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# The Politics of Pentecostalism; Does it Help or Hinder Democratic Consolidation in Brazil?

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The Politics of Pentecostalism; Does it Help or Hinder Democratic  
Consolidation in Brazil?

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, Seth, and to my children: Brett, Lane and Mikhail. Their love and patience have sustained me through many long days and nights. I also want to thank my mom and dad, Jacque and Hal Heitler, for their encouragement and endless support. Lastly, I want to dedicate this to my father, Mike Moser, to whom I will always be grateful. He taught me to fight for my dreams, and to never give up. Thank you, dad, for reflecting God's perfect love. I miss you.

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I also want to thank Dr. Bernd Reiter for his encouragement, and for his contribution to this project. He was a valuable resource for me as I tried to navigate my way through the graduate program. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Eunjung Choi for her assistance and guidance.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Figures .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Introduction: Democracy in Brazil .....	1
Illuminating the Problem.....	1
Understanding Religion in Brazil.....	2
Dealing with the Effects of Modernization.....	4
Structures of Participation .....	5
Poor Land Management.....	6
Important Questions .....	8
Theoretical Framework .....	9
The Power Sharing Theory .....	9
Methodology .....	11
Using Data and Other Sources.....	13
Chapter One: Religion as a Social Dynamic.....	16
Defining the Terms .....	17
The Reasons for Religious Conversion.....	21
Dealing with Anomie in Developing Societies.....	23
Liberation Theology and Social Justice.....	26
How is Pentecostalism Relevant to Democracy? .....	29
Working for Social Justice .....	31
Christianity and Politics.....	33
Pentecostalism in a Power Sharing Relationship .....	36
Chapter Two: The Political and Social Dynamics of Brazil.....	38
Defining Democracy .....	38
Rondonia: A Micro Analysis of Land Conflict.....	44
Evangelical Growth in Rondonia.....	48
Chapter Three: Pentecostalism at Work .....	52
How Pentecostalism Can Reduce Fragmentation .....	55
Census Among Religious Elites .....	56
Evangelicals as a Power Sharing Partner.....	58

Chapter Four: Conclusions and Implications.....	62
Pentecostalism as a Positive Force .....	63
Pentecostalism as a Social Force .....	63
Sustaining Democracy .....	66
Implications .....	69
Drawbacks .....	69
Final Thoughts.....	70
 Bibliography .....	 72

## **TABLE OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Religious Conversion in Brazil.....	3
Figure 2: Diagram of Christianity .....	19
Figure 3: The Growth of Evangelicals in Rondonia .....	45
Figure 4: Voter Turnout in Brazil and Rondonia .....	49

## **ABSTRACT**

Like so many other developing nations, Brazil has suffered from extreme inequality. Even though it has a healthy economy, free elections and multiple political parties, there are deep divides and unstable political institutions. The relatively recent transition to democracy has allowed a large and growing Evangelical community to emerge which is causing a religious shifting. The Evangelical faith, of which Pentecostalism is a subset, is providing alternative structures for social and political expression previously denied to many. The Pentecostal churches are building community networks and strengthening civil society in a way that is giving many of Brazil's marginalized access and legitimacy.

The focus of this paper is to determine if Pentecostalism undermines or strengthens democratic consolidation in Brazil, and what role it has to play in power sharing.



## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL**

Like so many other developing nations, Brazil has battled oppression, poverty and inequality. It has seen its share of monarchies, dictators and military regimes and, has more recently, embraced democracy. The advent of democracy has ushered in neo-liberal economic policies and religious conversion which have impacted Brazil profoundly. It has also become a dominant economic player in the global market, and continues to show strength and perseverance in the face of a weakened global economy. In fact, recent 2011 economic indicators rank Brazil 8<sup>th</sup> in the world for GDP, along with low unemployment and little external debt (The World Factbook, 2011).

