Theoretically, there are consejos in each part of the
    province of Buenos Aires.

7   Pastor Pedro explains the absence of lower class pastors and churches in these organizations
    by the fact that these umbrella organizations are strongly shaped by the middle class
    (Interview Pastor Pedro Part 2). The degree of enrollment varies among non-middle class
    Pentecostal churches. Churches like IURD, GIL and Cumbre Mundial de los Milagros, for
    instance, are enrolled in the registro, but are not accepted as members in ACIERA, FECEP or
    the Consejo de Pastores de la ciudad de Buenos Aires.

care about the affiliation, (2) needs the bureaucratic skills and knowledge to manage the enrollment procedure, and (3) often needs a contact from a church already enrolled in these organizations.[8] Pastor Pedro supposes that most of the smaller churches in the *conurbano* do not even know that umbrella organizations like ACIERA and FECEP exist.[9] Small churches outside the city of Buenos Aires – which represent the majority of Pentecostals congregations – generally go without any public voice or representation.[10] They remain in the shadows of the lower class neighborhoods and slums of the *conurbano* without enjoying any type of formal recognition and visibility, while urban middle class Pentecostals endeavor to represent Pentecostalism through their umbrella organizations.

Churches that are not enrolled in one of the umbrella organizations may be regarded as dubious.[11] Thus, some of the middle class interviewees tackle the topic of legitimacy and argue that churches should be affiliated with an umbrella organization. They suppose that a church needs a legal frame legitimizing its existence and its form of practice. Eduardo, for instance, explains that affiliation in an umbrella organization would facilitate the supervision and collective control of churches.[12] Another example is Claudia, who states that there should be legal head organizations in place in order to control congregations. According to her, the lack of such control is a serious flaw of many smaller lower class churches. Watching a video of a smaller church located in the *conurbano* of Buenos Aires, she states that many smaller churches in poorer places do whatever they want since they lack a central control which could regulate their activity.[13]

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8   Interview Pastor Oscar Part 2.

9   Interview Pastor Pedro Part 2.

10   There is an umbrella organization which tries to represent smaller Pentecostal churches: FIPA (Federación de Iglesias Pentecostales Argentina). Yet, this umbrella organization enjoys less power and recognition than ACIERA and FECEP and integrates only a small fraction of the existing smaller churches.

11   Pastor Pedro describes inter-congregational exchange and accountability as functions of these umbrella organizations (Interview Pastor Pedro Part 3).

12   See Interview Eduardo.

13   Interview Claudia Part 2. Nevertheless, the degree to which evangelical umbrella organizations are able to exercise such control is questionable. Although umbrella organizations may contribute to the accountability of Pentecostal churches, it seems rather to be the belief that these organizations contribute to the accountability of the churches enrolled that increases their credibility and legitimacy. Since umbrella organizations integrate numerous churches they are not able to maintain a strong relationship with each of them.

Another important institution that characterizes the formal circle and contributes to the legitimacy of Pentecostal churches is education. Various Bible institutes have been opened to provide religious education and to formalize the training of pastors. Remarkably, pastors of middle class congregations not only hold some type of theological degree, but also maintain strong relationships with these educational facilities. Many of them work or have worked as teachers in one of the Bible institutes. Moreover, some of these educational facilities were founded by middle class pastors[14] and are still run by them. Positions as teachers or directors in Bible institutes are prestigious among Pentecostals and confer an outstanding status to a pastor. Being a teacher or even a director of one of the Bible institutes contributes to the recognition of the pastor and his congregation. Thus, congregations are often evaluated according to the educational background of their leadership. Churches led by pastors with a low educational background are seen critically by middle class Pentecostals. Pastor Oscar from the middle class church *Iglesia del Libertador* regards the lack of education as a central problem of many churches in the province of Buenos Aires:

> (…) we know of pastors who do a terrible job, because they don´t have any real Biblical training. They have opened new churches because of some disagreement they had with others, and without having any resources, they start to do things…they start with liberations (…) but with a total lack of knowledge. But we aren't really in contact; we don't have contact with those churches. We just hear about the things that happen.
> INTERVIEW PASTOR OSCAR PART 2

Pastor Oscar not only criticizes the supposed lack of education but also points out that his congregation does not want any kind of contact with these churches. The absence of a substantial educational training is disapproved of and has a negative impact on the recognition of a church.[15] The importance of education among middle class Pentecostals will be discussed in more detail

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Moreover, it is not their principle aim to control churches but rather to give evangelical Protestantism and Pentecostalism a public voice. Pastor Pedro describes the principal objective of these organizations rather as a political one. See Interview Pastor Pedro Part 2.

14   For instance, FIET (Faculdad Internacional de Educación Teológica) was founded by Pastor Saracco who is head of a middle class congregation.

15   Also Pastor David describes the lack of training as the fundamental problem of Pentecostalism (Interview Pastor David).

below. Here it is just important to remark that the educational status of a pastor may contribute positively or negatively to the legitimacy of his congregation.

Finally, two other factors that may further contribute to the legitimacy of churches are close contact with the evangelical print media and involvement in social projects. Many middle class pastors maintain good relationships with the national evangelical newspapers – *El Puente* and *La Corriente* – and write articles from time to time in these releases.[16] Moreover, middle class congregations launch social aid projects and some of them have even received official distinctions for their social engagement.[17]

Different institutions contribute to the legitimacy of Pentecostal churches. These institutions, such as membership in an umbrella organization, allow for the drawing of "legitimate" boundaries, for distinguishing between "legitimate" and "less legitimate" or "illegitimate" Pentecostal churches. This institutionalization creates what Algranti calls a "formal circle of Pentecostalism",[18] a group of institutionalized churches that establish themselves as legitimate religious actors in opposition to churches that do not participate in these institutions. Middle class Pentecostals are not only strongly involved in these institutions, the institutions related to the formal circle are even run by middle class pastors. Thus, middle class Pentecostals shape the policy of the institutions that formally represent Pentecostalism in Argentina. Their position allows them to accumulate power and to control access to the institutions that legitimatize churches. By controlling access to the formal circle they can enforce definitions of "appropriate" and "legitimate" Pentecostalism. The fact that ACIERA and FECEP rejected the IURD's application and withdrew *Ondas de Paz y Amor* from its registers illustrates their power to define "legitimate" Pentecostalism.[19]

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16   Pastor Pedro describes El Puente as a typical publication for middle class Pentecostals (Interview Pastor Pedro Part 2).

17   Pastor Pedro states that his ex-congregation Iglesia del Centro twice received distinctions from the Peruvian government for being the non-governmental institution that most assisted Peruvian citizens in Argentina. See Interview Pastor Pedro Part 2. For further information regarding the social engagement of middle class churches, see subsection 8.5.3.

18   See Algranti 2010: 84–85.

19   For the exclusion of the IURD from the circle of Pentecostal churches, see also Semán 2003: 69–71. Interestingly, also sociologists of religion may get involved in drawing boundaries. Thus, famous scholar of Argentinean Pentecostalism Wynarczyk refuses to define the IURD as Pentecostal or even evangelical. Instead, he describes the IURD as "parapentecostal" and excludes the church from a detailed consideration in his work. See, for instance, Wynarczyk 2003: 35; 2009a: 53.

One of the institutions' objectives related to the formal circle is to improve the legitimacy and position of Pentecostalism in the religious field and in society. Aspiring for legitimacy, the formal circle seeks to monopolize the definition of Pentecostalism and to (re)define Pentecostalism as a socially acceptable and legitimate religion. Churches with a questionable reputation have to be excluded from what is publicly defined by the formal circle as Pentecostalism, since their presence imperils the creation of a socially acceptable Pentecostalism and the accumulation of legitimacy.

The rejection of churches from the formal circle implies that they do not represent acceptable forms of Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, rejection by the formal circle does not prevent these organizations from attracting large numbers of believers. The success of "illegitimate" Pentecostal churches such as the IURD shows that the definitions of appropriateness and legitimacy imposed by the formal circle do not concern the entire Pentecostal community. Instead, they appear to concern mainly a specific circle of Pentecostals: particularly middle class Pentecostals and those who are actively or passively integrated in the formal circle. Hence, the criteria for legitimacy imposed by the formal circle constitute a partial view that is particularly promoted by middle class Pentecostals. The majority of Pentecostals who are affiliated with small churches outside the city of Buenos Aires do not seem to care about the formal recognition of their church by these institutions.

Based on these observations one can outline a rough model of the field of Pentecostalism.[20] The Pentecostal field is organized on the basis of two types of resources: (1) the legitimacy of churches according to the formal circle of Pentecostalism, and (2) the public impact of the church, defined here by its public visibility among Pentecostals and its size. Using these two criteria, one can sketch a field model with two scales: the vertical scale shows the legitimacy as defined by the formal circle and the horizontal scale exhibits the impact of a church defined by its size and public visibility.

Figure 17 shows a rough sketch of the field of Pentecostalism in Argentina. This sketch serves only as a general illustration of the ideas presented here. The legitimacy of religious actors is defined by the standards of the formal circle. Only churches which fulfill the requirements of the formal circle are considered to be legitimate religious organizations. These churches are located in the upper area of the field. By contrast, churches which do not participate in the

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20   The concept of the religious field is based on Seibert's approach to the religious field. However, in contrast to the field which is proposed here, he defines the field around two different types of resources: organizational complexity and credibility (Seibert 2010).
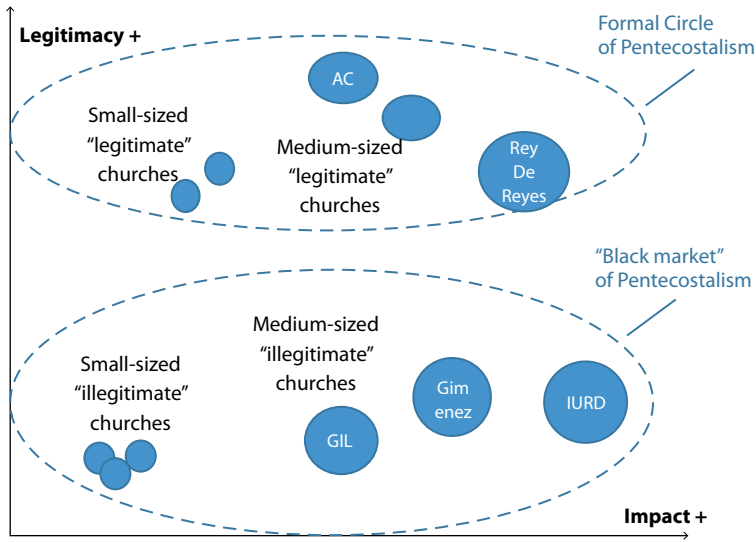
FIGURE 17   *The field of Pentecostalism in Buenos Aires*[21]

institutions of the formal circle are regarded as less legitimate and are there-
fore located at the lower end of the field. The churches with the highest impact
in terms of public visibility and size are situated at the far right while smaller
churches with little public visibility are located at the far left.

The middle class churches that I studied are located together with AC in the
upper middle and left areas of the field. They are medium-sized or small
churches which are highly integrated in the formal circle of Pentecostalism.

From the perspective of the formal circle of Pentecostalism, the lower part
of this figure forms a "black market" of Pentecostalism: churches located here
are not recognized by an umbrella organization and their pastors lack theo-
logical training. Therefore, they are perceived as illegitimate – or at least less
legitimate – religious organizations. The "black-market of Pentecostalism" is
dominated by a high variety of Pentecostal churches: the vast majority of
smaller churches in the *conurbano* and slums of Buenos Aires are likely to form
part of this "black market", but also many medium-sized and even some larger
churches like the IURD offer their religious products on the "Pentecostal black
market". Nevertheless, most religious "consumers" appear not to care about the
legitimacy of the religious goods they consume. The "black market" of Pente-
costalism will include considerably more churches and followers than the

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21   Source: own.

formal, "official market". Thus, in numerical terms, informal Pentecostalism rather than formal Pentecostalism represents the whole of Pentecostalism, whereas in terms of symbolic power general Pentecostalism is represented by the formal circle which is highly shaped by middle class Pentecostalism.

The field of Pentecostalism represents only a partial view. As already stated, not all Pentecostals seem to care about the legitimacy criteria established by the formal circle. Particularly middle class Pentecostals appear to enforce these criteria. For other Pentecostals, other legitimacy criteria may be important. A criterion that may turn out to be especially important among lower class Pentecostals, for instance, is the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit in a congregation. Congregations which are believed to experience a high presence of the Holy Spirit enjoy a high popularity. Hence, it is questionable whether the field sketched out here represents legitimacy standards that are shared by the whole or the majority of Pentecostals. The legitimacy standards discussed here are formal standards that are particularly present among middle class Pentecostals. By promoting formal legitimacy standards they seek to establish their churches as legitimate religious organizations. They create "legitimate" boundaries in opposition to other Pentecostal churches.

8.2   Excellence and Order: Structural and Organizational Boundaries

Excellence and order are important values for middle class Pentecostals. Middle class interviewees and churches portray themselves as committed to these values. Churches and their members are expected to give their best in order to provide a high quality of religious and secular services. Their affinity for quality goes along with their preference for tidiness and order. Stressing these values, middle class Pentecostals draw boundaries in opposition to Pentecostal churches which are located in "untidy" places and in which order and quality appear to play a minor role. Particularly the small churches in the *conurbano* and *villas* are experienced as untidy and poorly organized. Moreover, they are located in unsafe places that the middle class tends to avoid.[22]

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22   The degree of organization and infrastructure often goes hand in hand with the size of a church. Thus, many larger and mega churches develop a massive organizational structure while smaller churches lack the resources to build up a vast organizational structure. Yet, not only church size determines the organization and infrastructure of a church. Although many larger and medium-sized churches possess a poor infrastructure and organization, most of the medium-sized middle class churches have developed a substantial organization and infrastructure. Two examples of large churches with poorer infrastructure, for

The appreciation of excellence and order becomes particularly manifest in the infrastructure, the church organization and the structure of church services. Being committed to excellence and order, middle class Pentecostals draw organizational and structural boundaries. They engage in creating distinctions from the organizational and structural features of other Pentecostal churches.

8.2.1   *Safe and Tidy Locations*

The most evident structural boundary refers to the location and infrastructure of middle class churches. Middle class churches are located in specific places. They are not located where one finds the majority of Pentecostal churches, in the poor suburbs and slums of Buenos Aires, but in middle class neighborhoods. There is a geographical segregation of middle class churches: churches with a significant proportion of middle class members are usually situated in the urban, middle class districts of Buenos Aires. In poorer districts within and outside Buenos Aires, on the contrary, churches attract almost exclusively the lower class. These churches recruit their members basically from the surrounding neighborhood and therefore from the lower class. As described above, the density of Pentecostal churches is significantly higher in these neighborhoods than in the middle class districts of Buenos Aires city. Most Pentecostal churches are located in lower class neighborhoods of the *conurbano*.[23] By contrast, churches in the middle class neighborhoods of Buenos Aires city represent only a fraction of the movement. Middle class Pentecostals preferably frequent churches in these middle class neighborhoods. Consequently, churches which are predominantly middle class or mixed are limited to middle class districts.[24] The distribution of middle class churches has one simple reason:

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instance, are Manantial de Bendiciones and Cumbre Mundial de los Milagros. Both are lower class churches and attract a comparatively high number of participants to its weekly church services.

23   See Semán 2006a: 199–202.

24   In middle class districts, one can find not only middle but also lower class churches and larger churches with a highly mixed social composition. Many of the medium-sized and larger churches in the urban middle class neighborhoods of Buenos Aires attract members from different districts in and around the city of Buenos. This is particularly the case for the well-known churches with famous preachers such as Rey de Reyes or Catedral de la Fe. Due to the high popularity and strong reputation which these churches enjoy, they attract individuals who live farther away and have to travel several hours in order to reach church services. Some of the middle class and lower class churches from our sample – which are mainly located in Buenos Aires city – also attract their members from different parts in and around the city of Buenos Aires. Often members travel more than an hour to

middle class Pentecostals are unlikely to affiliate with Pentecostal churches that are located in lower class neighborhoods due to safety and cultural concerns. Many middle class *Porteños* avoid entering lower class neighborhoods and in particular slums since these places are experienced as insecure and dangerous.[25] Interestingly, geographical boundaries also become important for drawing other boundaries. When describing characteristics of Pentecostalism they perceive as negative, middle class Pentecostals usually refer to churches in the *conurbano*, in the poor suburban neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. They seek to distinguish themselves in particular from a type of Pentecostalism they believe to be prevalent in the poor *conurbano*.

A second structural characteristic concerns the infrastructure of churches. The physical infrastructure of middle class churches displays some general characteristics that many other Pentecostal churches do not share. Most of the middle class churches that I studied in Buenos Aires occupy physical locations which were originally constructed as churches. Their buildings include different facilities. Besides the basic facilities such as restrooms, entrance hall, and the main hall middle class churches have different halls for courses, groups and other activities, offices for pastors and secretaries, and a bookstore in the entrance hall. In general, the facilities are very well administered. There is no paint peeling from the ceiling or mold and water spots on the walls. Restrooms are clean and equipped with paper towels and soap. The main hall is equipped with sophisticated music and sound equipment and a projector that displays the song text and Bible readings on the wall. Walls are painted and floors are tiled. Heaters, ventilators, or air conditioning make the facilities of the church more comfortable.

The facilities of churches that one can find in lower class neighborhoods and slums in and around Buenos Aires are usually very different from those of middle class churches. Many of the locations were never constructed as

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get to their church. However, living a bit farther from the church is less stressful for the middle class since they have access to cars. Many lower class Pentecostals living in the province of Buenos Aires instead have to take long bus trips in order to attend church services in the city of Buenos Aires.

25   A pastor of a church situated in a slum, for instance, mentioned to me that his church was planning to open a branch in a middle class neighborhood close to the existing branch in order to attract the middle class. According to him, the only possibility to attract the middle class was to open another branch in a middle class district since middle class individuals would refuse to enter slums they experienced as less secure. Slums are often perceived as a hotbed of crime and drug-business (Gorelik and Silvestri 2010; Guano 2004; Kessler 2010b).

churches and consist of a sparsely decorated hall in which plastic chairs are assembled. Here, floors are not tiled and are just bare concrete. Paint may peel from the walls. Sometimes there are no heaters while the walls and doors have holes through which the wind may enter in the winter. In many smaller churches, the music and sound equipment is limited to a keyboard, speakers, and a guitar or drums. These churches are regularly much less comfortable than middle class churches.

Surprisingly, references to the infrastructure of churches are not as ubiquitous among middle class interviewees as one may suppose. In many cases middle class interviewees simply appear to take a good infrastructure and organization as givens, since most of them are members of well-equipped churches and have not directly experienced churches with poor infrastructure and organization. Nevertheless, there are several interviewees who display preferences concerning the infrastructure and organization. These interviewees prefer churches with a developed, comfortable, and orderly infrastructure.[26] They do not necessarily want a luxurious infrastructure, but they reject the precarious infrastructure that one can find in many smaller churches in slums and lower class neighborhoods.

8.2.2 *Order and Organization*

Talking to members and pastors of middle class churches, the term "excellence" often appeared. The term was used particularly with respect to quality, tidiness, and order. Churches and their members are expected to give their best in order to provide a high quality of religious and secular services. This becomes visible not only with respect to the infrastructure but also to the organization of the church and the structure of church services and its music. The middle class churches that I studied have developed a sophisticated organizational structure in order to satisfy the requests and interests of their middle class members. In these churches, several pastors are dedicated to the spiritual well-being of church members while at least one secretary coordinates and assists their daily tasks. Moreover, these congregations generally offer an internet page, a ministry that carries out social projects, and a variety of groups, courses, workshops and other activities (e.g. weekend camps, soccer tournaments).

In analogy to these characteristics, middle class interviewees state that they prefer a church organization with a variety of ministries, activities and social

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26   Javier, for instance, states that he likes the well administered interior of AC (Interview Javier). Mateo describes the space of the church Ministerio Apostólico Jesús Varón Guerra Y Libertad as a space where he would get depressed due to the poor infrastructure (Interview Mateo).

projects. Particularly courses and workshops that contribute to members' education are welcomed. Some of the middle class interviewees stated that they like to have small groups in their church in which they are able to discuss their problems and pray in a more intimate context. These church groups are a general characteristic of middle class churches.[27] There are usually two types of groups: specific groups, such as self-help groups for married couples, and regular groups, often called *discipulados* or *celulas*. The regular groups generally consist of 3 to 12 members. Meetings take place in the church or a member's home. These meetings provide a more intimate context in which church members can not only deepen their knowledge of the Bible but also discuss their problems and seek advice and support.