#### **Illuminating the Problem**

A relatively healthy economy, free elections, and multiple political party environment position Brazil as a shining star among developing countries. However, on closer inspection, social indicators show a different story. The homicide rate for the period of 1980-2002 has skyrocketed from 15 to 32 per 100,000 people (Crime, Violence

and Economic Development in Brazil: Elements for Effective Public Policy, 2006). And, recent data from Transparency International reveal a highly fractured and weak political system ranking Brazil 69 out of 178<sup>1</sup> for high corruption (Corruption Perception Index 2010 Results, 2010). The effects of rapid industrialization and globalization are producing extreme income inequality, social anomie and disconnect (Chestnut, 1997; Gaskill, 1997; Lipset & Lakin, The Democratic Century, 2004; Martin, 2002; Von Sinner, 2004) while re-enforcing existing structures of clientelism (Petersen, 2004). It is, therefore, evident that underneath the neo-liberal policies and strong economic indicators there are deep divides and unstable political institutions. These imbalances are threatening the consolidation and stability of democracy in Brazil (Lijphart, 2008).

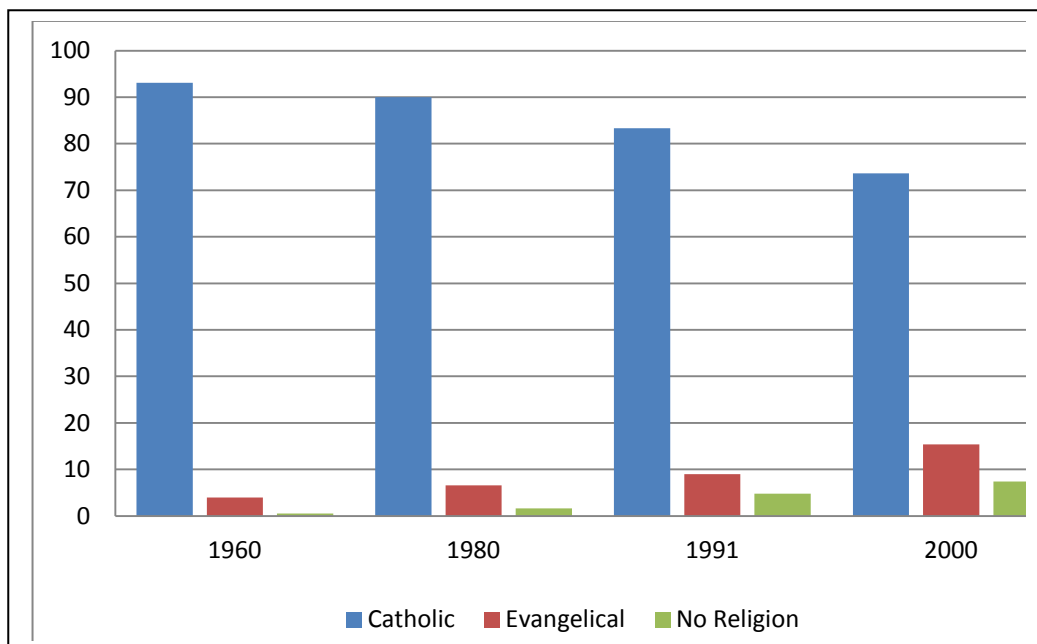
## **Understanding Religion in Brazil**

How are Brazilians responding to the effects of modernization? Part of the answer is found in the phenomenon of religious conversion. Recent demographic data show that even though Brazil still has the world's largest Catholic population, there is another trend that is emerging. Brazil now has one of the fastest growing

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<sup>1</sup> There were 178 countries ranked in the survey. Brazil was tied with Cuba, Montenegro and Romania

Pentecostal/Evangelical populations. Many Brazilians are leaving the Catholic Church for the Pentecostal faith. In fact, census data show that from 1940 to 2000, Catholicism dropped from 95% to 73.6%, while Evangelicals (of which Pentecostals are a sub-set) increased from 2.6% to 15.4% in the same period (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics n.d.). The World Value Survey conducted in 2006 shows a further decline in Catholicism to 69.1% and the percentage of Evangelicals at 23.3 % (2.3% claimed to be Protestant) (Online Data Analysis, 2006). The Pew Forum’s research in Brazil shows that eight in ten Protestants are either Pentecostal or Charismatic, and that the majority of Pentecostals belong to the Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church (Pewforum.org, 2006).