However, the most essential congregational practice remains the church service. Remarkably, middle class church services tend to be shorter than in other Pentecostal churches. Church services last between one and a half and two and a half hours in the middle class churches that I studied, while in many other Pentecostal congregations church services last from two and a half to as much as six hours. Middle class church services normally follow a common structure. They start with musical praise during which the participants arrive and are welcomed at the entrance by a pastor and/or ushers who may hand them the church program. The music is followed by a prayer, some organizational announcements, tithing and offering, and the sermon which takes up most of the time of the church service. The church service ends with a prayer and some short announcements regarding upcoming church events. In many other Pentecostal churches, the structure of services is less evident and appears to depend more on the intuition of pastors and members.[28]

Attributes that appear again and again in the interviews when it comes to the organization and practices of the church are "order" and "disorder/chaos". Often when practices in the videos were perceived negatively, they were described as chaotic. Thus, "disorder/chaos" has a clearly negative connotation whereas "order" is experienced as positive. Order refers to what middle class interviewees describe as a clear and comprehensible structure: every element

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27   Church groups also exist in many of the larger churches while they tend to be less prevalent in medium-sized lower class churches. However, in lower class churches of medium and smaller size they are less prevalent.

28   Most of the lower class churches have their main service in the evening, while middle class churches tend to prefer Sunday morning for their main church service. Lower class churches frequently have difficulties attracting members to church services in the morning, since lower class Pentecostals prefer evening services. An exception among middle class churches is La Puerta Abierta where the main service takes place in the evening.

occupies the position assigned to it due to a rational principle of organization. Order is experienced by the respondents, for instance, in good church administration, a clear assignment of responsibilities, and adherence to the official church schedules.[29] In the context of the church service, "order" means that the actions of individuals (pastors, musicians, ushers, audience etc.) correspond to an organized and coordinated structure. "Chaos", by contrast, is associated with a lack of organization: participants do what they want without a visible social coordination.

Hence, middle class interviewees prefer well-structured and organized church services. Activities such as singing, praying, and preaching are expected to be arranged in a serial, planned order in which they follow one another in time. A mixing of activities or different individuals involved in different activities simultaneously is experienced as chaotic. Interviewees pointed out that this type of chaos is somehow typical for many Pentecostal churches. According to them, church services should also have a clear assignment of tasks: the responsibilities for each task – music, preaching, praying, doormen, etc. – should be clearly assigned to specific members to avoid chaos. This concept of order also includes schedules. For some of the informants punctuality played an important role. According to these interviewees, church services should begin and end punctually and should not run on too long.

This sense of order is illustrated by Ana who dislikes a video of GIL. In this video participants of a GIL church service are simultaneously performing various activities such as singing, speaking to the pastor, blessing members, and praying. She describes what she sees as chaotic: every participant is doing something different. "Chaos" appears here as a lack of collective coordination.[30] Also Emilia argues that participants should always focus collectively on one activity at a time and then together begin the next activity. After watching a video from GIL she says:

> Emilia: I don't like the chaos. I don't like the music.
> Interviewer: The chaos?
> Emilia: The chaos. When people start walking around while other are praying.

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29   Claudia mentions, for instance, that due to a bad delegation of tasks there were no possibilities for growth in her old church. The pastor tried to accomplish all tasks but did not manage to conduct a sufficient Bible teaching (Interview Claudia Part 1). She refers to the concept of order by stressing in particular the delegation of tasks in the church service (Interview Claudia Part 1).

30   Interview Ana Part 1.

Interviewer: Why don´t you like it?

Emilia: Because, either they are walking around or they are praying. I don´t really know what they are doing. (…) I like it when we are singing or worshiping God, because we are more concentrated. Then we can go on to do something else. But I don't like it when the two things get mixed up. You see, that is another thing about Pentecostal churches that we don´t like. I mean, neither my husband nor my children like it; we agree on that. If you go to the church to hear a message, you just want to hear the message. You don't want others to be speaking to the right, then to the left. Or for them to open a door, close a door, come in, go out, pim pum pam (…).

INTERVIEW EMILIA

Middle class interviewees show a taste for order that conveys social coordination and promotes the idea that every practice has its properly assigned place and time. According to this taste, Pentecostals should not follow their spontaneous impulses during church services but rather orient themselves to the collective structure of the church service which assigns a place to every type of activity and expression. This preference for a well ordered and controlled practice of Pentecostalism also concerns expressivity during church services, a topic that will be addressed below.

The ideal of order also appears in reference to the sermon. According to middle class interviewees, sermons should be well structured and convey a clear message.[31] Eduardo is an example for this taste a structured style of preaching. He is a member of the mixed congregation *Buenas Nuevas* that offers each Sunday morning a church service more inclined towards the middle class and Sunday evenings a church service more inclined towards the lower class. He better prefers the style of the pastor who conducts the morning church service, Pastor Norberto, since he regards this pastor's style as much more structured than that of Pastor Moncho, the evening pastor:

Eduardo: I personally like Norbeto´s preaching and preparation, (…) more than Moncho´s.

Interviewer: What is the difference?

Eduardo: Moncho doesn't have official training. He doesn´t have a degree in theology. He preaches more in an inspirational way. Norberto is more of a teacher of the Word. (…) I don´t know if you studied theology, but when you put a sermon together, there is a technique, an order to it: an introduction…Moncho is more…his sermons don't have any order, and if

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31   See, for instance, Interview Susana.

you aren´t used to listening to him you get lost in what he is trying to say. Norberto is more organized; you have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It´s a different style.

INTERVIEW EDUARDO

Education is perceived by Eduardo as an element that facilitates an ordered sermon. Astonishingly, education is a subject that comes up with regard to almost every area of the church. For this reason, educational boundaries will be discussed in more detail in a separate section.

8.2.3   *Aspiring to Excellence in Music*

Middle class Pentecostals aspire to excellence. They do not want to practice their faith in a church that is mediocre. Churches are expected to strive for a high quality of religious practice. The demand for quality becomes particularly apparent with regard to the worship music.

The style and quality of music can differ significantly between Pentecostal churches. The middle class churches that I visited favor a quieter style of music consisting mainly of pop ballads and hymns. The musical style is overwhelmingly inspired by the Anglo-Saxon style of Christian pop music. Congregations tend to play songs from famous Christian composers and bands such as Marcus Witt, Hillsong, or Jesús Adrián Romero. Besides Christian pop music, hymns are a typical type of musical praise in middle class church services. Often songs form a mix of more classical hymns and pop music. In some churches bands also sometimes play jazz or classical music.[32] Songs generally praise the goodness of God, his unconditional love and the presence of Jesus, and announce one's love and adoration for God. Bands consist of trained musicians and include at least a piano, electro bass, guitar, drums, a singer, and three or four background singers. Very typical are also a saxophone player, a chorus of between seven and twelve singers, and sometimes other wind and string instruments.

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32   With regard to classical music, the opinions of middle class Pentecostals are divided. In some cases middle class Pentecostals are big fans of classical music and would like to listen mainly to classical music and hymns in their church services. This group forms a minority. The majority of middle class interviewees regard classical music as a good feature which should, however, not dominate the music during the church service. They welcom one or two pieces of classical music in the church service, while prefering pop music for the rest of musical contributions to the church service. Finally, another group of interviewees was against playing classical music in church services. They perceive classic music rather as a type of music for older people and prefer instead music that is more motivational.

Middle class congregations make use of sophisticated sound and music equipment and a sound engineer at the rear end of the church hall. Song texts are generally projected on a wall behind or beside the pulpit.

In many Pentecostal churches, especially those of the poorer suburbs of Buenos Aires, the equipment of the church band is significantly poorer and bands include fewer musicians and instruments. Sometimes they only have a simple stereo equipment and a keyboard, other times they have drums and a guitar along with the keyboard. The keyboard is the most prevalent instrument in these churches, such that even in bigger bands the keyboard playing Latin-American rhythms usually assumes the central role for the musical praise. Not only is the equipment poorer, but also the musicians tend to be less trained than in middle class churches. Consequently, the quality and style of music can differ significantly from that of middle class churches.

Middle class interviewees prefer churches that provide an excellent quality of music and dislike what they call a bad quality of music. Therefore, church musicians are expected to be skilled and well trained and to play harmonically without making mistakes. In order to have a professional quality, the equipment is also important. Thus, some interviewees argue that churches should be well equipped with sound systems and instruments.[33] Middle class interviewees also exhibit specific preferences concerning the type of music. *Cumbia* is not perceived as a type of music which enables devotees to be excellent. By contrast, middle class Pentecostals often experience it as a part of lower class culture which they reject. Hence, *cumbia* is regarded as a type of music that may be appropriate for lower class Pentecostals, but not for themselves. Instead, they prefer Christian pop music. Particularly Hillsong, Marcos Witt, and Jesús Adrián Romero have an appeal to middle class Pentecostals. Their music is described as harmonic and poetic. Miguel, for instance, argues after listening to a piece of music at GIL that this congregation has a poor quality of music. He likes the musical style of Hillsong and hates it when church musicians play *disafinado*, out of tune.[34] Carlos is also a fan of Hillsong, which he names as an example of excellent Christian music:

> (…) Hillsong for example. That is what captures the middle class – verses that are coordinated and thought out, with some element of poetry, and music that is much more thoughtful than "tachin, tapum, tachin tapum". That is what most appeals to the middle classes.
>
> INTERVIEW CARLOS

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33   See, for instance, Interview Emilia; Interview Eduardo.
34   Interview Miguel Part 2.

Christian pop music is not only seen as a more ordered ("coordinado") and harmonic style of music than the "tachin, tapum" of *cumbia* but also as more thoughtful ("pensado"). Moreover, Carlos considers this type of music as matching with the middle class.

In sum, middle class Pentecostals are not only located in other types of neighborhoods than the majority of Pentecostal churches, they also establish boundaries with regard to their organizational structure and infrastructure. They develop highly equipped and well administered facilities, offer a variety of activities and courses, a high quality of music and well-structured church services, as opposed to other Pentecostal churches that are often conceived of as poorly organized, unstructured, and lacking in quality. Structural and organizational boundaries are perhaps the most evident boundaries since they become visible in the infrastructure and organization of churches. Although they play an important role, they are not the most prominent boundaries. They rather seem to form basic conditions which middle class Pentecostals expect from their churches in an almost natural way.

8.3   Intellectual Refinement: Educational Boundaries

Among middle class Pentecostals there is a strong emphasis on education. Their level of education – as well as their educational aspirations – allows them to draw educational boundaries in opposition to other Pentecostals. References to education are ubiquitous in the interviews and appear with regard to almost every aspect of the church. The importance that middle class Pentecostals attribute to education and personal development becomes particularly apparent in the organization and infrastructure of their churches as well as in the style and content of the sermons.

8.3.1   *Educated Environments: Well Educated Pastors and Members*
Middle class Pentecostals want to be surrounded by an "educated" social environment. They expect education to play an important role in their churches. In particular, the education of the pastor as the head and representative of the congregation is conceived of as essential. Therefore, pastors of middle class churches are usually highly educated, with some of them holding PhD degrees. Further, they not only tend to be educationally well trained, but are often also integrated in some kind of evangelical educational facility as teachers or directors.

Many middle class interviewees evaluate the quality of pastors on the grounds of their educational achievements. According to these interviewees, pastors should have a good general education and theological training, whereas

pastors without theological training are suspected of making mistakes in the Bible teaching, the religious practices, and the management of the church. Specifically Pentecostal churches in the poor *conurbano* are thought to be led by pastors who lack a sufficient educational background.

Showing videos of healing practices and exorcisms from lower class churches to middle class interviewees, they argue that these churches are led by pastors lacking adequate education: this supposed lack would drive them to conduct dubious practices in their churches. Carlos' reasoning exemplifies the concept of pastoral education among middle class Pentecostals. The absence of education is seen as a strong disadvantage for the congregation and a potential threat for the Christian message and religious practice.

> In many Pentecostal churches, and outside the city in the provinces, this occurs a lot. They have experiences with God, and then it's over. They read the Word a little bit, and that's it. So they are becoming cults, forming congregations thinking that God speaks to them and that God controls them (…) and they are really doing a poor job, because when you got there, you realize that they don´t understand anything. They are so far away from the Word of God and the guidance that God offers us in the Bible, because of a lack of knowledge. "And because of ignorance, my people have perished," says the Word, and there is so much ignorance, in the Pentecostal church there is so much ignorance. Even though the new generations are changing a bit, it is still easier to experience God than to study the Word of God.
>
> INTERVIEW CARLOS

Carlos refers in particular to churches located on the poor outskirts of Buenos Aires as churches where pastors lack sophisticated education. For him, the quality of pastors and their religious practices depend strongly on their educational background: it is the educational level which decides the ability of pastors to conduct religious practices in an appropriate way. Further on, Carlos distinguishes between educated Pentecostalism and emotional Pentecostalism. In educated Pentecostalism, practices are based on knowledge whereas in emotional Pentecostalism pastors and members follow their feelings when performing religious practices.

> What [religious practice] is based on, now how it is done. It can be based on skill, experience and training. Or on feelings and emotions. This is the big difference. In the Pentecostal church, it is usually based on emotion.
>
> INTERVIEW CARLOS

Also Maria shows a critical attitude towards the education and performance of pastors in lower class neighborhoods. According to Maria, many Pentecostal pastors of lower class congregations are individuals who have achieved very little in their secular lives and are now striving for recognition through their religious activity. These pastors are thought to lack the necessary training and abilities that would prepare them for their task.[35]

Educational preparation is regarded as an essential condition for being a good pastor. The educational training of middle class pastors is positively distinguished from the supposed lack of education among pastors in lower class neighborhoods. In this way middle class Pentecostals draw a boundary between their style of Pentecostalism and the "uneducated" Pentecostalism of others. Education is an easily applicable resource for the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals since they themselves hold higher educational degrees than do lower class Pentecostals.

Interestingly, even the pastor's capacity to perform strong spiritual practices, which are usually perceived critically, is judged according to his educational attainment. Middle class Pentecostals claim that strong spiritual practices like exorcisms should be carried out with discretion in private places apart from the church service. But performing them privately is not the only condition that they mention. In addition, those who conduct these practices should be well trained. Only those who are intellectually trained are regarded as skilled enough to perform these practices in an appropriate manner. The following quote from an interview with Camila in which she refers to a video of an exorcism illustrates this position:

> There are some people who truly treat this with the seriousness that it deserves, but there are other people who have made this a circus. I reiterate that I do not agree with [the latter] and [I believe that] of course not only does a person have to be spiritually trained, but they also have to have the intellectual ability to know what they are dealing with.
> INTERVIEW CAMILA

Interviewees regard spiritual practices as sensitive procedures for which actors require intellectual and spiritual preparation.[36] However, strong spiritual practices

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35 Interview Maria Part 2.

36 See also, Interview Alejandra. Some interviewees add to this view on exorcisms that churches should offer a professional counseling service which accompanies individuals who are affected by some kind of secular or spiritual affliction. The objective would be a long-term change in the life style of the given individual. See, for instance, Interview Emilia.

are perceived as far less important by middle class interviewees than other practices. Pablo, for instance, claims that churches should not focus on spiritual manifestations but rather on teaching the gospel. Instead of conducting practices of *liberación* the church should be dedicated to Christian subjects and speak about God.[37] Spiritual practices tend to be portrayed if at all as secondary in importance, whereas the transmission and understanding of the Bible is supposed to stand at the forefront of the congregation's practice.

Finally, education plays an important role concerning peer members. Some of the middle class interviewees expressed the desire to have fellow members with a similar social background in their congregation. Those who mentioned this preference were members or ex-members of lower class churches in which they suffered from a lack of peers with similar cultural backgrounds. The lack of individuals with similar cultural backgrounds was experienced as a serious disadvantage since it meant for them also the absence of friendships within the congregation. One of these interviewees is Maria. She was once a member of a lower class church and experienced difficulties in establishing friendships within the congregation. A further reason to leave this church was that she did not want to raise her children in an environment which she describes as shaped by lower class problems.

> (…) I didn't like the Pentecostal church I went to very much because it was "so poor." (…) I didn't like it because (…) I couldn´t identify with the people. To give you an idea, the people who go to these churches are typically women who were either abused as girls, or had two or three husbands, or have children from different men. The problem with them is that their current boyfriends molest their daughters who are from different fathers. They usually work cleaning houses and their daughters stay at home with their drunken husbands. They are from a very low social class…I´m not trying to be disrespectful, I just mean that I didn´t have friends there. I saw that my daughters were going to grow up in that environment and that worried me. Or they had children that…you see I am a lawyer…they would come to me to get advice about their children who had gone to prison for theft. It´s a very low social class.
>
> INTERVIEW MARIA PART 2

A common educational background facilitates the sharing of many cultural habits and the formation of friendships within the congregation. Therefore, simply embracing an educated leadership and membership contributes to the

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37   Interview Pablo Part 2.

middle class appeal of middle class churches. Middle class Pentecostals want to practice their religion in an educated environment, an environment that is experienced as fundamentally different from that of the "uneducated" congregations in the *conurbano*.

8.3.2   *Seeking and Providing Education*

The appreciation of education also becomes evident regarding the educational ambitions of middle class Pentecostals. Middle class Pentecostals strive for spiritual and personal growth which they believe can be achieved through education. For this reason, many of the middle class informants have studied at theological institutes. Some of them even earned theological degrees while others took courses to deepen their theological knowledge. Frequenting Bible courses and undergoing theological training is often related to the ideal of personal development.[38] Camila, for instance, seeks development as she says: "I am searching for development, a devolopment in my relationship with God (…)." (Interview Camila)

The middle class churches that I studied also place a strong emphasis on education in their organizational offerings. Bible courses are a must. Some congregations collaborate closely with Bible institutes to develop their course program. In these courses, Pentecostals can study different topics concerning the Christian faith.

> The Iglesia Biblica Cristiana, for instance, offers courses on the life of Paul, the early years of Jesus, as well as training courses for future Sunday school teachers and personal counselors, and courses on what they call anthropological theology which are dedicated to self-discovery called "La persona que soy" ("The person that I am") and "Descubre tu camino" ("Find your way").

Other educational facilities that one can find in many middle class churches are Christian kindergartens and primary schools, and in some cases even secondary schools. Moreover, middle class churches offer Sunday schools for children and teenagers. For middle class congregations it appears to be an important feature to have their own educational facilities to which members can send their children. Another feature contributing to the educational aspirations of middle class churches is the book store. The book store sells aside

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[38] For instance, Mateo explains that he took a number of courses in his church in search for personal development (Interview Mateo).

from Bibles, music CDs, and the latest issue of *El Puente* or *El Corriente* a variety of evangelical books from Anglo-Saxon authors.[39] In this way, the educational aspirations become apparent in the form of organizational boundaries as discussed in the previous section.

8.3.3   *Educated Ways of Preaching: Education and Development in the Sermon*

The sermon is another aspect in which the aspiration for education becomes apparent. Middle class congregations place a strong emphasis on the sermon: the sermon is at the heart of the congregational practice and makes up by far the most important part of the church service. Sermons are generally longer, show a clearer structure, and engage a more intellectual style of preaching than in other Pentecostal churches.[40]

8.3.3.1   A Refined Style of Preaching

Preachers of middle class churches tend to make an erudite appearance during sermons. Many of them apply an almost academic style which makes the sermon resemble in extreme cases an academic lecture. Different techniques contribute to the erudite appearance of preachers and make their sermons appear more intellectual than those of other Pentecostal preachers.

First, the use of language differs from that of other preachers. Preachers speak in a clearly articulated Spanish without much of the typical *Porteño* accent. They often use refined vocabulary and more abstract terminology as well as loan words, particularly terms from ancient Greek and Hebrew. Further, preachers frequently apply metaphors.

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39   Some lower class churches also offer a bookstore-like facility. However, these facilities more often sell sweets, potato chips, and soft drinks than books. The few books that they offer tend to be older and often look like they have already spent a long time in the window display.

40   In many Pentecostal churches the structure of the sermon and the main message are often less evident for middle class observers. Shifts between different topics are frequent. Pastors may also switch between the oral discourse of the sermon and physical activities that involve the audience. They may ask the audience to repeat certain phrases or carry out specific activities after which they return to the oral discourse of the sermon. Thus, sermons tend to form a mix between the oral discourse of the pastor and physical activities integrating the audience. The oral discourse is in many churches shaped by the concepts of spiritual warfare and prosperity gospel. Often the focus of the sermon lies on improving daily life, which is supposed to be achieved by blessings of the supernatural, particularly miracles.

Second, preachers use references and side notes which show that they have command over a large amount of historical, scientific, and theological knowledge. They sometimes insert references to famous scholars, particularly philosophers, or theories. Providing background information is another important characteristic. Middle class preachers provide vast and concrete information about the historical context of the Bible story.

> An intrusive example for this tendency occurred in Iglesia del Libertador. Iglesia del Libertador is a middle class church located in an upper middle class neighborhood in the north of the city of Buenos Aires. During one sermon the preacher explained at length James Fowler's faith stage theory to his audience. He presented a detailed description and examples for each faith development stage. More frequently, preachers provide historical background information for a Bible reading. Pastor Mraida from the Iglesia del Centro, for instance, presented during a church service a lengthy explication of a Jewish purification ritual and provided the Hebrew word and a Spanish translation for each of the components of the ritual.

Third, middle class preachers tend to use techniques which transmit an image of exactitude and lend an almost scientific appearance to the sermon. For instance, sometimes preachers focus on one sentence from the Bible and compare different possible meanings of the sentence or a word in the sentence in order to discover the real meaning of the phrase. This technique suggests that the objective is to find the exact meaning of each phrase and not just to read the Bible. Moreover, it insinuates that the pastor exerts a distinguished and more sophisticated form of reading and interpreting the Bible.

Fourth, a controlled use of the voice transmits an image of being measured and thoughtful instead of being emotional. Middle class pastors generally preach in a quiet and controlled voice. They may raise the voice or speak faster in order to underline parts of their argument, but they usually abstain from shouting.

Fifth, preparation contributes to an image of professionalism. Some middle class preachers orient their sermon on notes that they prepared for the sermon. Several middle class preachers also apply modern technology in order to impart their message. They project central points of their message as an electronic presentation on the wall behind the pulpit. This method allows everyone to follow the central argument and creates a professional appearance.

Finally, their almost academic style is loosened by the use of humor and irony, often self-irony. Middle class pastors occasionally make jokes about themselves, the habits of Protestants, or Argentinean culture.

An important element of sermons is reference to the Bible. All middle class pastors I interviewed explained to me that a strong Bible basis was the central characteristic of their sermons. Therefore, during sermons there is an extensive usage of Bible references. Middle class preachers start their sermon with a comparatively long Bible passage. They read the Bible passage out loud, which may at the same time be projected on a wall behind the pulpit. After this, they begin with an interpretation of the Bible passage, relating it to everyday life. Finally, they end the sermon with some conclusions. In total, the Bible exegesis is an essential element of middle class sermons.

8.3.3.2 The Message of the Sermon: Personal Development and Assuming a Pro-Active Position

The ideal of education and development also appears as a topic in the content of sermons. The content of the sermon varies from church service to church service and tackles a wide variety of topics. Nevertheless, there are quite a few similarities in the discourse of middle class preachers. Common topics of sermons include moral improvement, personal development and self-realization, establishing a pro-active attitude, and improving society. These topics are often related to education and personal development.

Pastors frequently address the topic of personal development. In particular, the role of education, wisdom, and the necessity for self-improvement are stressed: faithful Christians should train themselves in order to be prepared for the challenges they face as Christians in modern society. Further, the idea of constant personal development is often combined with the concept of providence: God has a purpose for every individual and vests each individual with specific skills to fulfill this purpose. According to this view, one should train these skills in order fulfill one's divine purpose in the best possible way. It goes without saying that this discourse encourages continual self-improvement and the search for excellence.[41]

The "development discourse" also embraces the idea of moral development and improvement. Middle class pastors frequently stress the need to regret one's sins and to morally improve oneself. The moral discourse can be combined with the demand to be pro-active:[42] Christians should assume a pro-active posture

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41   For instance, the preacher from Iglesia Cristiana Biblica calls the audience to actively use the talents that God gave them and to multiply them (Iglesia Cristiana Biblica 10th April 2011). Additionally, for the idea of providence and action for God, see Iglesia Peniel: 1st May 2011.

42   The lack of Christian values and the existence of harsh inequalities and injustice are frequently criticized in middle class sermons. Preachers state that Christians should try to impact society and change it: they should shape society with their Christian values and behavior, instead of being shaped by society.

with regard to society and their own lives. In order to govern their lives and social environment pro-actively, pastors encourage them to develop their professional skills. Again, the importance of education and professional training becomes central.

> During a sermon in the Iglesia del Centro, Pastor Mraida points out that devotees have to assume responsibility for their lives and should act in a pro-active manner. Instead of stressing the possibility of divine interventions in support of devotees, he argues that devotees have to work out their lives and prepare themselves for the future. A central element of this preparation is lifelong learning. In some cases, pastors may even seek to transmit specific skills to their members, as in Iglesia del Centro where the pastor explains in a specific evening service how to plan, realize, and control the success of business projects.[43]

Hence, the discourse of middle class pastors stresses a specific range of values: self-realization, self-development, and pro-active attitudes that are closely related to education and learning. Christians are expected to fulfill God's purpose and to behave at the same time in a pro-active way by governing their lives and their social environment. Their strategy for achieving this goal is through education and training.[44]

8.3.4 *Education as a Resource for Middle Class Boundary Work*

Education is a highly valued good in the middle class. Drawing boundaries on educational grounds appears to be a typical characteristic of the middle class. Therefore, it is not surprising that middle class Pentecostals repeatedly refer to education and draw boundaries between the educational standards of their churches and the supposed lack of education in other Pentecostal churches, mainly those located in the poor neighborhoods of the *conurbano*. However, the intensity and frequency with which middle class Pentecostals refer to education is astonishing. Education plays a central role in many areas of the church. It is considered important with regard to the (secular) services of church (Bible courses, schools etc.), leadership, other members, spiritual practices, and the sermon.

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43   See sermons of Iglesia del Centro, 17th April 2011 and Iglesia del Centro 01st May 2011.

44   Nevertheless, middle class churches do not only emphasize this life. Salvation – or: the afterlife – is generally portrayed as the final destiny and objective of evangelical faith. Yet, salvation is not regarded as a question of achievement, but of predestination.

The strong emphasis which is placed on education may be due to the fact that the possession of and affinity for education constitutes a central boundary of the Argentinean middle class. Education is – by definition – an aspect that is more pronounced in the middle class. Being a resource that is "naturally" given in the middle class, it lends itself for drawing and underlining differences with regard to those who are perceived to be less educated or "ignorant", namely lower class Pentecostals.

8.4 Moderating the Spirits: Expressive Boundaries

> (…) the higher one's place in the status pyramid, the smaller the number of persons with whom one can be familiar, the less time one spends backstage, and the more likely it is that one will be required to be polite as well as decorous.
>
> GOFFMAN 1959: 133

> Plus la situation est tendue, formelle et plus le locuteur tente de se conformer au style (…) le plus légitime.
>
> LAHIRE 2001: 78

Expressive boundaries refer to the visible performances of participants and pastors during church services. Performing Pentecostalism in a less expressive and emotional way, middle class actors draw expressive boundaries. Their religious performances are marked by an adaptation to middle class standards of appropriate behavior. They seek to distinguish themselves from other Pentecostals whom they experience as uncontrolled, emotional, and noisy. Expressions of Pentecostalism which are experienced as potentially shameful are widely banned from the church service. The tendency for banning "inappropriate" aspects from the public sphere of the church service becomes apparent in the general atmosphere of church services and its spiritual practices, as will be shown in the following subsections.

8.4.1 *An Atmosphere of Good Behavior*

The ambience of Pentecostal church services in Latin America is widely known. Latin America's Pentecostal churches are notorious for their expressive and emotional atmosphere. Correspondingly, one can also witness a highly expressive emotional atmosphere in many of Argentina's Pentecostal churches which can become apparent in various ways: dancing, singing, shouting, crying, trembling, speaking loudly in tongues, and manifesting evil spirits. Church

services generally embrace a wide range of emotions from joy, happiness, contemplative moments, ecstasy, crying and relief. Particularly the musical praise is a moment of festivity and joy. The most popular styles of music are Christian rock and pop, *cumbia,* and folk music. The majority of songs are motivational and cheerful. The audience sings out loud, claps their hands, raises their arms, and may sometimes even dance or jump to the rhythms. Frequently, smaller churches provide rattles to their members with which they accompany the songs. These elements create an enormously festive and cheerful atmosphere.

> Songs frequently praise the power of the Holy Spirit and its coming ("Ven Espíritu!"), thank God for his support and call Him to heal, and celebrate the defeat of the Devil. A very typical song in lower class church services invites the participants to let the Holy Spirit flow and sings "Dejalo que se mueva, dejalo que se mueva, el Espíritu de Dios!" ("Let the Spitit move"). The song gets faster and louder with each refrain and ends in a speedy and loud sound to which people sing and dance.[45] In El Redentor, a lower class church located in a slum in the surrounding area of Buenos Aires city, the song was interpreted by the church band. The singer used a lot of gestures and moved the pulpit up and down like a rock singer while he sung in an emphatic voice. During the refrain he started to jump and suddenly danced with the pastor on the pulpit. The people in the audience also started to jump and dance. A bunch of elderly ladies ran to a free space in front of the pulpit in order to dance there. At the end of the song participants applauded and called out loudly in jubilation. The singer shouted into the microphone while music kept playing "Yes, lord! The Spirit of God is moving this night! The Spirit of God is moving this night! Umbababababababa [speaking in tongues] Uuhhhhhuuhhhhhh! Yes, lord! Yes, lord!" The audience exalted loudly and many participants raised pieces of cloth and swung them around like a flag.

Also during the sermon and prayers, there are different elements that contribute to the expressive atmosphere. The audience, for instance, may occasionally shout "Gloria!", "Amén!" or "Aleluya!" and raise their arms or the pastor may

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45   Other popular songs of lower class churches are, for instance, "Asi se alaba a Dios con mucha alegria y gozo!" or "Espíritu de Dios, llena mi vida, llena mi alma, llena mi ser, Espíritu de Dios llena mi iglesia, llena mis hermanos, llena mi ser, y llename, llename, llename con tu presencia, llename, llename, llename con tu dulzura, llename, llename, llename con tu poder, llename con tu poder." These songs, for instance, were played in a congregation of Centro Cristiano in a slum in the city of Buenos Aires. See video 7112 and 7133.

raise his voice strongly and start to shout. In particular, spiritual practices such as faith healing and prayers can be very expressive and lead to ecstatic states in which the audience speaks loudly in tongues, trembles, and may fall to ground. All these elements create an atmosphere that is highly expressive and often described as noisy by middle class Pentecostals.[46]

> A Pentecostal branch which had recently opened when I started my field research was Ministerio Apostólico Jesús Varón Guerra y Libertad. For this reason, I had the opportunity to accompany the church in its development. An old, sparsely decorated craft hall served as a temple for the small congregation. Between 10 and 40 members attended the church services regularly during my research. The atmosphere was always very lively, particularly during the praise when the pastor imitated Christian songs with cumbia and Carribean rhythms in a playback mode. During these moments the church converted into joyful celebration in which members sung loudly and danced through the hall. But also during sermons and prayers the atmosphere became emotional and expressive with members shouting repeatedly "Gloria!" ("Glory!") Preachers frequently engaged interactive elements in their sermons and asked the audience "Cuantos dicen gloria a Dios?" ("How many of you say > glory to God < ?") which was answered in a loud voice "Gloria a Dios!" ("Glory to God!") and then the pastor asked "Y a su pueblo?" ("And for his people?"), whereupon the participants shouted "Victoria!" ("Victory!"). This performance was repeated over and over again during sermons. The Holy Spirit was an important element in the sermon as well as in religious practices. Depending on the church service, strong spiritual manifestations and exorcisms took place. During prayers participants spoke loudly in tongues and trembled. At the end of the church service pastors laid hands on the foreheads of participants while some of them dropped to the ground.

By contrast, in middle class church services, the atmosphere tends to be different. Here, the audience manifests their emotions less openly. The general style of the church service is calmer, more sober and characterized by a limited degree of physical and emotional expression. During the music, members may sing and some may stand and raise their hands a bit. Yet, the general atmosphere remains comparatively quiet.

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46   Many middle class pastors described lower class Pentecostal churches as rather noisy.

> A very typical pop ballad for a middle class Pentecostal church, for
> instance, is "Canta al Señor toda la creación" by Danilo Montero. The song
> is a mix between a pop song and a very melodic hymn. The text praises
> God's majesty and power and announces an unlimited love for Him. This
> song is played, for instance, during a church service in the middle class
> church Iglesia del Libertador: the song is interpreted by a band that con-
> sists of the main singer, two background singers and a small choral group,
> a drummer, a guitarist, a bassist and a saxophonist. The singer, a young
> man dressed in casual clothing, stands at the pulpit and sings in a calm
> voice while he sways slowly to the rhythm of the music. The vast majority
> of audience sits on their places and quietly listens to the music, whereas
> only a very few participants stand up and sing. Some among them very
> cautiously raise an arm while they sing. The atmosphere is very con-
> trolled and appears to be almost stiff.

In the rare cases that they say "Amén" or "Gloria a Dios" ("Glory to God!"), par-
ticipatns pronounce these exclamations in a much softer and discrete voice. At
the same time, the audience shows lower degrees of physical and emotional
involvement. States of ecstasy are widely absent. Participants do not tremble,
speak loudly in tongues, or drop to the ground. They control and limit their
physical gestures and expressions. Not only participants but also pastors limit
their expressiveness. Pastors do not yell or speak in tongues, and seem to avoid
strong emotions. There appears to be a non-verbalized consensus about the
limits and appropriate forms of physical expression during the church service.
This consensus prohibits "outbursts" and "uncontrolled" behavior and limits
the expressivity to a certain level and to specific contexts. Interestingly, Pastor
Oscar stresses the importance of free expression during church services: devo-
tees should be free to express themselves as they want.[47] Yet, at the same time
he points out that the church wants to maintain "a certain image" with regard
to church visitors who do not form part of the congregation. Therefore, his
congregation would not encourage *desbordes* (exaltations) – such as shouting
or people dropping to the ground – as they use to happen in many Pentecostal
churches:

> If we conduct religious practices where we think people may fall down or
> manifest the Spirit in some way, we do it after the service, not during the

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service. This is to prevent projecting a certain image to people who are not part of the congregation. We don't pray all together, but we do say, 'We are going to pray for each other,' and you'll hear the person next to you praying quietly. In Pentecostal churches, people yell, there are very dramatic expressions of the Spirit. But these transgressions, so to speak, wouldn't occur in our church.

Charismatic practices that may disturb other visitors of the church are not carried out during the church service but in specific spaces apart from the church service. By separating potential *desbordes* from the public sphere of the church service, the congregation wants to maintain a "certain image", an image of order and respectability.

The quotes from Pastor Oscar illustrate that the risk of outsiders, non-Pentecostal class peers, entering the scene is always present in the mindset of the congregation. It does not matter if an outsider is really present. The possibility of an outsider paying a visit is sufficiently worrying. Middle class Pentecostals do not want to be caught unawares when performing inappropriate practices. For this reason, they have to be prepared for potential visits and orient their religious performance to standards of appropriate behavior. It seems like the non-Pentecostal class peer is experienced as always being present and judging the appropriateness of the behavior of its class peers.

However, not only the potential presence of non-Pentecostal peers leads to the adoption of a socially more acceptable style. Also the preferences that many middle class Pentecostals communicate lead in this direction. Interviewees explained to me that they prefer a calm atmosphere during church services. They dislike the loud atmosphere and shouting which many of them have already experienced personally in other Pentecostal churches. Some of the informants state that they would not affiliate with a congregation in which the pastor or members shout. Other interviewees relate shouting to the effervescence of emotions of which they disapprove. Emotions are regarded skeptically. Middle class Pentecostals appear to dislike the open manifestation of emotional states in the church service. Real faith is described as something different from human emotionality. Luis, for instance, claims that faith should not be an emotion but a conviction:

I don't like it when things get overly emotional, when faith becomes something emotional, I don't like it. Faith should be a conviction in my life, in my thoughts.

It seems like Christian faith is perceived as something that should be practiced in a rational rather than an emotional manner. Emotions tend to be rejected in the statements of middle class interviewees.[48] Middle class Pentecostals appear to prefer the exclusion or at least subordination of emotions in the congregational practice.

Moreover, middle class respondents who are affiliated with socially mixed congregations do not welcome the expressive style of some of their fellow members. They perceive an expressive style as the attempt of fellow members to publicly simulate a personal relationship with God. The rejection concerns physical expressions such as dancing, raising arms, and shouting exclamations like "Gloria a Dios!" and "Amén!". Participants, by contrast, should rather limit their expressions, according to the view of middle class interviewees. One example is Fabian. He participates in a mixed church and dislikes the expressive style of some of his fellow members. According to Fabian, devotees should not dance in the Spirit in public. He prefers that they express these forms of adoration privately.[49] Another example is Eduardo. Although he does not claim that it is wrong to be expressive, he dislikes other believers around him being very expressive.[50] Therefore, he depreciates the the shouting of expressions such as "Gloria a Dios!" in Pentecostal church services. There is a general rejection of expressive religious styles which is shared by most of the middle class interviewees.

But there are also exceptions. Isabella, a member of AC, stated that she prefers a more expressive style of worship. She would like her congregation to be more expressive. She describes her peer members in AC as restraining the Spirit:

> Look, when someone says that he is Pentecostal he lets the power and the joy of the Holy Spirit flow…I would say that here, at this church, Assembly of Christ, there is little flowing. I mean, it's not because of the Holy Spirit. It's just that people here are stiff, cardboard almost, very 'I'm not going to open up, because the person next to me will look at me and say, 'What's wrong with you?' (…) Why do they have to have their hands in their pockets, their mouths closed, and with an expression on their face that makes you think, 'Wow, he's really into it,' 'Ahhh yes, because the Lord…' with their foreheads and faced scrunched up. (…) Don't sing too loud, you

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48   See also Interview Mateo.

49   Interview Fabian.

50   Interview Eduardo.

> shouldn't be too jubilant, you shouldn't clap too much, you shouldn't yell (ahhh). It looks bad, you shouldn't jump.
>
> INTERVIEW ISABELA PART 1

Although she exhibits in other parts of the interviews a very critical position towards the spiritual manifestations, she states here that she would prefer her congregation to be more Pentecostal in its religious expression. She regards her peer members as limiting their expressions and abstaining from practices that "*queda mal*" (make a bad impression) due to the fear of being perceived as strange or inappropriate by their peers. Being fed up with this type of acting, she criticizes her peer members for exercising self-control from which she wants to break away. The case of Isabela shows that middle class Pentecostals may also suffer from the social constraints which control and limit the expressivity of their religious practice. Nevertheless, being a member of AC, Isabela adapts herself to its modalities of expression. Even she reports to limit her expressions in the church service of AC and to behave in a more expressive way when visiting other churches outside the city of Buenos Aires. The case of Isabela indicates that middle class devotees do not necessarily practice Pentecostalism according to their personal affinities but adapt their religious expressions within the sphere of the middle class church service to what they believe others will regard as appropriate.

The majority of middle class Pentecostals adapt themselves to a less expressive style. Most respondents describe their own religious style, in comparison to the style of other Pentecostals, as rather quiet and calm. They state that they neither shout, nor raise their arms or dance.[51] The comments from an interview with Pedro illustrate the widespread disapproval of an expressive style of Pentecostalism. He describes himself as rather reserved and dislikes manifesting his relationship with God publicly in front of other individuals. He prefers, instead, having an intimate and private relationship with God.

> It seems excessive to me, raising your hands, kneeling, or praying in a loud voice (…) Personally, I don't feel comfortable when things like that are happening around me, because it's just a question of preference. I am a little more private, more reserved. I try to have a relationship with God, and I don't have any reason to display it to the person next to me. I don't like it; it's what makes me uncomfortable…but I'm in no place to judge anyone.
>
> PEDRO 00:26:54-00:29:10-6

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51 Three examples are Ana, Nadia and Miguel (Interview Ana Part 1, Interview Nadia, Interview Miguel Part 2).

This unease with publicly expressing one's relationship with God is shared by the majority of my middle class respondents. Intimacy and discretion play a central role in their religious tastes and practices. The church service is not experienced as the appropriate sphere to express emotions and a personal relationship with God. For this reason, many of them prefer to have small groups or personal meetings with their pastor in which they can express themselves and discuss their problems in a more discrete environment.