**Figure 1.** Religious Conversion in Brazil. Data compiled from IBGE census. Source: [www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/tendencias\\_demograficas/abela02.pdf](http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/tendencias_demograficas/abela02.pdf)

The religious shifting in Brazil has not decreased religiosity. In fact, data on religious practices show that 96.7% of respondents “totally believe” in God, 70.1% pray every day, and 25.6% attend church or religious services more than once a week<sup>2</sup> (Brazil Religion Survey, 2007). The Association of Religion Data Archives, using survey data from the World Values Survey, show that in 1991, 87.7% of those surveyed identified as a “religious person”, and by 2005 it was still 88% (ARDA, 2005). The same data shows that religion is important to most Brazilians, and, in fact, has a role to play in Brazilian society.

**Dealing with the effects of modernization.** The literature reveals Brazilians are converting to Pentecostalism to help them deal with the effects of modernization, ineffective social policies, and ongoing exclusion and inequality. This is particularly true with the poor and the marginalized in Brazil who are converting to Pentecostalism (Burdick, 1993; Chestnut, 1997). As Casanova observes all traditions “are radically transformed in the process of modernization” and people are “forced to respond to and adjust to modern conditions” (Casanova, 2011, p. 264). The movement away from traditional life to a more modern society has affected the nature and structure of religious

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<sup>2</sup> This survey was based on an average of 5700 respondents. For more information, please visit [www.thearda.com](http://www.thearda.com)

institutions in Brazil. Previous to the inception of democracy, the Catholic Church was the only game in town.

**Structures of participation.** Does the structure of participation within the Catholic Church and the Pentecostal church really matter? Much of the literature shows that it does matter. For instance, Lipset and Lakin argue that religion is only able to positively affect democracy insofar as it reflects a positive structure of participation (Lipset & Lakin, *The Democratic Century*, 2004). Burdick (1993), Stoll (1990) and Swatos (1994) also argue that Pentecostalism exhibits egalitarian structures which allow everyone to participate in the leadership, and in the body of the church. This is not the case with the Catholic Church. As Lipset and Lakin's work on democracies in Latin America shows, the authoritarian structures of the Catholic church have contributed to conditions that are hostile to a stable democracy, and Cava claims that Pentecostalism is a "root contradiction to Catholicism" (Della Cava, 1976, p. 27).

The Catholic Church, overseen by the Pope in Rome, has a traditional structure of leadership which is often imported from other countries. However, most Pentecostal churches in Brazil are predominantly indigenous and socially embedded (Freston, 2004; Gaskill, 1997; Petersen, 2004), making them attractive to the poor

and the marginalized (Burdick 1993; Stoll 1990; Swatos Jr. 1994). Because many of the Pentecostal churches are relatively de-centralized and autonomous ( (Freston, 2004; Von Sinner, 2004), they are usually self-governing and flexible (Acosta, 2008). This feature is distinctive from the Catholic Church's traditionally hierarchical, centralized structure and provides a unique opportunity for the marginalized to gain access to political and social space.

**Poor land management.** Ineffective social policies such as poor land management is also driving religious conversion, particularly in the Amazonian region (Mahar, 1989; Millikan, 1992; Motta, 2011; Von Sinner, 2004). Scholars have documented the effects of massive migration and how this has triggered land conflict, racism, and violence (Brown, Brown, & Desposato, 2007; Chestnut, 1997; Millikan, 1992). Rowan argues these types of abuses trigger the marginalized to seek out religion as a tool for change and a way to claim legitimacy (Ireland, 1992). Burdick's work also reveals that Protestantism/Pentecostalism helps the poor deal with abuses, create counterdiscourse to racism, and provide for a political space (Burdick 1993).