Middle class churches may offer specific physical or temporal spaces in which a higher degree of emotion and expressivity is accepted. Middle class pastors informed me, for instance, that they would carry out exorcisms, if necessary, in more intimate spaces apart from the church service. Another environment that offers a space for more emotional and physical expressions are smaller church groups. Some churches offer, for instance, "camps" in which a group of members assembles to spend a weekend together in a closed location outside the city of Buenos Aires. Interviewees described these surroundings as emotionally more intense. However, during the church service there are also particular moments that are more intense. This is specifically the case at the end of the service. Some middle class churches perform a prayer and sometimes a laying on of hands at the end of the church service. This is generally the moment in the church service that most encourages an emotional and/or spiritual experience and provides a context in which participants can express their emotions more openly. Yet, also during this moment emotional and physical expressions remain much more limited than in other churches.[52] The audience acts calmly. Participants do not shout, tremble, or show any other

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52   An exception is the church Iglesia Peniel. While the general style of the church service is calm and resembles that of other middle class churches, there is a specific moment that sometimes occurs at the beginning of church services. This moment provides a context that allows members to express their emotions. It starts at the end of the musical praise: while the music plays and a large part of the congregation stands in front of the pulpit, individual members go up to the stage and declare their problems. During this practice they may shout and cry. This contributes to a highly emotional atmosphere. After this moment, the sermon begins and the atmosphere becomes totally quiet. No one shouts "Gloria a Dios" or other expressions. The church service creates a specific space for the expression of emotions, while the rest of the church service is dominated by a style that one can also observe in other middle class churches. According to members of the churches, this moment happens without planning and only very rarely when members feel the need to express their grievances. The existence of this practice appears to be encouraged by the fact that Iglesia Peniel is a more closed community and perceived by members as a more intimate space than other churches. Here members feel encouraged to express emotions that they would otherwise only express in small groups.

type of pronounced physical and emotional involvement. They stand quietly. Some among them raise their arms or go to the pulpit to kneel and pray. A few among them may cry quietly on their own.

> However, there were also exceptions of single individuals who were more devoted than the general audience. I observed one of these exceptions in a branch of the Asambleas de Dios in Flores (on San Pedrito Avenue), a congregation with around 400 active members mostly from middle class neighborhoods in and around the district of Flores. The atmosphere was generally rather quiet during the church service and only a few members spoke quietly in tongues. But one member stood out during my observations: he spoke loudly in tongues during prayers and his loud interjections of "Gloria!" and "Amén!" during the sermon seemed to irritate some of his fellow members. His actions stood in contrast to the general behavior of the audience and illustrated the type of behavior that was perceived as normal in this middle class church. After the sermon I approached him and found out that he was from a slum where his main church was located. Thus, his noticeable actions during the church service may be related to the fact that he was affiliated with a different branch of Asambleas de Dios in a very poor neighborhood that probably performed a different style of Pentecostalism. His way of acting exemplifies the contrast between the "inappropriate" style of Pentecostalism and middle class Pentecostalism.
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> I made similar observations with middle class Pentecostals in lower class churches. In one case I visited a lower class church in the surroundings of Buenos Aires city together with two middle class Pentecostals who were affiliated with different churches. A lower class Pentecostal who was a friend of a friend of these two middle class Pentecostals and a member of the church had invited us to visit his church. Thus, we participated one Sunday evening in the service. While he and the majority of the audience were engaged in the repetition practices the pastor was asking them to carry out, the two middle class Pentecostals were much more reluctant to perform the repetition practices and to show any sign of emotional involvement. They refused to perform the repetition practices and showed no emotional expression while the audience was clapping their hands loudly and exclaiming "Gloria!".

Altogether, physical and emotional devotion tends to be less pronounced than in other Pentecostal churches. One can observe a more controlled type of Pentecostalism. Participants appear to control and limit their physical gestures

and expressions. There seems to be a non-verbalized consensus regarding the limits of physical expression. This consensus prohibits "outbursts" and "uncontrolled" behavior and limits expressivity to a certain level and to specific contexts. Nonetheless, participants' emotions can be expressed in specific moments of the church service if they remain controlled and limited. "Uncontrolled" emotions and "outbursts", instead, are banned from the public sphere of the church service and are delegated to the private sphere. The privatization of "inappropriate practices" will be discussed in the next subsection.

8.4.2   *Restraining the Spirit*

One of the central characteristics of Pentecostalism is its emphasis on the Holy Spirit and its gifts. The emphasis on the Spirit can express itself in a variety of practices during the church service. The most important among them are perhaps the speaking in tongues, faith healing, and exorcisms.[53] Yet, these practices are widely absent in the services of middle class congregations. In fact, the performance of these practices is often not very welcome in the public sphere of the church service.[54] Spiritual practices that are strongly rejected are public exorcisms and other types of spiritual warfare. Middle class Pentecostals have an ambivalent relationship with regard to spiritual warfare. Pastors of middle class congregations believe and support the concept of spiritual warfare.[55] Although they seem to be comfortable with the concept of spiritual warfare, references to evil forces are almost entirely absent in their church services.[56] Moreover, middle class pastors reject the performing of exorcisms during church services as scandalous and unaesthetic. In their view, churches should protect the privacy of their members and remove them in the case of a demonic

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53   See Anderson 2004: 30; Chesnut 1997: 6, 47; Corten 1995: 10–12, 153–154; Freston 1998: 340; Mariz 1994: 67; Lehmann 2003: 479; Luca 1999a: 9–10; 2008b: 29–30; Parker 1996: 142; Schäfer 1998: 67; 2009: 567; Wynarczyk et al. 1995: 7–8.

54   Middle class churches do not seek to spur manifestations of the Spirit nor miracles during their church services. This attitude includes faith healing the speaking in tongues. Practices involving the idea of spiritual healing are limited to prayers and the laying on of hands at the end of church services.

55   Interview Pastor David; Interview Pastor Alejandro.

56   Only very rarely – if at all – do pastors mention demons or Satan and call to fight these forces. Moreover, many middle class informants reject the overuse of references to demons and Satan. According to them, God should rather stand in the center of the church service instead of malicious spirits. One of those who criticize the overuse of these references is Marta. She argues that Pastor Juan Crudo attributes too much importance to Satan and demons (Interview Marta Part 2).

manifestation from the public sphere of the church service into a more intimate space.[57]

Lay members of Pentecostal churches also adopt a very critical attitude towards exorcisms in church services. I showed different videos of exorcisms and healing practices to middle class interviewees. The reactions to these videos were negative, ranging from rejection through indignation to laughing and mocking the way in which these practices are carried out. These practices are not perceived as appropriate in relation to wider society. Middle class Pentecostals argue that they cannot bring non-Pentecostal friends or neighbors to such church services without feeling ashamed and being described as insane. Thus, there is a demand to adapt Pentecostalism to social norms of appropriateness and decent behavior. Pentecostalism is requested to adapt to forms of expression that are experienced as acceptable by peers. According to these demands, the church service should be performed in a way that is also perceived by non-Pentecostal peers as appropriate and convenient. Expressions and practices that do not fit this condition are moved to a more isolated, private sphere.

Also with respect to the integrity and intimacy of the individual, middle class Pentecostals claim that these practices should be carried out in separate spaces. They argue that performing exorcisms in the public sphere of the church service could expose and humiliate the affected individual. In order to protect the dignity of the individual, interviewees want these practices to be carried out in a more private context. Maria expresses dissatisfaction while watching a video of a GIL exorcism. She describes the event as a show. Instead of drawing the public attention to the spiritually afflicted individual, she would try to withdraw him/her from the public scene of the church service.[58] Exposing the person in this state to the public is perceived as a humiliation. In order to avoid situations of exposing a possessed individual to the public and letting him/her potentially face public humiliation, respondents prefer exorcisms to be practiced in a discrete manner in private places.

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57   Pastor Oscar, for instance, believes that exorcisms during the service would be scandalous and affect the orderliness of the service (Interview Pastor Oscar Part 2). Pastor Alejandro fears that public exorcisms could affect the person's dignity and would turn into a show (Interview Pastor Alejandro). Besides the intimacy of the individual, Pastor Manuel also names aesthetic and spiritual reasons. Yet, performing an exorcism in public is not only regarded as unaesthetic and unethical but also as spiritually dangerous (Interview Pastor Manuel).

58   Interview Maria.

Middle class Pentecostals are not only reluctant with regard to exorcisms but also with respect to other practices involving the Holy Spirit. Another practice that is strongly questioned is the display of miracles during church services. Although middle class Pentecostals do not reject the sharing of narrative testimonies, they disagree with demonstrating miracles during church services. Comments that I received on a video showing faith healing practices in GIL illustrate this preference. In this video, GIL pastors announce that miracles have occurred. They show the healed individuals to the audience and relate their emotional states to the public. Watching this video, Pedro disapproves of the form in which the testimonies are presented. He dislikes the fact that pastors narrate the miracles and the emotions of the individuals in question.[59] Interviewees prefer instead a Pentecostalism in which miracles assume a less prominent place and in which miracles are sought and communicated in a discrete, less noisy form.

In contrast to middle class congregations, in many other Pentecostal churches manifestations of the Holy Spirit are more welcome since they are usually conceived of as a demonstration of the spiritual authority of the congregation. Consequently, manifestations of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual practices related to it such as speaking in tongues, faith healing practices, and exorcisms are more prevalent than in middle class congregations. The public practice of exorcisms, however, is not a general characteristic of Pentecostal churches. Some Pentecostal churches emphasize exorcisms and other techniques for spiritual healing whereas other churches perform these practices only occasionally during church services or in smaller groups. These practices are thought to help overcome different kinds of suffering.[60]

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59   Interview Pedro.

60   Middle class sermons also address the topic of suffering. Yet, the topic of suffering is tackled in a different way than in other churches. While many Pentecostal churches normally present suffering as the product of a spiritual affliction which can and should be solved by divine intervention, some middle class pastors paint a different picture of suffering. These preachers do not deny that God may help the individual to overcome his/her suffering. But they tend to describe suffering and problems as a normal part of empirical existence and more particularly as something that may fulfill a divine purpose in the life of the individual. A pastor preaches, for instance, during a Sunday church service in Comunidad Cristiana that Christians should not be afraid of suffering: suffering will come one day or another and help the individual to experience and purify him-/herself, while the love of God would allow the individual to support the suffering and even to relax in the middle of his/her problems (Comunidad Cristiana 29th May 2011). Also, a preacher in Iglesia del Libertador explains that the diseases from which he suffers are a divine purpose which allow him to strengthen his faith (Iglesia del Libertador 05th June 2011). Suffering is

Following an invitation, I visited a branch of "Iglesia Evangelica Misionera" in a lower class neighborhood outside Buenos Aires in Villa Lanus Oeste. The congregation in Villa Lanus Oeste had around 200 active members. Church services took place mainly at night and started generally with cheerful pop and folk music to which people would raise their arms, sing and sometimes dance. Lay members were actively integrated in church services by leading prayers and making announcements. The atmosphere was expressive: prayers were very intense and people spoke powerfully in tongues. For one Sunday night service, the congregation had invited a travelling apostle who performed a wide variety of healing practices and miracles. One of these healing practices concerned the change of dental fillings in the mouth of the participants through a prayer. Participants were asked to stand in front of the pulpit and to put their hands on their mouths. The apostle started praying intensely. During his prayers he yelled occasionally in a loud and screechy voice demanding God to change the cheap fillings into fillings of gold and silver, repeating over and over again: "Muela de plata, muela de oro, Se realiza. Se realiza. Se realiza. Ahora!" ("Silver inlays, gold inlays: they become reality. They become reality. They become reality. Now!") The majority of the audience prayed with him. Many of them trembled and spoke in tongues while pressing their hands strongly on their mouth. After the apostle stopped praying many participants seemed to be still in a state of ecstasy. The apostle called each individual who had cheap fillings to come to the front where he checked with a flashlight whether the fillings had changed to silver or gold. On many occasions he announced that the fillings had changed, showing it to other participants while the audience applauded cheerfully. Other healing practices and miracles were concerned with quitting smoking, a rain of gold and diamonds from the ceiling, and healing from physical illness. The congregation had announced this event as

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described as a test ("prueba") and an experience which helps to develop one's character and relationship to God. Hence, God is portrayed as not always relieving devotees from their afflictions. Suffering is conceptualized as forming part of empirical life. This approach changes the focus from overcoming suffering to dealing with suffering. For dealing with suffering, particularly its acceptance as a divine purpose may provide some relief, while the hope of overcoming the suffering is not totally eradicated. The objective is to find one's peace and personal equilibrium despite suffering from an affliction. Although middle class preachers seek to impart a meaning to suffering, they may also apply spiritual practices which address the suffering. While they publically abstain from practices of faith healing and exorcism to address these problems, they use prayers to deal with illness and suffering.

the night of miracles. The small church building was completely full with more than 200 visitors, many of them standing outside to watch through the door to the church. Despite the fact that this event was not a daily one, participants were familiar with the ideas and practices and actively engaged in them. Spiritual practices of this kind would be hard to imagine in the middle class congregations of my sample.

While strong spiritual practices are generally conceived of as inappropriate by middle class Pentecostals, there are some spiritual practices which they accept. This is the case with a spiritual practice that respondents watched in one of the videos during the interview. The video shows a spiritual activity at the end of an AC church service. In this video AC members approach the pulpit where they kneel down in order to pray. They are attended by pastors and *obreros* who speak or pray quietly with them. Meanwhile, a soft pop ballad is played and the rest of the congregation stand in the back at their places and listen to the music and/or sing.

   Middle class interviewees described this practice with very positive adjectives. Many approved of the fact that participants and their problems are not displayed in public but treated discretely in a more intimate and respectful atmosphere during this practice. Susana, for instance, likes the practice of AC because the attention is not drawn to the devotees who pass to the front for a prayer. Instead, pastors and *obreros* attend each person individually while the rest of the congregation is focused on the music.

> Interviewer: Why does it seem nice to you?
> Susana: Because they go up front, and if you compare it with our way, they go to the front and pray calmly, speak intimately with God. It seems like…and there is the pastor to help them, who prays for them. It seems like they are in a relationship with God. It doesn't look like they are trying to show off or attract attention. Meanwhile everyone is singing, so people's attention isn't focused on those who are up front. People keep praying, worshipping, while those who need to go up front and pray.
> INTERVIEW SUSANA

The practice is perceived as more authentic and less exaggerated than the healing practices and exorcisms. Pedro indicates that he likes this type of practice because there is no exaggeration or show. He regards it as a more natural, more human type of spiritual practice.[61] The practice shown in the video can

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61   Interview Pedro.

be understood as a functional equivalent to the practices of faith healing and
exorcisms that are carried out in other Pentecostal churches. Although acting
as a functional equivalent for the unpopular spiritual practices, this practice is
described in widely different terms than the exorcisms and faith healing prac-
tices in GIL. The activity in AC is not only experienced as positive, but is the
video that middle class interviewees most appreciate among all the videos
which I showed to them during the interview. They attribute positive charac-
teristics such as intimacy, authenticity, and respect to the activity shown in the
video. The activity combines a rather sober and controlled but still emotional
style with a spiritual practice. In this way it is experienced by middle class
interviewees as a more decent practice which does not – in contrast to many
other spiritual practices – overstep the limits of appropriateness. To remain
within the limits of appropriateness appears to be an essential criterion for
middle class Pentecostals. If activities run the risk of crossing the limits of
appropriateness, they are removed to the back area, a more private sphere.
This appears to be the case with glossolalia, for instance.

Glossolalia is rarely practiced in middle class churches and if so, then only
quietly. It is difficult – if not almost impossible – to observe middle class
Pentecostals speaking loudly in tongues. Again, the social acceptability of the
activity plays a role. Some middle class interviewees mention that it may be
perceived as strange by new visitors if people spoke loudly in tongues during
the church service.[62] Yet, middle class Pentecostals believe in the gifts of the
Spirit and in particular in the gift of tongues. Interestingly, the majority of my
middle class informants mentioned that they had experienced the gift of
tongues.

The affinity for glossolalia appears to be as prevalent among middle class
Pentecostals as among other Pentecostals. Nevertheless, middle class Pente-
costals abstain from speaking loudly in tongues during the church service.
Those who speak in tongues during the church service mentioned that they do
so very quietly and speak more loudly in tongues when they pray at home.
Others abstain directly from speaking in tongues during services and reserve
this practice for the private sphere. Camila, for instance, prefers to speak loudly
in tongues at home but not in the congregation.

> (…) speaking in tongues (…) is more of a personal thing with God than
> something to display in public. Yes, I believe that people can speak in
> tongues when you are worshipping, when you are in intimate prayer with

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62   See, for instance, Interview Alejandra Part 2.

> God, that the Spirit can move you to say different things. But that is some-
> thing between you and God, not a circus act. (…) I like to talk to God
> when I'm in the shower, when I'm drinking mate, when I get angry.
>   INTERVIEW CAMILA

The affinity that many middle class Pentecostals have for glossolalia is not
expressed in the congregational practice of Pentecostalism. There is a differ-
ence between the religious tendencies of middle class Pentecostals and the
style of their public religious practice. Middle class Pentecostals face the need
to suppress their tendencies in order to create a legitimate and appropriate
practice of Pentecostalism in the public sphere. They create a Goffmanian
front region from which they ban the inappropriate practices.[63] Middle class
Pentecostals separate the private sphere from this front region – the public
sphere of the church service.[64]

More private contexts separate from the church service appear to form a
kind of back region where "the performer can relax: he can drop his front, forgo
speaking his lines and step out of character." (Goffman 1959: 112) Socially
unadapted practices are realized in the private sphere, the back region.

Besides the congregation, particularly pastors and *obreros* are responsible
for the impression management. They act as directors of the "performance" by
controlling the scene in the front region. In the case of violations against the
principles of appropriate conduct, pastors or *obreros* reprimand the individual
in question. Thus, in cases of strong spiritual manifestations, manifesting par-
ticipants are taken out and brought to a more intimate back space within the
church.[65] Pastors and members strive to maintain a certain image during the
church service, whereas the private sphere becomes a space for more intense
Pentecostal practices.

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63   See Goffman 1959. Goffman writes: "If an individual is to give expression to ideal standards
      during his performance, then he will have to forgo or conceal action which is inconsistent
      with these standards. When this inappropriate conduct is itself satisfying in some way, as
      is often the case, then one commonly finds it indulged in secretly (…)." (Goffman 1959: 41).

64   Lahire, in contrast, distinguishes between "marchés francs" and "marchés tendu" : "Les
      marchés tendus imposent de la mise en forme, de la preparation, du calcul, de l'attention,
      du soin, du souci, etc." (Lahire 2004/2006 : 632). He supposes that the difference between
      lower and higher social classes is that the latter are more frequently involved in the
      "marchés tendus". See Lahire 2004/2006: 632.

65   Individuals who cross the limits of appropriate behavior – by speaking loudly in tongues
      for instance – may be sanctioned as the example of the pastor from AC illustrates who
      approaches participants that speak in tongues.

8.4.3   *Towards a de-Pentecostalized Style of Pentecostalism*

Analyzing the style of middle class congregations, one may question if this style is still Pentecostal. In fact, the style of middle class churches appears to be significantly less Pentecostal than the typical model one has in mind when thinking about Latin American Pentecostalism. Some of the characteristics that are often associated with Pentecostalism, such as the expressivity, emotionality, festivity, and the presence and practice of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are absent or only weakly developed. There appears to be a de-Pentecostalization of middle class Pentecostalism. When concerning the style of middle class church services, one may perhaps presume that middle class Pentecostals reject the typical Pentecostal beliefs in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, this is not the case. As was discussed above, middle class Pentecostals believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, demons, exorcisms, and faith healing.

Yet, these beliefs become – if at all – only marginally visible in the religious practices during church services. Instead, middle class churches seek to ban spiritual practices from the church service. There is a difference between the beliefs and the public practices of middle class Pentecostals. Despite professing Pentecostal beliefs they abstain from fully practicing them. Rephrasing Grace Davie's popular "believing without belonging", one could describe the attitude of middle class Pentecostals as a "believing without public practice".[66] The reason for this appears to be their attachment to the middle class representations. Their attachment to middle class representations of the appropriate leads them to draw boundaries in opposition to their popular religious roots and to abstain from "inappropriate" Pentecostal practices. In consequence, the public practice of Pentecostalism constitutes a compromise between popular religion (Pentecostalism) and middle class representations, converting Pentecostalism into a more appropriate – and less Pentecostal – religious practice.[67]

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66   See Davie 1994.

67   The religious taste of middle class Pentecostals indeed rejects many of the characteristics of popular religion, particularly the expressivity and focus on life improvement. Nevertheless, there still seems to be a strong link between the middle class taste and popular religion. The relationship of the middle class to popular religion is ambivalent: while they tend to reject many of the expressions of popular religion in the context of the church service, they do not neglect them in their beliefs and private religious practice. First, middle class Pentecostals remain attached to the holistic worldview since they believe in supernatural intervention, spiritual gifts and demonic possessions. Second, they believe in and seek miracles and some of them speak in tongues or even conduct exorcisms in their private sphere. Hence, rather than a total rejection of popular religiosity, they exhibit a taste that splits their religious practice into a non-popular public practice of religion and a private practice of religion which can assume popular elements.

The "inappropriate" aspects of Pentecostalism to which middle class Pentecostals remain attached are transferred to the private sphere. Their Pentecostal identity becomes partly privatized. The private sphere constitutes an intimate sphere which protects middle class Pentecostals from the threatening glances of class peers. In private they are not at risk of being embarrassed and losing face. Therefore, the private sphere provides a space to break away from the social conventions of the middle class and the pressure to behave appropriately. Here, middle class Pentecostals can dedicate themselves – without feeling compromised – to what is regarded elsewhere as "inappropriate". Yet, it is hard to know to what extent middle class Pentecostals engage in the "inappropriate" aspects of Pentecostalism in their private sphere. Even though there is some evidence for the presence of stronger Pentecostal practices in the private sphere of middle class Pentecostals – several interviewees stated that they dedicate themselves to stronger spiritual practices, such as speaking in tongues, in private – it is difficult to estimate to what degree they relax from the middle class representations in the private sphere. In order to study this question, a comprehensive study in its own right would be necessary.

In sum, the differentiation between public and private practice can be interpreted as a strategy of middle Pentecostals to solve the conflict between their attachment to popular religion and the representations of the educated middle class. The more visible public practice adapts to the representations of appropriateness, whereas the private sphere is the arena in which middle class Pentecostals permit the "inappropriate" aspects of their religiosity to take effect. More intense Pentecostal practices preferably take place in the private sphere.

8.5   Authenticity, Respectfulness and Selflessness: Moral Boundaries

Analogous to the results from Lamont's study about the U.S. American and French upper middle class,[68] Argentinean middle class Pentecostals draw moral boundaries. Moral boundaries are boundaries that refer to the morality of actors. Creating moral boundaries means attributing specific moral qualities to oneself and different moral qualities to the other from whom one seeks distinction.[69] Middle class Pentecostals emphasize a range of moral values such as authenticity, honesty, respectfulness, selflessness, freedom, and autonomy. By stressing these values they insinuate, directly or indirectly, that other Pentecostals often lack these qualities.

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68   See Lamont 1992.
69   See Lamont 1992: 4.

Remarkably, when drawing moral boundaries, middle class Pentecostals do not refer to the ascetic lifestyle which is often seen as a characteristic of Pentecostalism. As was suggested by different scholars, middle class Pentecostals are less strict in their lifestyle and withdraw from the puritan moral rules, that included, among other characteristics, a strong control of the physical appearance.[70] Even though Argentinean middle class Pentecostals are committed to a less ascetic and rather worldly lifestyle which may embrace fashionable clothing, football, and even alcohol consumption, they do not depreciate the ascetic lifestyle of other Pentecostals. This may be due to the fact that a highly ascetic Pentecostalism is not very visible in Buenos Aires. The majority of medium-sized and larger churches in Buenos Aires do not impose draconian moral rules on their members. Therefore, a less ascetic lifestyle is not a unique characteristic of middle class congregations but of many Pentecostal churches in and around Buenos Aires. Instead of asceticism, other moral values appear to be more suitable for the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals. Four types of values that are often mentioned by middle class Pentecostals are: freedom and autonomy, authenticity, selflessness, and respectfulness. Each of these values will be discussed separately in the following subsections.

8.5.1   *Freedom and Autonomy*

Freedom and autonomy are essential values in most modern societies, where they tend to be particularly upheld by the educated middle class. Therefore, it is not surprising that these values are also strongly emphasized by middle class Pentecostals. They portray themselves as independent actors who refuse to be externally controlled by other actors. By underlining their autonomy, they draw a boundary in opposition to the public imaginary of Pentecostalism as a religion of strong leaders and obedient followers. Their desire for autonomy becomes particularly evident with regard to church leadership. Middle class interviewees prefer to have a leader who grants them liberties within and outside the church. They regard themselves as responsible actors who should decide for themselves. An authoritarian church leader who limits their freedom is not appreciated. Sara, for instance, argues that leaders should not control the behavior of church members.

> What bothers me, personally, is that the leaders tell people what they have to do, I don't like that; telling them what to do doesn't seem right to me.

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70   See Lindhardt 2012: 100–101, Martin 1995: 108, 116; Robbins 2004: 121–122.

> Instead of teaching them through the Word, they just give them rules and
> stuff like that.
>
> INTERVIEW SARA

The quote from the interview with Sara illustrates the importance of a certain
degree of liberty within the church. According to many interviewees, congre-
gations should promote individual autonomy and self-realization. An exces-
sively authoritative leadership is not perceived as contributing to this
requirement. Thus, strong hierarchies within the church and a centralist lead-
ership are regarded critically. Eduardo, for instance, argues that Pentecostals
focus too much on the figure of the pastor who becomes often an almost abso-
lutist leader. Instead of a centralist leadership, he prefers a more democratic
leadership.[71]

In analogy to their disapproval of authoritative leadership, middle class
Pentecostals are not receptive to an authoritarian style of preaching. An
authoritarian style of preaching is experienced as aggressive and potentially
manipulative. Fabian, for instance, argues that pastors should not speak in a
challenging, but instead in a normal voice.[72]

Moreover, many respondents explained that they dislike the constant use of
repetition practices.[73] In many Pentecostal churches services these practices
are ubiquitous. Preachers tend to frequently ask the audience to repeat phrases
and/or to act out specific movements. A popular type of repetition practice, for
instance, is the rhetorical question "Cuantos dicen Gloria a Dios?" ("How many
of you say > glory to God < ?") to which the audience is expected to respond
"Gloria a Dios!" ("Glory to God!"). Other repetition practices in church services
can involve physical movements: standing up and stomping the ground three
times and repeating a phrase or laying hands on one's own head and withdraw-
ing them rapidly while shouting "Fuera!" These practices imply a spiritual
cleansing of malicious forces. But there are also simpler practices such as rais-
ing or waving one's arm and repeating a phrase. These practices are instructed
by the preacher and are often described as strategies to integrate the audience
more actively into the church service.

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71   Interview Eduardo.
72   Interview Fabian.
73   Also middle class pastors tend to stress freedom of expression and state that they do not
      want to control the expressions of their members. Pastor Oscar, for instance, describes his
      church Iglesia del Libertador in contrast to lower class Pentecostal churches as a church
      where participants can express themselves freely (Interview Pastor Oscar).

Practices of repetition are almost totally absent in middle class congregations. Only a few middle class pastors apply repetition practices and when doing so, they rarely employ them. Middle class interviewees depict these practices as silly and manipulative. Particularly a video from a church service of Juan Crudo who asks the audience to conduct different repetitions practices such as waving their arms, repeating a phrase, and blowing a kiss to God stimulated critical statements about repetition practices. The following quote from an interview with Emilia illustrates her aversion to repetition practices.

> (…) well, I don't like those things. Like greeting with your arm. I don't like it when they 'tele-direct' us, like when they tell us from the pulpit, 'Raise your hands, lower your hands.' I get annoyed when they start with 'Raise your hand, lower your hand, say this or say that.' One greeting is enough to establish a friendly environment, but they get too controlling and I get annoyed.
>
> INTERVIEW EMILIA

Repetition practices are perceived as encroaching upon participants' freedom of expression. Again, the autonomy of the individual is emphasized. Middle class Pentecostals do not want to feel controlled in their expressions during the service. Instead, they claim that the expressions and practices of the participants should be intrinsically motivated. Marta, for instance, asserts that repetition practices force participants to carry out activities they do not really want to perform.

> Well, all the silly things they make you do, 'Shake hands, brother,' because, I mean, they are things that motivate you, but they make you to do an absurd amount of rituals that maybe you don't want to do. They need to stop doing this, in my opinion. We need more free personal expression, not to be told, 'Ok, now hold holds, raise your hands.' Maybe that is the last thing you actually want to do. And everyone does it, because the pastor tells us to.
>
> INTERVIEW MARTA PART 2

Repetition practices are rejected as a practice that undermines the autonomy and liberty of actors.

Ironically, middle class Pentecostals emphasize the ideal of free expression, but at the same time exercise strong control over their expressions by setting limits for appropriate religious practice, as described above. This contradiction appears to be resolved by the difference between external and internal control.

Controlling oneself is perceived differently from being controlled by the pastor. Hence, behaving appropriately during the church service is not necessarily experienced as the product of external control but as an internal control.

The views on autonomy also indicate the value which middle class interviewees attribute to the authenticity of their behavior. They do not want to perform practices and display expressions of religious devotion that they do not feel. Instead, they expect themselves and others to be authentic in their expressions.

8.5.2   *Authenticity*

Authenticity is a ubiquitous topic. Authenticity is not only related to the physical expressions and practices of devotees, but also the content of the sermon. When evaluating the quality of a sermon, interviewees refer to the correctness of its doctrines. Particularly the concept of *sana doctrina* was mentioned again and again in the interviews. The idea of *sana doctrina* refers to the basic truths that are expected to be applied in every area of congregational practice. With regard to the sermon *sana doctrina* refers to the Biblical basis and the authenticity of the Bible interpretation which is conceived as crucial as Pablo puts it: "La doctrina es lo principal" ("The doctrine is the most important thing").[74] The following insights from the interviews provide some indications as to the meaning of *sana doctrina*.

Isabela states that she would leave her church if she noticed any deviations from the *sana doctrina*. In order to verify the match between the sermon and the *sana doctrina*, she recommends comparing the content of the sermon with that of the Bible in case of doubt.[75] A strong Biblical basis is also an essential element for Luis, who states that he likes his congregations because its pastors provide clear and precise sermons that are based on the Bible.

> Preaching is Biblical. What do I mean by 'Biblical'? That it is read from the Bible, very precisely and clearly from the Word of God. It does not mean going to the pulpit and talking about any topic and not basing it on the Bible. In this case, here we preach the Word of God, the very words of God. They aren't so much thematic sermons, on one topic or another. They are Biblical readings. The Bible is preached directly. But in other places, the preachers talk about some topic for 50 minutes and the Bible for only 5 minutes.
>
> INTERVIEW LUIS

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74   Interview Pablo Part 1.
75   Isabela Part 1.

Luis describes the focus on the Bible as the principle element of a good ser-
mon. According to him, good sermons primarily explicate the Bible, whereas
poor sermons would be dedicated for the most part to other issues.[76] According
to middle class Pentecostals, the sermon should consist of an authentic repre-
sentation of the word of God. Miguel summarizes the concept of *sana doctrina*
in simple terms: "Palabra de Dios 100%, eso es lo importante" ("100% word of
God that is the important thing")[77] With the concept of *sana doctrina,* middle
class Pentecostals seek to establish a distinction between what they perceive
as the real gospel and a corrupted gospel which is based on incorrect Bible
interpretations and/or manipulations. Following this concept, only a Bible
teaching that is based completely on the Bible is an authentic Bible teaching.

Again, education plays an important role. The ability of a pastor to provide
an authentic presentation of the Bible is attributed to the pastor's theological
education. Sara, for instance, argue that pastors who do not preach the *sana
doctrina* lack theological training.[78] Theological training constitutes an impor-
tant indicator for the quality of preaching and its reliability concerning the
Biblical foundation. Educated pastors are seen as preaching in an authentic
way, whereas untrained pastors lack this ability. This differentiation evidently
draws deep boundaries in opposition to other Pentecostal congregations that
do not have well trained pastors and are therefore thought to deliver instead of
the *sana doctrina* a corrupted teaching of the Bible. Many of the Pentecostal
congregations in the *conurbano* are perceived as moving beyond the *sana doc-
trina* in their teaching and practices and are consequently not regarded as
being real Christians.

The value of authenticity concerning the sermon becomes particularly evi-
dent in the concept of *sana doctrina*. However, the sermon is not the only area
of the church service where the value of authenticity plays an important role.
Middle class Pentecostals stress the value of authenticity also with regard to
spiritual practices. Strong spiritual practices which one can observe in some
Pentecostal churches are conceived of as an inauthentic, theatrical show or
even as an expression of mental illness. Several middle class interviewees
describe exorcisms as a form of religious show and the individuals involved as
acting in a psychologically deviant manner. Carlos, for instance, believes in

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76   Another indication is provided by Viviana, who likes the fact that her congregation keeps
      itself to the doctrine. This means for her that the congregation does not preach contents
      that are not in the Bible (Interview Viviana).

77   Interview Miguel Part 2.

78   Interview Sara. Also Carlos clarifies that the *sana doctrina* depends on the theological
      training of the preacher (Interview Carlos).

exorcisms. He himself works in the church's ministry of spiritual liberation. Nevertheless, he reports that there is a lot of imagination involved in liberation. According to Carlos, only a very small minority of the individuals that appear to be possessed are really possessed.[79] For the vast majority of cases he regards mental health problems as the reason for manifestations. He is not the only interviewee that expresses doubts about the manifestations and exorcisms. Although all middle class interviewees believe in the existence of demonic possessions and claim that there is a need for exorcisms, many of them share Carlo's position and put the authenticity of demonic manifestations into doubt. Frequently, strong spiritual manifestations are described as a theatrical show in which the manifesting individuals act. Moreover, supposed manifestations of demonic possessions are portrayed as hysterical reactions in a context which encourages such mental conditions. Isabela, watching a video of a GIL exorcism, describes the dynamic in GIL as collective hysteria. It goes without saying that she dislikes such a dynamic.[80] Also Camila has strong feelings about spiritual manifestations during church services. Her criticism is that instead of emphasizing Jesus, pastors encourage people with psychological problems to play act and to commit *estupidéces* (stupidities).[81] Hence, the general suspicion among middle class Pentecostals is that the mechanism behind spiritual manifestations in church services are psychological problems or theatrics in which the congregation engages.

Questioning the authenticity of other Pentecostals involves not only questioning their moral qualities but also their religious authority. The faith of the other appears less legitimate due to a lack of authenticity. In contrast to the inauthentic other, middle class Pentecostals describe themselves as authentic believers.

8.5.3   *A Selfless Faith*

The attitude of middle class Pentecostals towards many of the characteristics of other Pentecostals is often marked by skepticism. This attitude becomes evident not only with regard to the music, atmosphere, and expressions of lower class Pentecostals but also the supposed motivations for their religious activity. Criticism is raised against a style of Pentecostalism which emphasizes miracles and the healing from suffering. Some of the middle class interviewees infer that most Pentecostals only seek miracles but do not care about God. The following quote from an interview with Maria summarizes this idea:

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79   Interview Carlos.
80   Interview Isabela Part 2.
81   Interview Camila.

> (…) what the Pentecostal churches – especially poorer churches – are
> looking for is the spiritual touch, miracles, healing. They are not looking
> for God himself, as much as they claim to be.
>

Lower class Pentecostals are portrayed as pragmatic, egoistic actors who seek
an improvement in their life by performing magical practices. This type of
spiritual pragmatism is disdained by middle class respondents. By contrast,
they tend to depict God as the objective and motive of their religious activity.
Middle class Pentecostals prefer to conceive of religious practice as a selfless
activity dedicated to God. They appear to follow the ideal of a "disinterested"
faith in which the main interest is the supernatural and not its powers and the
empirical advantages which the faithful devotee can derive from it.

   Middle class Pentecostals prefer to portray themselves as practicing religion
as an end in itself. At the same time, it is not clear to what extent middle class
devotees actually act as disinterested, selfless religious actors. Also, middle
class Pentecostals seek miracles and supernatural support in order to cope
with their daily reality. They may, however, depict their search for a miracle as
a secondary objective and present themselves as primarily seeking God.[82]

   The ambivalent relationship which middle class Pentecostals have concern-
ing divine miracles also becomes evident in their attitude towards prosperity
gospel. Asking middle class Pentecostals about the *teologia de la prosperidad*
(prosperity gospel), they usually react with tough criticism. The disapproval of
prosperity gospel becomes particularly evident when interviewees watch vid-
eos from the sermons of Juan Crudo, a famous representative of prosperity
gospel in Buenos Aires. His prosperity sermons are described as selling fast and
magical solutions to the audience. Moreover, interviewees suppose that pros-
perity preachers create false expectations that can drive believers to frustra-
tion if the expected miracles do not happen. For example, Claudia perceives
Juan Crudo's sermon as offering "McDonalds-like" solutions to a lower class
audience.[83]

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82   Miracles are not neglected. They are perceived as a potential outcome of the religious
      activity. However, this outcome should not form the central motivation for the religious
      activity, according to middle class interviewees. Finally, there is also salvation as a poten-
      tial objective of religious activity which is not a selfless objective.

83   Interview Claudia Part 2. Maria also describes Crudo's sermon as transmitting the idea of
      a magical God who realizes the dreams of every faithful devotee. She perceives Pastor
      Crudo to be selling dreams to his audience (Interview Maria Part 2).

Middle class Pentecostals tend to reject the idea of a direct transaction between God and the devotee which assumes that devotees will be repaid by God according to their "investments". At the same time, the possibility of prosperity in this world is not denied. God and the evangelical lifestyle may help devotees to prosper.[84] Middle class Pentecostals usually accept the general notion that God may reward followers in different areas of their daily lives. At the same time, they disapprove of a focus on prosperity.

Accordingly, there normally are no direct references to prosperity gospel in the sermons of middle class pastors. In fact, all the middle class pastors I interviewed strongly reject prosperity gospel. Nevertheless, some preachers occasionally refer to the general idea that God rewards devotees for their efforts.

Moreover, middle class Pentecostals associate prosperity gospel with an emphasis on offerings. The importance that some Pentecostal churches place on the financial contributions of their members is therefore rejected. Middle class congregations abstain from emphasizing financial sacrifices and endeavor to separate financial donations from spirituality.[85]

Nevertheless, members of middle class churches are also called on to make sacrifices. But instead of financial sacrifices, middle class congregations rather demand sacrifices of time and energy from their members. Members are encouraged to create their own ministries within the church and engage in activities for the good of the community and society.

> The middle class congregation Iglesia del Libertador, for instance, strongly encourages its members to dedicate themselves actively to a task within the community. Only those who render a service to the congregation and/or society are considered to be active members of the church. Those who instead participate in church services, church groups and tithe are only regarded as participating members, but not as active members.[86]

Hence, the ideal of selflessness becomes also manifest in the form of efforts to improve society. Middle class churches show a pronounced sense of mission vis-à-vis the society. Creating a positive impact on society is also an objective that middle class pastors tend to stress. For instance, Pastor David from the

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84   Interview Pastor Oscar Part 2; Interview Pastor Alejandro.

85   Emphasizing offerings and tithing is perceived as a central element of the prosperity gospel. When I asked Pastor Manuel from the middle class church Comunidad Cristiana about the church's stance on the prosperity gospel, he directly answered that his church would not emphasize offerings (Interview Pastor Manuel).

86   Interview Pastor Oscar Part 1.

middle class church *Iglesia La Puerta Abierta* points to the social role of Pentecostals and emphasizes the importance of social aid projects in society.[87] The attitude concerning social aid is also illustrated by a sermon from *Iglesia del Libertador*. In this sermon the preacher criticizes another Pentecostal church for being excessively spiritual and disregarding the area of social aid. The other church is described as lacking religious development. The faith of this congregation is conceived of as magical and therefore immature. *Iglesia del Libertador*, in contrast, is described as a congregation with a developed religious faith that emphasizes serving the other. According to the discourse of the preacher, giving and helping the other are central features of religious development. For this reason, providing social aid is conceptualized as an expression of religious maturity.[88] Similarly, also middle class respondents claim that churches should include ministries of social help. They argue that churches should be engaged in society and deliver social assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the society. They regard it as part of their mission to assume responsibility and to be engaged in society. Particularly the poor are a frequent target of attempts to improve society. Social projects that supply the poor with food and clothing or professional counseling are common social services one can observe in middle class churches. These services allow middle class Pentecostals not only to portray themselves as morally respectable actors but also to illustrate their social position and to draw a boundary between those who can give and those who receive. Moreover, social projects lead to public recognition and help to accumulate legitimacy, as already described above.

The concept of selflessness draws a strong moral boundary between those who are described as selfish actors that only seek an improvement of their life and the selfless (middle class) Christians that practice Pentecostalism due to their devotion to God and seek to improve the life of others.

8.5.4   *Being a Respectful Devotee*

Not only the importance of miracles, but also the way in which miracles are sought is a controversial topic for middle class Pentecostals. Other Pentecostals are suspected of not complying with the norms for appropriate, respectful behavior when they seek miracles. According to middle class interviewees, devotees should interact in a respectful way with God: they should subordinate themselves to God and respect God's sovereignty. Other Pentecostals are suspected of placing themselves in a position superior to God by seeking to control God's actions in order to carry out divine miracles. The value of

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87   Interview Pastor David.
88   Iglesia del Libertador, 12th June 2011.

respectfulness becomes particularly manifest with regard to prayers and faith healing practices.

In middle class churches, the style of prayers tends to be calmer and more cautious than in many other Pentecostal churches. At some instants the voice may be raised, but the general tone of the prayer is quiet and contemplative. The prayer is usually accompanied by a piano playing softly in the background. The audience remains silent during the prayer. Participants may sit or stand in their places and incline their heads while they contemplate the words of the praying individual, some raise a hand and speak in a quiet voice. Prayers often start with thanking God for his/her greatness and support; after this they may apologize for the shortcomings of the congregation and finally present some requests to God. They can ask for specific concerns like the health of a particular member or more generally for support and peace.

Strong, demanding prayers are not only widely absent in the middle class congregations that I studied, they are also criticized by middle class interviewees. In many other Pentecostal churches, faith healing and the search for miracles are often accompanied by strong prayers which request God for healing. In these prayers pastors may emphatically ask God for specific interventions. This style of prayer is depreciated by middle class respondents. Watching a video of a prayer in a Pentecostal church of the conurbano in which the preacher prays for the creation of gold and silver dental fillings, Horacio describes the style of the prayer as too demanding. In his view, the pastor tries to force God to perform miracles. He dislikes this type of religious practice and argues that the pastor should encourage the audience to worship God instead of seeking to bring about miracles.[89] Maria presents a similar opinion. She believes that God can create and improve dental fillings. But she dislikes the style in which the prayer is conducted.

> (…) I don't like it, I don't like it. It's like he's trying to control the hand of God, (…) I think God can fix things, make changes, but I don't like how [the pastor] leads. It's almost like he's saying, "Now God do this, now put your hand there," and then all the screaming. (…) I don't like it, it's almost like he's steering the hand of God.
>
> INTERVIEW MARIA PART 2

It appears to Maria as if the preacher is trying to control the hand of God. Pastors shouting and aggressively demanding God to perform miracles are regarded as lacking humility. Middle class Pentecostals perceive intense

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89   Interview Horacio.

prayers as the attempt to violently force God to intervene in a specific way: these prayers seek to invert the natural hierarchy between the supernatural and the devotee. According to middle class interviewees, devotees can request God's support but not with force. Therefore, prayers are preferred to be carried out in a calm voice that appears less "aggressive".

Some middle class interviewees stipulate that Pentecostals tend to believe in a mechanism for receiving miracles. They disapprove of this idea and argue that there is neither a method to produce supernatural miracles nor a way to persuade God to intervene in a specific manner in daily life. According to them, God would instead intervene whenever God wants. Although they reject the idea of a manipulable supernatural, they believe that there are modes of conduct that may provide a positive context for supernatural interventions. However, a guaranty for divine miracles does not exist. Luis explains that there is no general method for healing people.

> (…) there's no one way to heal. All miracles come from God. He conducts them how, when, and where he wants. All I can do is take on an attitude of faith in miracles, that God does them. What can I do? Have fatih, live a holy life, be a perfect temple for God to do his work. But living a good and holy life doesn't make God perform miracles. God will perform miracles when He wants to. There's no method, no system.
>
> INTERVIEW LUIS

According to Luis, God would heal whenever God wants: a faithful lifestyle would not necessarily produce miracles. Yet, he also supposes that exhibiting an *actitud de fe* – a faithful lifestyle – creates a conducive context for the occurrence of divine miracles.

Pentecostal practices that endeavor to heal suffering individuals immediately from their afflictions are seen as "acts of omnipotence": the human being seeks to intervene in the supernatural and to control God.[90] Faithful devotees are instead expected to be humble actors *vis-a-vis* God: they may ask for favors, but they must do this in a respectful manner which underlines the sovereignty of God and the subordinate position of the individual. Other Pentecostals are considered as lacking an understanding of their position and being unable to develop appropriate, respectful forms to deal with the supernatural.

In sum, an appearance of moral correctness seems to constitute a key factor for earning respect among educated middle class Pentecostals. Skeggs writes

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90   See, for instance, Interview Emilia.

with regard to the drawing of moral boundaries and the display of one's morality:

> The ethical self (…) becomes an imperative: it has to be displayed as a sign of one's social responsibility, self-governance, morality and value.
> SKEGGS 2005: 974

According to Skeggs, the ethical self is conceptualized as standing in opposition to the "bad selves" of those who "cannot operate an ethical self".[91] These "bad selves" are, of course, the "inappropriate selves" of the lower class.[92] The imaginary of the "inappropriate other" and the efforts to institutionalize the boundaries vis-à-vis these "bad selves" will be addressed in the following chapter.

8.6   Summary

This chapter described the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals. Middle class Pentecostals tend to draw five types of symbolic boundaries: legitimate, structural and organizational, educational, expressive, and moral boundaries. These boundaries become manifest in the religious tastes and styles that middle class Pentecostals display.

Middle class Pentecostals draw legitimate boundaries by creating a formal circle of Pentecostalism. Belonging to the formal circle depends on different requirements: membership in official evangelical umbrella organizations, enrollment in the *Registro Nacional de Culto*, participation in the *Consejo de pastores*, the educational involvement of pastors in Bible institutes, and possibly the engagement in an evangelical newspaper. These characteristics contribute to the formal recognition of a church and increase its legitimacy. While the majority of Pentecostal churches in Argentina do not fulfill these requirements, middle class churches are usually deeply embedded in the formal circle and some of its pastors even control the bodies of the formal circle of Pentecostalism. Embodying and controlling legitimacy, middle class Pentecostals are not only able to distinguish themselves from other Pentecostal congregations as more legitimate religious organizations, but can even de-legitimize other Pentecostals by excluding them from the formal circle of Pentecostalism.

Structural and organizational boundaries refer to churches' physical structure and organization. Middle class Pentecostals want their churches to

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91   Skeggs 2005: 974.

92   See Skeggs 2004: 79–118.

represent order, tidiness, and excellence. Therefore, middle class churches tend to have a tidy appearance, well managed facilities, sophisticated equipment, well-structured church services with high quality music, and a variety of secular services. The secular services of middle class churches are often related to the educational aspirations of its middle class membership.

Further, middle class Pentecostals place a strong emphasis on education. The drawing of educational boundaries not only becomes visible in the extensive educational programs of middle class churches but also in the way sermons are preached. Sermons are often preached in a rather academic way and frequently address topics of personal growth and moral improvement. Moreover, pastors are evaluated by middle class Pentecostals on the basis of their educational achievements. Lower class pastors are regarded skeptically since they lack, according to middle class Pentecostals, the educational means to teach and implement an appropriate form of Pentecostalism. Hence, education becomes an essential asset for drawing boundaries in opposition to the "uneducated" Pentecostals of the lower class neighborhoods.

Another central type of boundary drawing takes place in the context of the church service in the form of expressive boundaries. Expressive boundaries refer to the visible performances of participants and pastors during church services. While Pentecostalism is notorious for its highly expressive and emotional style and its spiritual practices, middle class Pentecostals abstain from displaying these attributes. Church services in middle class congregations tend to be less expressive and emotional and more sober. Spiritual practices such as faith healing and speaking in tongues are barely visible. Inappropriate manifestations of Pentecostalism are eliminated from the public sphere of the church service. While the service is dedicated to a more appropriate performance of Pentecostalism, inappropriate Pentecostal tendencies can become manifest in the private sphere, in a back region hidden from the glances of middle class peers.

Finally, middle class Pentecostals also draw moral boundaries between themselves and other Pentecostals. They tend to portray themselves as more authentic, selfless, and respectful than other Pentecostals who are not only suspected of practicing Pentecostalism in an inauthentic way but of doing so for selfish reasons and lacking respectfulness and humility when addressing God.

In total, the drawing of these five types of boundaries goes along with more "appropriate" tastes and styles of Pentecostalism. A new type of Pentecostalism emerges which fits better with the representations of the middle class. Drawing symbolic boundaries in opposition to the "inappropriate" attributes of Pentecostalism, middle class Pentecostals can negotiate the appropriateness

of their religious belonging. They reduce tensions with their class representations and create a socially more acceptable form of Pentecostalism.

Some of these boundaries correspond to oberservations made by other scholars. Miller and Yamamori studying the social engagement of Pentecostals contend that particularly middle class congregations develop social help programs.[93] Other scholars exploring single cases of middle class churches have found that these churches show a lower level of expressivity and are less inclined towards spiritual warfare.[94] However, the results of this study diverge from the supposed tendency of middle class Pentecostals towards prosperity gospel.[95] At least for the case of middle class Pentecostals in Argentina, there appears to be no such tendency: the interviewed pastors and lay members reject the health and wealth gospel.

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93   Miller and Yamamori 2007: 3,127,213.

94   See Hasu 2012, B. Martin 1995: 108, 116. Also Nathalie Luca (1999b: 107; 2000: 535) observes in the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul (South Korea) that university students organize their own church services. These services are shaped by a different religious style which is less emotional and involves to a minor degree the charismatic gifts.

95   Droogers 2000: 47.

The Evolution and Implications of Boundary Work

The previous chapter analyzed five types of boundaries that middle class Pentecostals draw upon in order to negotiate the (in)appropriateness of their religious practice. This boundary work leads to the emergence of a new type of Pentecostalism that is more socially acceptable and decreases tensions with the representations of the middle class. This section will discuss the historical origins of this type of Pentecostalism and the implications of the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals.

Historically, middle class Pentecostalism has its origins in the upward social mobility of sections of the Pentecostal movement as well as in the Pentecostalization of middle class evangelicals. The first section will briefly describe these developments, which culminate in a tendency towards a Pentecostalism that is more adapted to the middle class representations.

The emergence of this new type of Pentecostalism is based on boundaries drawn in opposition to other Pentecostals. This boundary work not only produces a more "appropriate" type of Pentecostalism, but also implies the (re) production of an imaginary of an inappropriate other from which the "decent" middle class seeks distinction. The second section addresses the question of how middle class Pentecostals relate to this "inappropriate other".

Despite endeavors to craft a more appropriate Pentecostalism, to a certain extent, deviations, tensions, and inappropriateness remain. The lingering inappropriateness of the appropriate form of Pentecostalism will be tackled in the third section.

9.1 The Evolution of an Appropriate Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism stands in tension with the social representations of the educated middle class of the "European" metropolis of Buenos Aires. Trembling in ecstasy, shouting loudly, bursting into tears, singing and dancing to *cumbia*, praying vehemently in tongues – an educated middle class *Porteño* could not be in a less fitting place. As an accumulation and recombination of elements of popular Latin American culture, Pentecostalism not only has few cultural connections to the educated middle class, it also represents a culture from which the educated middle class seeks distinction. The tensions that arise from the mismatch between the middle class representations and Pentecostalism, exert

a pressure to convert Pentecostalism into a more tolerable religious option for the educated middle class. As a result, a socially more adapted style of Pentecostalism differing from that of "mass Pentecostalism" emerges. Historically, its emergence is the consequence of three different developments: (1) upward social mobility among second and third generation Pentecostals; (2) the spiritual *avivamiento* among evangelical communities with a middle class tendency; and (3) religious "market forces" discovering new clientele for Pentecostalism in the urban middle class. In the following paragraphs, I will describe these three developments.

9.1.1   *Upward Social Mobility*

Many second and third generation Pentecostals experienced upward social mobility and adapted their cultural preferences to their new class environment. The old-fashioned style of "lower class Pentecostalism" ceased to be an appropriate cultural model for them. Consequently, they tried to adapt Pentecostalism to their "new" class representations. These changes often took place in older, established churches and were accompanied by conflicts.

One example of this process is the historical evolution of *Assembly of Christ's* religious style. As described above, AC experienced a change in its social composition towards becoming a middle class church. This also included a change in its religious style, when its church services went through a process of de-Pentecostalization. Powerful spiritual practices disappeared more and more from the public scene of the church service and were substituted by a focus on the sermon and education.[1] AC became a more acceptable and presentable option for its growing middle class membership, who did not want to feel ashamed of being Pentecostal when bringing non-Pentecostal friends to the church.

Thus, the evolution of a new, more socially-adapted style within the church appears also to be the result of the perceived risk of being thrown into one bucket with the "uncivilized" lower class, and being conceived of as an "inappropriate other" by middle class peers. Their middle class status is thus endangered. Facing this risk, the development of a more "appropriate" style of Pentecostalism allows them to confirm their middle class identity and decrease the tension between the middle class representations and their religious affiliation.

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1 Interestingly, the style of middle class Pentecostalism appears to move towards historical Protestantism. However, it does not become historical Protestantism, but rather forms a mix between the more secularized and rationalized style of historical Protestantism and the style of "mass Pentecostalism".

This process has frequently been described by scholars of religion in terms of the sect-church dichotomy.[2] Sects are conceived of as standing in a tense relationship with their social environment: they tend to reject the surrounding society and to be rejected by the society. Further, sects are thought to attract particularly lower class individuals,[3] whereas middle class actors are less likely to affiliate with sects due to the stigma and social costs involved in sect-membership.[4] However, over time, sect members may experience social-upward mobility. In order to reduce the stigma and social costs of their religious membership, they will decrease the level of tension between their religious group and the surrounding society. As such, the religious group adapts more and more to the general social standards. In this way, the process of social upward mobility finally transforms the sect into a church. Unlike the sect, the church is characterized by a higher acceptance of the social environment and an increased public legitimacy. Many middle class Pentecostals seem to experience such a process: they assume enhanced social positions in which formal behavior in the public sphere and the hiding of inappropriate practices become increasingly important.[5] Sect-type practices would create enhanced tension with the social environment and impose significant social costs on these middle class actors. Hence, a church-type model of Pentecostalism, which reduces the tensions with the social environment, is more convenient. Therefore, middle class Pentecostals seek to establish their congregations as churches. They break away from the sect-model by banning socially inappropriate practices and pursuing public legitimacy.[6]

The development towards a more church-type style of Pentecostalism can also be described as a three-fold process of rationalization, secularization and institutionalization. According to Gorski, rationalization and secularization of religion refer to a process in which religion becomes less magical and experimental, and more ethical and intellectual.[7] The partial ban on spiritual intervention practices and expressive elements, as well as the increased emphasis on intellectual practices – sermons and Bible interpretation – and ethics in the

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2 Iannaccone 1988, 1994; Niebuhr 1929; Troeltsch 1923/1977.

3 Niebuhr 1929: 25; Pyle 2006: 78.

4 Iannaccone 1994.

5 Lahire distinguishes between "marchés francs" and "marchés tendu": "Les marchés tendus imposent de la mise en forme, de la préparation, du calcul, de l'attention, du soin, du souci, etc." (Lahire 2004/2006 : 632) He states that the difference between lower and higher social classes is that the latter are more frequently involved in the "marchés tendus". See Lahire 2004/2006: 632.

6 See also Corten 1995: 189–192, 209–215.

7 Gorski 2000: 148–149.

"appropriate" style of Pentecostalism, are evidences for such a rationalization and secularization process within middle class Pentecostalism.[8] Moreover, the involvement of umbrella organizations and educational institutions indicate an institutionalization process, implying that Pentecostalism loses its sectarian appearance and is converted into a church-type Pentecostalism.[9]

9.1.2 *The Pentecostal Avivamiento among Non-Pentecostal Evangelicals*

The upward social mobility of second and third generation Pentecostals is not solely responsible for the emergence of an "appropriate" style of Pentecostalism. Simultaneously, sectors of the non-Pentecostal evangelical community that likewise exhibit middle class tendencies have experienced a spiritual *avivamiento*. In particular, members of Baptist congregations and the Plymouth Brethren at one time experimented with the new Pentecostal expressions, which were often not welcomed by the spiritual leaders of these congregations. Therefore, many of the "Pentecostalized" members of these churches switched to Pentecostal congregations. Others founded their own charismatic communities, like the *Comunidad Cristiana* or *Iglesia Puerta Abierta*. Today, these two churches are charismatic congregations with a strong middle class membership. They exhibit a religious style similar to that of the long-standing Pentecostal congregations, who experienced a change in their social composition into a more middle class base. For this reason, the "appropriate" style of Pentecostalism can be seen to have been created basically from two sides: (1) from Pentecostal churches that increasingly assumed a middle class profile and (2) from previously non-Pentecostal Protestants, who already had a strong middle class influence and experienced a charismatic renewal.

Both developments – the partial de-Pentecostalization of Pentecostal churches and the Pentecostalization of some evangelical communities – culminate in a similar religious style. They form a milder type of Pentecostalism

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8 These processes take hold within the public sphere of the church, even though it is unclear to what degree they effect the private practice. The inappropriate, socially non-conforming elements are eliminated from the public sphere of the church service and are partially transferred to the private sphere. The extent to which processes such as secularization are also taking place in the private religious sphere is unclear. Maybe the process of secularization and rationalization of public religious practice precedes secularization within the private sphere – embracing the private practice and popular religious beliefs – of middle class Pentecostals. Yet, based on the existing insights, it is impossible to assess and predict such a change.

9 As such, the secularization process of the religious group implies an adaptation to the external social environment and its values (Luca 2008b: 40). General secularization trends in society may also affect religious organizations and drive them to secularize internally. See, for instance, Dobbelaere 2002: 123–130.

and create boundaries in opposition to "lower class" Pentecostalism. A partially de-Pentecostalized style of Pentecostalism emerges, which constitutes a combination of popular mass Pentecostalism and the middle class representations.

9.1.3 *Pentecostal Entrepreneurship: The Middle Class as a New Religious Market Niche*

The new, socially adapted, and more softly charismatic style of Pentecostalism which is performed in nice, tidy churches in middle class neighborhoods, decreases the threshold for other middle class Argentineans to become Pentecostal. Pentecostal entrepreneurs, aware of the preferences and aspirations of the urban middle class, engage in fishing for this new clientele by adapting their church styles. In this way, religious "market forces" spur a further adaptation to the representations of a new and, thus far, widely ignored religious clientele: the urban middle class. Despite enjoying the reputation of being a particularly difficult clientele to convert, due to its supposed secularity, this social segment is actively pursued by some churches, by carrying out evangelizing campaigns in middle class neighborhoods and adopting new religious styles, considered more fitting with the urban middle class. One example is the church *Cristo la Solución* located in the neighborhood of Flores.

> Cristo La Solución is one of the most ancient churches in Buenos Aires city and, with almost one thousand active members, is one of the largest churches in the urban district of Flores. Due to the extensive use of modern media such as TV-programs, radio and internet, and evangelization events in affluent parts of the city of Buenos Aires such as Puerto Madero, the church is well-known among Pentecostals. Today, the church's marketing strategies target the urban middle class in particular. In order to recruit new members, Cristo La Solución applies marketing strategies involving the aesthetics and values of the middle class. It uses modern stylish designs on flyers, its homepage, and its own decoration. Despite its efforts to attract the urban middle class, the church remains very mixed with regard to its social composition and especially appears to attract the lower middle and lower classes. With its modern image and targeted offers such as hip-hop dance, youth holidays, etc., the congregation particularly attracts youths. More important than the marketing efforts of the church are the changes in the religious practice. Informants reported to me that the church once embraced a ministry dedicated to the expulsion of evil spirits. Faith healing and exorcisms were frequent and important elements of the religious practice. With

the church tending more toward the middle class, faith healing and exorcism disappeared. Finally, the ministry for exorcism was abandoned and faith healing and exorcisms were banned from the official practice. Today, the performance of such practices is limited to the laying on of hands at the end of the service. This practice is performed in a quite atmosphere. Demonic manifestations do not occur and the pastor or his usher only briefly put their hand on the forehead of the participant. The new attitude towards these healing practices is illustrated by the following scene, which I observed during a service: a middle aged woman manifested loudly at the beginning of the church service. She was crying and shouting – a behavior that would have been interpreted as a form of demonic possession by GIL pastors and would probably have led to the conducting of an exorcism. This however was not the form considered appropriate in Cristo La Solución. At first, the worship was continued, ignoring her in the hope that she would stop. But the woman continued and many members looked irritated and disturbed by her comportment. The continuation of the church service was unthinkable. Thus, a church leader asked a group of ushers to take the women out of the hall. She was accompanied to a different part of the church building, where she could no longer disturb the service. Her behavior was not integrated into the church service, as an exorcism no longer had any place.

Faith healing and spiritual warfare are today substituted by a new form of healing strategy: personality change through coaching. The sermons of the pastor of the congregation, pastor Juan Crudo, frequently resemble a coaching workshop, in which he tries to empower his audience with pro-active messages. The stated objective is to change the attitude of the devotee. This work is continued in small church groups where leaders accentuate the message and empower members. Moreover, in the church's bookstore, visitors can buy a wide variety of Christian self-help literature written by the pastor. These publications concern different areas of life such as financial prosperity, debt, happiness, professional success, and family. Besides these empowerment strategies, the congregation also engages in a discourse on miracles. The notion of miracles, however, is not as pronounced as in other Pentecostal churches and is frequently connected to the concept of prosperity gospel. This becomes evident during the offering and tithing, in which the pastor stresses the concept of sowing and harvesting: devotees who give will later receive a hundred or even a thousand times what they gave. Thus, the belief in supernatural intervention plays an important role in the discourses of the church. The practice of Cristo La Solución constitutes a mix between

empowerment strategies and the search for favorable supernatural inter-
ventions. Although the church abandoned practices that could alienate
the middle class, at the same time it maintained practices and discourses
that may be regarded critically by the middle class such as the discourse
of prosperity gospel. Cristo La Solución combines a "mainstream"
Pentecostalism with a style of Pentecostalism more adapted to the urban
middle class. Thus, the style in which this recombination results is still
somewhat different from the "appropriate" style of Pentecostalism
described in this study.

The example of *Cristo La Solución* reveals that Pentecostal churches may pur-
sue strategies to attract the middle class and therefore partially adapt their
style to what this clientele values. However, the degree to which these strate-
gies and adaptations are successful is questionable, since the vast majority of
members in churches like *Cristo La Solución* are still recruited from the lower
class. This may be due to the fact that, to a certain extent, the church styles still
remain attached to characteristics that are regarded critically by middle class
Pentecostals, such as the undisguised employment of prosperity gospel in
Cristo La Solución.

    Furthermore, the case of *Cristo La Solución* illustrates that aspects of the
"appropriate" style of Pentecostalism can also be appealing to lower class
Pentecostals. Nor is the taste for the "appropriate" style of Pentecostalism an
exclusively middle class phenomenon. Although the emergence of a socially
more adapted style of Pentecostalism is particularly related to the involvement
of middle class actors in Pentecostalism, there are also segments of lower class
Pentecostals that practice this style of Pentecostalism by recombining, for
instance, some of its elements with other styles of Pentecostalism.[10]

9.1.4   *Crafting Publicly Visible Boundaries – An Outlook*
Middle class Pentecostalism has been promoted by the three developments
described in the previous paragraphs. These developments culminate in more
appropriate tastes and styles of Pentecostalism. By drawing boundaries in
opposition to the inappropriate attributes of Pentecostalism, middle class
Pentecostals negotiate the (in)appropriateness of their religious belonging.

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10   The tendency towards a more socially acceptable style of Pentecostalism is not an exclu-
     sively middle class tendency. Also, lower class Pentecostals may prefer this style and pro-
     mote it. In these cases, they may reject, for instance, an excessively loud style of
     Pentecostalism or adapt to the "civilization discourse" by cleansing Pentecostalism of
     some of its "uncivilized" characteristics.

Nevertheless, the boundaries are still rather fragmented and only visible to those who have experimented with Argentinean Pentecostalism. A process of social institutionalization that would render the distinction between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" forms of Pentecostalism publicly visible has, so far, barely emerged. However, such a public institutionalization of this distinction would allow middle class Pentecostals to publicly display the appropriateness of their religious belonging and reduce social tensions. In this case, non-Pentecostal class peers would be able to directly recognize middle class Pentecostals as belonging to a more appropriate form of Pentecostalism, instead of throwing them into one category with the "inappropriate" lower class Pentecostals.

For this reason, in the long run, middle class Pentecostals might seek to establish publicly visible boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate forms of Pentecostalism. They may endeavor to transform the, thus far, fragmented symbolic boundaries into institutionalized, publicly visible boundaries which differentiate between the "high art" of Pentecostalism – a decent, middle class Pentecostalism that is recognized by society as an appropriate form of religion – and mass-Pentecostalism, which corresponds to the Pentecostalism of the popular masses residing in the lower class neighborhoods and slums of Argentina. There seems to be some efforts in this direction. The struggles for political and public recognition that are fought by evangelical umbrella organizations, point to the attempt to establish a public image of an appropriate Pentecostalism.[11] The exclusion of highly visible, inappropriate churches from these umbrella organizations, such as the IURD and the church of Pastor Gimenez, contributes to these attempts to create a public image of an appropriate Pentecostalism that distinguishes itself from the "inappropriate" manifestations of Pentecostalism. However, only time will tell whether, and to what extent, these efforts yield results, and whether a publicly visible representation of a distinguished form of Pentecostalism – a respectable, appropriate Pentecostalism – will emerge and convert the fragmented symbolic boundaries into publicly visible, "objective" boundaries.

9.2   The Inappropriate Other

The creation of distinctions is based on an imagined inappropriate other. By drawing symbolic boundaries, middle class Pentecostals create and reproduce the imaginary of an inappropriate other, a Pentecostal who embodies the

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11   See, for instance, Wynarczyk 2009a, 2010.

characteristics of Pentecostalism that do not fit into middle class representations. The inappropriate other is not necessarily a Pentecostal from the lower class, but both – the inappropriate Pentecostal and the lower class Pentecostal – are often grouped together for middle class Pentecostals. As such, the inappropriate other becomes particularly manifest in the Pentecostal churches located in the lower class suburbs of Greater Buenos Aires. These churches are portrayed as noisy and untidy places, in which uneducated pastors encourage their deprived members to perform silly religious practices.

The comments below from an interview with Marta summarize, to some degree, the attitudes of middle class Pentecostals towards these churches. Her comments refer to a video in which a pastor performs faith healing practices. In this video, the pastor prays vehemently in order to convert cheap dental fillings into silver or gold. During this prayer, the pastor shouts loudly and the audience puts their hands on their mouths. While watching the video, Marta laughs loudly and says:

> (…) it seems crazy to me. (…) They may call themselves evangelical communities, but they are outside of what the Word of God is, of what the true doctrine is, and they are completely distorting it, just like a path of salt, or I don't know, or all of this, like selling oil. But notice that all the church's walls are falling apart, meaning, it's in a poor neighborhood, where unfortunately, thanks to a lack of education, anything can happen. And these are environments where people leave their tithes and offerings, but they are not growing spiritually, rather quite the opposite. Here you see that the person is expecting a miracle. There is someone selling miracles, and well, I think this type of community is a very negative thing. That's why I consider education to be fundamental, more than the person who is in charge of a church. This is what I believe is negative about Pentecostalism: the fact that it gives authority to these types of people.
>
> INTERVIEW MARTA PART 2

Marta condemns what she sees in the video, which she describes as the practice of an excess of authority and a manipulation of the audience. Moreover, she stresses the fact that this church is a lower class church. In such humble places, she argues, anything can happen due to a lack of culture. According to her, people approach these churches in search of miracles, while the pastor assumes the role of a seller of miracles who is paid by his clients with offerings and tithes. Due to their focus on miracles, she supposes, members of this church neither seek nor achieve any spiritual growth. She regards this church as similar to the IURD and states that churches like this deviate from the *sana*

doctrina. Finally, she mentions that the pastor's education is essential to prevent this type of deviation and abuse.

Her position summarizes the way in which many middle class Pentecostals perceive "lower class" Pentecostalism. The type of spiritual practice to which Marta refers is regarded as a deviation from what is perceived as appropriate – as good taste – by middle class interviewees. They disapprove of this form of Pentecostalism as a manipulative excess of authority, a lack of education and spiritual growth, and an abusive deviation from what they call the *sana doctrina*. Lower class Pentecostals are conceptualized as lacking the necessary education for appropriately judging religious practice. Pablo puts it in simple words:

> It is for ignorant people, those who can believe in all this, people who are needy, who have problems and think that they will find solutions here.
> INTERVIEW PABLO PART 2

Pablo believes that this type of Pentecostalism is for ignorant people who are suffering from problems. Interestingly, middle class Pentecostals employ the deprivation discourse about Pentecostalism – which explains the success of Pentecostalism among lower classes by referring to the concept of deprivation – in order to disqualify other types of Pentecostalism. This type of Pentecostalism, which emphasizes miracles and faith healing, is described as a product of the needs and ignorance of its devotees. Deprivation and ignorance – by themselves already inappropriate characteristics – are believed to lead to an inappropriate, superstitious Pentecostalism.

Attributing "inappropriate" characteristics frequently associated with Pentecostalism to an inappropriate, distant other enables middle class Pentecostals to hold themselves at a distance from these unwanted characteristics of Pentecostalism, characteristics that do not fit well with middle class representations. In this way, they can portray themselves as part of a different type of Pentecostalism, an educated Pentecostalism which has, if it all, only a very distant relationship to the inappropriate other, the ignorant Pentecostal in the poor *conurbano*.

However, in some cases the inappropriate other is not a distant other, but a very close one, as in the case of Javier. Javier is a member of a church he considers as a church for the *villero* (slum dweller). Despite being one of the interviewees with the closest relationship to "lower class Pentecostalism," he manifests some of the most critical attitudes. During the interview, he strongly criticizes the style of his church. In fact, it appears to be less his free choice and preferences than the pressure from his family that keeps him in the church.

In the interview, he seeks to distinguish himself very clearly from his fellow church members and the "Pentecostalism of the *villero*". He describes the cultural background of his fellow members – which he perceives as very different from his own – as a problem.

> (...) it so happens that we come from European roots, from European culture, and this is a church that is really for slum people, for negros – I don't mean to discriminate – so there are things that shock us sometimes, behaviors that – perhaps the slum people are very disorganized, they have a very chaotic way of being, that we don't like, and when you belong to a community like that, it's like they impose it. We, as Europeans, feel discriminated against. It's very difficult to make friendships, because it's like the slum person doesn't have the same level of culture that we do.
>
> INTERVIEW JAVIER

Javier defines himself as European and describes the *villero* ("slum dweller") as "improvisado" and of a different cultural level. His proximity to "lower class Pentecostalism" appears to produce the need for distinction, a distinction from the culture of the *villero*. Javier draws clear boundaries between his cultural background and that of the *villeros* affiliated with the church. By distinguishing himself from this culture, he reasserts his "European" middle class identity. His boundary work reflects the representations of the middle class: he portrays the middle class as European and civilized in contrast to the non-European "*negro*" from the lower class, who lives predominantly in the lower class surroundings of Buenos Aires and lacks an appropriate culture.[12] His church appears to him as a manifestation of the "culture of the *negro*". His malaise is nourished by the perceived conflict between the "culture of the *negro*" and the social position in which he regards himself: the position of a European middle class individual. As such, he feels compelled to defend the values that the middle class representations embrace: civilized behavior, order, education, etc. Since the church is populated by "*negros*" who impose their culture on the church, he feels trapped in a religious style that he cannot support from the viewpoint of the middle class. His inability to change the situation nurtures his need to strongly distinguish himself from this type of Pentecostalism. Communicating a clear (dis-)taste is the only way left to delineate his class allegiance.

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12   These concepts can be traced back to the modernization discourses in the history of Argentina. See Adamovsky 2009 and Svampa 1994.

9.2.1 *The Anti-sect Discourse among Middle Class Pentecostals: The Case of the IURD*

In other cases, the inappropriate other becomes associated with concepts related to the anti-sect discourse. Some ideas of the anti-sect discourse that stigmatize the new religious movements in Argentina, reappear in the reasoning of middle class Pentecostals. They are now attributed to other, mainly lower class Pentecostal churches, frequently described as manipulating and exploiting their members. With this communication pattern in mind, middle class Pentecostals can underline their distinctiveness. This, for instance, is the case with the *Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios* (IURD).[13] The TV programs of the IURD and the presence of numerous temples in Buenos Aires lead to a high degree of public visibility for this church. Because of this visibility, middle class Pentecostals are afraid of being equated with the IURD and its questionable practices. For this reason, middle class Pentecostals engage in distancing themselves from the IURD, as is the case with Andrea. Thus far, although Andrea has only seen the IURD church services on TV, she strongly dislikes the church and describes it as a sect that tries to exploit its members. According to her, members of this church only seek worldly prosperity without committing themselves to God's plans:

> I would consider the Universal Church to be a cult that has really grown in Argentina and preaches a fantasy gospel, not a practical gospel. I have talked to a lot of people who go to the universal church (…) who are only after economic prosperity, health, to resolve family problems, to find an instantaneous solution to everything, with water or prayer by the pastor, but without making any real effort themselves. They don't understand and don't want to make an effort to forgive or to change their lives and follow the principles of Christ.
>
> INTERVIEW ANDREA

The IURD is the church least liked by the middle class interviewees of the sample. When asked about a church they would never join, all middle class informants mentioned the IURD. The church is highly criticized by middle class Pentecostals and represents many of their dislikes. The style of the church

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13   The IURD has a negative image among the Argentinean public. The church puts a strong emphasis on the devil and evil spirits that are supposed to cause different types of suffering. For the Iglesia Universal Reino de Dios (IURD) in Argentina, see Semán 2003; Semán and Moreira 1998; Semán and Oro 2000; for the IURD in general, Corten et al. 2003; Freston 1995: 129–132; 1999: 153–160; Luca 2008b: 230–236, 248–251; Ruuth 2001.

forms the antithesis of "good taste"; it embodies the anti-taste of the middle class.

The IURD is frequently described as an institution that economically exploits its members and is therefore not considered to be a church, but rather a business primarily interested in economic gain. This alleged economic exploitation was the most prevalent criticism in interviews. For example, Miguel articulates allegations of this nature:

> (…) I would never even step onto the sidewalk of the Brazilian Universal Church, for example. It's something that I am totally against, and I would never go into that church. I do not consider them to be Evangelicals; it's something I reject spiritually. (…) They aren't Evangelicals, they aren't Christians, they only want to make money. (…) And they do things…their services create…they have satanic influences. A lot of the things they do are satanic.
>
> INTERVIEW MIGUEL PART 2

Miguel's description of the church as not only a business but also satanic is probably the harshest criticism that a Pentecostal can raise with regard to another Christian church. Other disparagements describe the church as manipulative, and criticize the use of "holy" objects and the absence of the *sana doctrina*. Finally, the fact that the IURD is not affiliated with an umbrella organization that could supervise its practices is condemned by another interviewee, Eduardo:

> …the Universal Church, which is not Christianity at all. It's a sect (…) they are not part of any kind of church umbrella organization; they are not regulated in any way. Because I believe that the church has to be in one… it can't be independent from everything else, it has to be in a community with other churches so that, mutually, there is a certain amount of supervision, so to speak.
>
> INTERVIEW EDUARDO

Claiming that churches should be subject to the supervision of a central organization, Eduardo believes this control mechanism is absent in the case of the IURD.

In fact, the IURD has been trying for several years to join one of the evangelical umbrella organizations and improve its status. ACIERA and FECEP, led by middle class pastors, rejected the application. Membership of the IURD with its high degree of public visibility and its "inappropriate" practices would

undermine their project of creating the image of an appropriate, socially acceptable Pentecostalism.

Middle class Pentecostals deny the IURD the status of a Protestant church. Although they acknowledge that the Argentinean public – as well as the IURD itself – defines the IURD as a *iglesia evangélica*, middle class Pentecostals refuse to identify the IURD as a Protestant church. According to them, the IURD misrepresents Protestantism and thereby contributes to the bad reputation of Protestantism. Therefore, they refuse to define the church as Protestant. Instead of classifying it as a Protestant church, middle class respondents use the term sect – in opposition to the concept of true Protestantism – to describe the IURD. The term "sect" connotes an extremely negative concept. Remarkably, by applying the term "sect", middle class Pentecostals employ the anti-sect discourse, also frequently used against Pentecostalism among the general public. However, in contrast to the public anti-sect discourse, they distinguish between churches that are "truly" Protestant and "non-Protestant" sects that are described as manipulative and exploiting their members. IURD falls into the last category. Hence, middle class Pentecostals adopt the anti-sect discourse for their own purposes by realigning it to their ideas of appropriateness and drawing boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate types of Pentecostalism. To depreciate the religion of the inappropriate other as a sect is a way of relating to his/her inappropriateness by drawing a sharp boundary between the own religious belonging and the inappropriate religious choice of the other. Another way of relating to the inappropriate other is to deliver him/her from his/her inappropriate characteristics and to convert the inappropriate into an appropriate human being.

9.2.2   *Civilizing the Inappropriate Other*

Among middle class Pentecostals, one can observe efforts to convert the inappropriate other into an appropriate other. Some middle class Pentecostals engage in transmitting their cultural representations of the appropriate to lower class Pentecostals. They endeavor to civilize the inappropriate other who represents the disliked "culture of poverty".

An example of these attempts is Pastor Victor from AC. If a participant speaks in tongues during the church service, Pastor Victor explains to the participant after the service that speaking in tongues is not welcomed in AC. Pastor Victor strives to implement a more "appropriate", socially acceptable religious style among church members. Despite frequent references to the "liberty of expression" pastors of middle class congregations seek to discourage "inappropriate" practices among their members. Participants who cross the limits of the appropriate are asked to modify their behavior. However, not only

pastors but also members are involved in these attempts to re-educate and amend inappropriate others. One example, Carlos, is an upper middle class architect who, during his free time, works on evangelization projects with prisoners. On a trip to one of these prisons he explained to me that he asks prisoners to speak properly in his presence. Carlos asks them to articulate in an appropriate form of Spanish because he supposes that their adaptation to an "appropriate" use of language will assist them in apprehending appropriate culture. This example illustrates that the culture of the other is not only perceived as inappropriate but that middle class Pentecostals also engage in re-educating the "popular masses".

Another example of these attempts at (re)education is the church *Buenas Nuevas*. Despite being located close to a slum, the congregation is influenced by the middle class. The church, committed to helping the "poor" runs social programs in the slum. *Buenas Nuevas* offers a specific church service at night with which the congregation tries to attract people from the slum. One of its pastors states that they want to discourage the "mentality of poverty". Although he claims that he dislikes the noisy style of Pentecostalism, he argues that the change of mentality is not so much related to the style of religious practice as it is to the education and culture of "the poor". While describing his church, he explains the ambitions of the congregation:

> I've tried, we've tried to do our best, because, by doing our best, professionals and other people like that feel comfortable. But that isn't the objective, because we work very hard specifically with the poorest and least educated people in the area, and it seems that, to show them – we push the idea of personal improvement, we try to show people that there are other ways to live, to encourage them to appreciate other ways of life, (…) to get them out of the poverty mentality, because it's not only about poverty but also about the mentality, a mentality of dependence, and breaking away from this mindset is a big challenge, (…) So when we do things this way, it's because we want to change this mindset (…) we aim for excellence, always working toward levels of quality, always demonstrating that there are different ways to live.
>
> INTERVIEW PASTOR RICARDO

The lower class is associated with a mentality of poverty that must be eradicated. This mentality of poverty that reigns in Argentina's slums and lower class neighborhoods is described as a mentality of dependency that deprives its hosts of a sense of autonomy and excellence. Even individuals with good earnings keep living in the misery of the Villa, despite having the economic

means to leave the area. The pastor regards his work with the poor as a way of spurring cultural change and diminishing the mentality of poverty among the "culturally" poor. The objective of these efforts is to (re)educate lower class Pentecostals according to some of the middle class representations. *Buenas Nuevas* aims to convert the "uneducated" slum dwellers into middle class individuals committed to middle class representations: being educated, autonomous, and pursuing excellence. From this perspective, middle class Pentecostalism becomes an acculturation institution promoting "appropriate" culture among the "inappropriate".

Middle class Pentecostals not only adapt their own style to middle class representations, they also seek to spread "decent" culture among those social sectors that are historically conceived of as forming the mainstay of inappropriate culture. There are direct analogies to what Adamovsky describes as the general tendency of the middle class and elite to perceive the "popular masses" as lacking appropriate culture.[14] The "popular masses" are portrayed as culturally maladapted and their material situation is traced back to this lack of cultural adaptation. Based on this perception, the middle class feels the need to reeducate these sectors according to the "cultivated" standards of middle class culture. Thus, the middle class aims for a re-education of the inappropriate others by training them in appropriate culture – the "white", "European" middle class culture. These efforts have their early roots in the civilization project of Argentina's founding fathers, as has been described in the fourth chapter.

The efforts to convert the "inappropriate slum dwellers" into respectable citizens do not necessarily undermine the symbolic class boundaries. In contrast, they even seem to strengthen these boundaries. The attempts at "civilization" aim to set the middle class representations of the appropriate as a general norm, as a shared hierarchy of appropriateness to which Pentecostals of all social classes should be committed. It is the attempt to convey to the inappropriate others that their way of being is less valuable than the way of being proposed by middle class Pentecostals.[15] However, the creation of such a shared hierarchy of values faces serious limitations and may only partially succeed.

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14   Adamovsky 2009.

15   By "civilizing" the inappropriate others, these actors try to impose their representations of appropriateness and their form of Pentecostalism as the legitimate standards by which other actors are expected to evaluate their practices. See also Bourdieu 1982: 136–142, 149–150; Bourdieu 1989b.

The middle class representations of appropriateness are not exclusively bound to individuals who are "objectively" located in a middle class position.[16] In some cases, middle class representations are adopted by actors, "objectively" situated in a lower class position. Therefore, among lower class Pentecostals one may also find critical voices with regard to some of the "exaggerated" characteristics of Pentecostalism and a tendency towards a more appropriate type of Pentecostalism. Consequently, the taste for a suitable style of Pentecostalism is mainly, but not exclusively, a middle class taste. To some extent, parts of the lower class commit themselves to an appropriate style of Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, other sections of the lower class adapt only very marginally – if at all – to the middle class standards of "appropriate" culture. Many Pentecostal churches favor a powerful, rather unadapted style of Pentecostalism. They appear not to care as much as middle class Pentecostals about the social acceptability of their religious practice.[17] Consequently, the religious culture of lower classes is not a dominated culture, as has been also suggested by researchers like David Lehman, Eloisa Martin, and Pablo Semán.[18] The lower class appears to evolve its religious culture autonomously. Sometimes its religious culture may even assume the form of a critical response to dominant cultural tenets. This autonomy implies that lower class Pentecostals may selectively adopt concepts and expressions from the middle class style of Pentecostalism and adjust them to their own logic.

9.2.3   *Remaining Deviations*

Although Pentecostals have undertaken considerable efforts to draw boundaries in opposition to "inappropriate" Pentecostalism and to develop a more appropriate style of Pentecostalism, the deviations that were at the origins of these endeavors do not completely disappear. Even in its more acceptable disguise, Pentecostalism remains a movement attached to popular religion and therefore alien to the representations of the middle class.

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16   The middle class discourse has established itself over the course of history as the legitimate view in Argentinean society and has been adopted by parts of the lower class. See, for instance, Adamovsky 2009.

17   Interesting examples for this tendency are two lower class members of the middle class church AC. Although they have a positive opinion of AC, they prefer more expressive styles. In contrast to middle class interviewees from AC they showed no rejection of exorcisms and strong spiritual manifestations during church services and even claimed that it would be favorable for the congregation to integrate these practices into the church service. See Interview Simón Part 2; Interview Andrés.

18   See Lehmann 1996; Martin 2009; Semán 2000, 2001a.

Despite the attempts to adopt more appropriate styles and tastes, deviations continue to exist. This, for instance, is illustrated by the fact that even in highly adapted churches like AC, the religious practice is still perceived as strange by middle class outsiders. Alberto, for instance, explained that he experienced the practice of AC as very strange during his first visits to the church. Another example is Laura, who is afraid of facing embarrassment when friends pay a visit to an AC church service. Hence, even churches like AC do not necessarily fit well with what is regarded as appropriate by non-Pentecostal middle class actors. Despite the efforts undertaken to adapt Pentecostalism, there seem to remain deviations based on a general conflict between "what Pentecostalism is" and "what the middle class seeks to represent".

The boundaries middle class Pentecostals draw are not of an absolute nature. They refer to nuances of style. A full adaptation to middle class representations would imply a withdrawal from Pentecostalism, since essential religious beliefs of Pentecostalism such as, for instance, the belief in supernatural interventions in daily life, are unsuitable for the aspiration of becoming a secularized and rational "European" middle class. Staying loyal to their beliefs, they remain Pentecostals, but try to render the public expression of these beliefs into something socially acceptable. Although this endeavor may drive them to assume less expressive and emotional forms of Pentecostalism, middle class Pentecostalism is still an emotional and expressive form of religion. Deviations continue to exist. In some cases they even constitute deviations from the "more" appropriate style of Pentecostalism, as the case of *Iglesia Peniel* illustrates.

> Iglesia Peniel is a Pentecostal church with a high proportion of lower middle and middle middle class members, and is located in a middle class neighborhood. The congregation is a rather closed community which visitors may only enter with a previous invitation from members or the pastor. During church services the church portal is guarded by doorkeepers who ask unknown visitors trying to enter the church about their business with the church. While the general style of the service is calm and resembles that of other middle class churches, there is a specific moment that sometimes occurs at the beginning of the service. This moment provides a context that allows members to express their emotions. It starts at the end of the musical praise: while the music plays and a large part of the congregation stands in front of the pulpit, individual members go up to the stage and declare their problems. The practice is conducted in a highly emotional atmosphere: the individual on the stage may shout, cry and tremble. However, after this moment, the sermon

begins and the atmosphere becomes totally quiet. None of the members
shout "Gloria a Dios" or other expressions. The first part of the church
service creates a specific space for the expression of emotions, while the
rest of the church service is dominated by a style that one also finds in
other middle class churches. According to members of the church, this
moment happens without planning and only very rarely, like when mem-
bers feel the need to express their grievances. The existence of this prac-
tice appears to be encouraged by the fact that Iglesia Peniel is a rather
closed community and perceived by members as providing a more inti-
mate space than other churches. In this space, members feel a possibility
to express emotions that they would otherwise only express in private.

The case of *Iglesia Peniel* demonstrates that churches may develop individual
strategies for negotiating the (in)appropriatenessof Pentecostalism. This nego-
tiation can sometimes result in a high degree of conformity as in the case of
AC, and in other cases integrate some rather "inappropriate" elements.

Being "inappropriate" leads to a renegotiation process involving continuous
efforts to lessen and conceal the deviations and draw boundaries in opposi-
tion to the inappropriate. Yet, this process consists also in maintaining the
inappropriate religious identity and not melding fully into the appropriate. In
order to maintain their religious identity, middle class Pentecostals must
remain inappropriate. Therefore, the boundary work remains incomplete.
Boundary work helps to reduce the distance from the representations of the
appropriate by drawing a symbolic boundary in opposition to "inappropriate
Pentecostalism". But it does not fully eradicate the distance. Deviations from
middle class representations are at the heart of Pentecostalism. These devia-
tions can be partly camouflaged, but not removed without abandoning the
Pentecostal identity. Hence, the only way to deal with the conflict is to practice
the inappropriate appropriately.

9.3   Summary

This section addressed the origins and implications of the boundary work of
middle class Pentecostalism. Historically, the evolution of middle class
Pentecostalism is particularly spurred by three parties: (1) Pentecostal churches
that increasingly assumed a middle class composition in their membership,
(2) previously non-Pentecostal Protestants with strong middle class tenden-
cies who experienced a charismatic renewal and finally became Pentecostal,
and (3) Pentecostal congregations that restyle their Pentecostalism in order to

recruit Argentina's middle class. These three tendencies culminate in a similar tendency towards a more appropriate Pentecostalism, a Pentecostalism which is more compatible with middle class representations. Nevertheless, this Pentecostalism is not a pure middle class phenomenon. Also lower classes may feel attracted to this socially more adapted and sober type of Pentecostalism.

Particularly middle class Pentecostals appear as fervent promoters of this tendency towards a more appropriate Pentecostalism. Risking stigmatization from their peers, they have a vital interest in creating and stabilizing a socially more acceptable type of Pentecostalism that fit better with their class representations. Drawing boundaries in opposition to the inappropriate attributes of Pentecostalism, they not only strive for a more appropriate form of Pentecostalism, but also distinguish themselves from an "inappropriate other" who is dedicated to an "inappropriate" type of Pentecostalism. The boundary work involves the (re)production of the imaginary of this inappropriate other, from which decent middle class Pentecostals seek distinction. This other is usually embodied by Pentecostals who practice their faith in the "untidy" churches of the poor *conurbano*; in other words: lower class Pentecostals. The example of the IURD illustrates the construction and stigmatization of the inappropriate other. The church is portrayed as a sect that moves beyond the borders of what is defined as "evangelical" and "Pentecostal". However, the boundary work of middle class Pentecostals sometimes even extends farther than only stigmatizing the inappropriate other. The most illustrative and paradoxical manifestation of the boundary work is its civilization efforts. Middle class Pentecostals attempt to civilize the "uncivilized" inappropriate others by training them in appropriate middle class culture and thereby seek to establish shared standards of appropriateness among Pentecostals. In summary, two typical techniques of relating to the inappropriate other are: (a) the depreciation of his/her religion as a sect and (b) his/her re-education and transformation into an "appropriate human being".

Despite the efforts to civilize Pentecostalism and to create a more appropriate type of Pentecostalism, the boundary work described in this chapter does not lead to a total dissolution of the tensions within middle class representations. Inappropriateness remains. Middle class congregations and Pentecostals continue to deviate to different degrees from their class representations. Boundary work helps to reduce tensions by performing the inappropriate in a more appropriate way, but it does not eliminate them.

Conclusion

The Pentecostal movement was the most successful branch of Christianity in the twentieth century and strongly influences global Christianity today. Pentecostalism experienced a vast expansion, particularly in Latin America, where it shapes the lives of millions of adherents.[1] Originally known as a movement of the poor and marginalized, scholars have noted an increasing expansion of Pentecostalism into Latin America's middle classes.[2] Nevertheless, it is not clear to what degree Latin America's middle classes are receptive to Pentecostalism. This supposed expansion into the middle class raises several questions: how does the middle class relate to Pentecostalism? What type of Pentecostalism do middle class Pentecostals create in Argentina?

So far, there has been little research done on middle class Pentecostalism in Latin America. Instead, the academic focus has been on the expansion of Pentecostalism within the lower class and its social, political, and cultural implications for the wider society. In order to fill this research gap, this study explores Pentecostalism within the educated middle class in Argentina.

The theoretical approach employed in this study emerged out of a dialogue between theory and empirical research, and is related to the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. His theoretical approach highlights the cultural dimension of class and illustrates how class belonging is marked and (re)produced by class-related tastes and lifestyles.[3] In addition to the sociology of Bourdieu, the theoretical framework was further expanded by the concepts of *boundary work* and *middle class representations*.[4] These extensions permit an emphasis on two aspects, crucial for understanding middle class Pentecostalism: non-conformance with class standards and the negotiation of this non-conformance.

Middle class representations refer to established class boundaries. These boundaries form a resource for everyday boundary work. Actors can engage with

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1   Anderson 2004: 11–13; Barrett 2001; Robbins 2004: 117–118.

2   See, for instance, Freston 1997; B. Martin 1995: 107, 112; Martin 2002: 4, 81, 24, 114; Schäfer and Tovar 2009: 7; Stewart-Gambino et al. 1997: 241.

3   Bourdieu 1979.

4   For boundary work, see Lamont 1992; 2001: 15344–15345; Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002: 171. For representations, see Moscovici 1976; 1988; 1998.

these boundaries to display their middle class position and to generate acceptance in middle class environments. However, middle class representations do not only provide resources for everyday boundary work. They also assume a rule-like character by forming class-related standards of appropriate behavior. These standards define what type of behavior is regarded as more appropriate and what type of behavior is less appropriate. Thus, middle class actors are expected to act according to these representations, or at least appear to do so.

Nevertheless, actors can also transgress the middle class standards of appropriate behavior. Argentinean middle class Pentecostals appear to contradict the social representations of the middle class with their religious affiliation. Transgressing class-related standards of appropriateness, they overstep the symbolic boundaries of the middle class and their non-conformance can result in tensions with other middle class actors. In order to negotiate the (in)appropriateness of their religious practice, they engage in boundary work. Everyday boundary work opens up the possibility of renegotiating (in)appropriateness: it can be employed as a strategy to indulge one's inappropriate tendencies and make them appear in a more appropriate light.

This study argues that middle class Pentecostals engage in just such a renegotiation process. They attribute characteristics conceived of as appropriate middle class traits to Pentecostalism, and remove from it characteristics that seem to be inappropriate lower class features. Their boundary work is based on preexisting resources. Redesigning Pentecostalism, they employ established boundaries from middle class representations to convert their Pentecostalism into a more appropriate religious option. The boundary work of middle class Pentecostalism was exemplified in this study by a comparison between a lower and a middle class church: God Is Love and Assembly of Christ. The comparison illustrates potential differences between the religious style of lower and middle class Pentecostalism, and exemplifies how a middle class congregation draws boundaries in opposition to other types of Pentecostalism. After having portrayed the case of these two churches, the integration of interviews with Pentecostals as well as observations conducted in numerous churches in and around Buenos Aires widened the perspective. This procedure allowed for an extrapolation of some of the previous findings and helped to illustrate how middle class Pentecostals in Buenos Aires draw upon different types of boundaries in opposition to other types of Pentecostalism. These boundaries, which become visible in the religious styles and tastes of middle class Pentecostals, were roughly classified into five types of boundaries: "legitimate" boundaries, structural and organizational boundaries, educational boundaries, expressive boundaries, and moral boundaries.

Disguising Popular Religion

Middle class churches perform a more subdued style of Pentecostalism. Many of these churches appear to have experienced a process of secularization in their public religious practice, leading to a weakening of their Pentecostal roots. For example, important elements of Pentecostalism have been removed from the public scene of the church service: spiritual practices such as speaking in tongues, faith healing, and exorcisms have largely disappeared from the church service, while expressive and emotional elements have been reduced. At the same time, middle class Pentecostals are committed to popular religious beliefs, including a strong belief in the involvement of the supernatural in daily life. However, these beliefs are barely noticeable in their religious styles. It can therefore be inferred that a process of adaptation to class representations has transformed the beliefs and tendencies into more socially-appropriate religious tastes and styles.

Middle class Pentecostals feel the need to civilize, to re-educate Pentecostalism. They develop a form of Pentecostalism that privatizes its inappropriate characteristics and cleanses it of its popular attributes. As such, it becomes a disguised form of popular religion, cloaked in a civilized, decent costume that neglects its popular roots. Analyzing middle class Pentecostals, one may wonder if popular religion within the middle class is not more widespread than the academic discourse suggests. Also, in the middle class there appears to exist an affinity for popular religion. However, middle class actors tend to perform a camouflaged form of popular religion, which evolves due to the low degree of acceptance of its "undisguised" manifestations.

Being "inappropriate" leads to a process of renegotiation that includes the continuous effort to smooth over and disguise the deviations, drawing boundaries in opposition to the inappropriate. However, the renegotiation process does not fully solve the conflict between what one is expected to be and one's inappropriate, untypical traits. This is illustrated in the strained relationship of middle class Pentecostals with their non-Pentecostal relatives and (former) friends, and their fear of being caught in an embarrassing Pentecostal practice. Behind the guise of an adapted, appropriate Pentecostalism, "ill-fitting" practices still appear. Deviations from middle class representations are at the heart of their Pentecostal identity. These deviations can be partly camouflaged, but cannot be dissolved without abandoning Pentecostalism. Thus, the only way to deal with the conflict is to practice the inappropriate appropriately.

Towards a New Style of Pentecostalism?

Scholars have often suggested that Latin American, middle class Pentecostals are inclined towards Neo-Pentecostalism.[5] However, this is not corroborated by the empirical results of this study. In Argentina, middle class pastors and lay members tend to reject characteristics often attributed to Neo-Pentecostalism, such as prosperity gospel and spiritual warfare. Furthermore, they seek to ban embarrassing spiritual spractices and concepts from the church service and emphasize the middle class values of education, order, tidiness, autonomy, respectfulness, self-control, etc.

From a global perspective, the growth of the middle class within Pentecostalism may well lead to the assertion of a new style of Pentecostalism. The new, middle class style abstains from the expressiveness, emotionality, and strong spiritual practices that have marked Pentecostalism so far. Instead, it places an emphasis on education, order, excellence, morality, and rather intellectual sermons, preaching personal development and pro-active involvement in the society. Becoming increasingly a middle class movement, this style may perhaps represent the future of Pentecostalism.

In line with this argument, the few existing empirical insights into middle class Pentecostalism in Brazil and Chile indicate tendencies that parallel those of the present study.[6] Middle class Pentecostals are inclined towards a less spiritual and expressive style of Pentecostalism that increasingly emphasizes education and intellectualism. Therefore, at least throughout South America, similar tendencies among middle class Pentecostals seem to exist. At the same time, however, tendencies in South America may be slightly different from those in Central America, where the middle class appears to be more inclined towards a Neo-Pentecostal style of religious practice, which emphasizes prosperity gospel.[7] Hence, it may turn out that somewhat diverging styles of middle class Pentecostalism evolve in different world regions. These differences may be related to the particular middle class representations and types of boundary work in each of these world regions. However, in order to explore these assumptions, more research on middle class

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5   Delgado 2004: 105–106; Jaimes 2007; Garcia-Ruiz 2007; Luca 1999b; Mansilla 2008; Martin 2002: 4; O'Neill 2010: 10; Robbins 2004: 121–122; Schäfer 20008a: 487, 492; 2009a: 49; Villamán 2002: 510–511. For the case of North America see, for instance, Hunt et al. 1997.

6   Martin 1995; 2006; Freston 1997; Gooren 2011; Robbins 2004: 121–122.

7   See Anderson 2004: 76–77; Delgado 2004: 105–106; Garcia-Ruiz 2004; 2007; Hallum 2002: 227; Martin 2002: 25; O'Neill 2010: 10; Schäfer 1988; 1992a; 1992b; 1998; 2002; 2005; 2006; 2008a: 490–494.

Pentecostalism will be necessary to determine differences and similarities in the religious tendencies of middle class Pentecostals worldwide.

Studying the Untypical

This study contributes to the debate on religion and class by illustrating how individuals from the middle class mark their status within a lower class movement. Over the course of the last decades, the role of class has been understudied in the sociology of religion.[8] Dominant approaches neglect class as an element that shapes religious practice. The "rational choice" theory of religion, for instance, is unable to seriously integrate social class into its framework, since a full consideration of the effect of social class on religious behavior could undermine the basic and necessary assumption of free (rational) choice. However, in modern religious fields that become increasingly pluralized and are based on "free" choices, social class may turn out to be an essential factor for explaining the way in which religion is practiced. Since religious affiliation and practice today are subject to choice, they can be employed by modern actors as markers of social status. That said, religious practice cannot only be used to underline one's individuality, but also one's belonging to a specific social group or class.

Despite the increasing relevance of social class in modern religious fields, current theoretical approaches to religion do not sufficiently consider social class. The disregard of social class becomes particularly evident with regard to the lack of studies concerning middle class religiosity. More empirical research on this topic is necessary to explore how middle class actors draw symbolic boundaries in religion. This study provides a small empirical contribution to this field of research. Conceptualized as an explorative study, it involves a limited sample of interviews and observations. That said, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Additional studies with larger empirical sets and deeper explorations may help to widen the empirical perspective and improve our understanding of middle class Pentecostalism, and middle class religion more generally. Moreover, there are also restrictions from a theoretical point of view: this study focused only on social class. Besides class, there are other aspects that play an important role, such as age, gender, ethnicity and their interplay with social class – all of which are likely to frame the religious practice of actors.[9] Thus, a further study of the interplay between these factors in the practice of religion could be fruitful.

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8   McCloud 2007b: 844; Smith 2005: 103.

9   McCloud 2007a: 14–15, 29–30; 2007b: 845.

Nevertheless, the relevance of boundary work is not limited to religion. Actors continuously negotiate the appropriateness of their way of being, continually striving to be viewed by their peers as "appropriate others." The insights from this study suggest that whenever actors exhibit "inappropriate" tendencies that deviate from their group representations, and which they cannot fully hide from the glances of their peers, they are likely to renegotiate their (in) appropriateness through boundary work. Studying untypical tendencies can therefore provide rich insights about how respectability and status are negotiated among social actors.

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