So much of the literature on religious conversion focuses on the Pentecostal Church's ability to attract the poor and the marginalized

(Burdick, 1993; Chestnut, 1997; Freston, 2004; Gaskill, 1997; Ireland, 1992 ;Martin, 2002). Nevertheless, the current literature does not provide definitive answers for what role the Evangelical church can play in accessing change; particularly in a fragmented democracy such as Brazil's. Is Pentecostalism able to contribute to cohesive democratic development? Some of the current literature on Latin American Pentecostalism argues that it may contribute while others argue it will not. Many scholars point to the Evangelical/ Pentecostal churches' ability to mobilize as a positive factor for democratic development (Freston, 2004; Gaskill, 1997; Petersen, 2004). While others suggest that it may be a force against (Ireland, 1999; Martin, 2002; Stoll, 1990) or have little to no effect on governmental structures (Gaskill, 1997). Petersen and Von Sinner argue that the effects of social networks created through religious community are positive for consolidation (Petersen, 2004; Von Sinner, 2004) and Freston points to these linkages as social capital (Freston, 2004). Von Sinner and Petersen also refer to Pentecostalism's potential to form alternative structures which they describe as "intermediate organizations" (Von Sinner, 2004, p. 249), and "alternative institutional organizations" (Petersen, 2004, p. 304). However, Petersen also argues that even though Pentecostals have the ability to link themselves horizontally does not necessarily translate into effective change vertically

(Petersen, 2004). At any rate, the current research only hints at the potential for Pentecostalism to be a viable alternative institution capable of contributing to consolidation. But, it falls short in describing the nature or purpose of this alternative structure and how it would access change.

### **Important Questions**

Therefore, in order to understand the potential of Pentecostalism in a modern world, I ask the following questions: how does Pentecostalism effect democratic consolidation in Brazil? Does it undermine or strengthen Brazil's democracy? And, how does it play a role in a power sharing relationship for reducing oppression and social inequality? In order to understand this relationship and how it will effect change, I use Arend Lijphart's consociational power sharing theory as described in his book: *Thinking about Democracy* (2008). With this theory I evaluate whether or not the distinctive features of Pentecostalism are compatible with consensus building. Ultimately, I argue that Evangelical Christians in a power sharing arrangement are a positive social force for democratic consolidation in Brazil.



## **Theoretical Framework**

In order for Brazil's democracy to strengthen and consolidate, the citizens must have access to the decision making process. However, Brazil's current structure undermines social cohesion and access to basic liberties. In fact, Brazil's democracy is failing to meet the needs of many, (Chestnut, 1997; Gaskill, 1997; Martin, 2002; Von Sinner, 2004) and has produced or even aggravated social inequalities. Abandoning democracy is not the answer. In fact, Arend Lijphart's work on power sharing does not undermine the basic tenets of democracy, but supports the idea that a stable democracy is much more likely to produce long term conflict management (Lijphart, 2008). Therefore, the goal of examining developing countries should be to focus on the nature and the structure of the democracy in order to offer long term solutions to instability.

**The power sharing theory.** Consociational democracy, also known as power sharing and consensus democracy, is a non-majoritarian governmental structure that guarantees group representation through coalition building (Lijphart, 2008). Power sharing seeks to include and represent as many citizens as possible rather than concentrating power in the hands of a few (Lijphart, 2008). The theory posits that increased citizen participation and

inclusion creates a stable democracy (Lijphart, 2008). This is often accomplished through coalition and consensus building designed to reduce conflict, and to create more opportunities for social cohesion. According to Lijphart, no particular institutional arrangement is necessary, but the conditions most conducive for a successful consociational democracy are determined by the elites embedded in subcultures. These elites can be either social or political party leaders. As such, it is necessary for cooperation among these elites in order to achieve balance. However, Lijphart also points out that even if all the conditions are met and there is consensus among the elites, there is still likelihood that a power sharing relationship is not achieved or if one is achieved, is not maintained. This may occur due to rivaling subcultures that are more interested in dominating than in consensus building (Lipset & Lakin, *The Democratic Century*, 2004).

In a country like Brazil where deep ethnic divides and extreme socioeconomic differences result in inequality and exclusion, consensus is desirable for consolidating their democracy. Even though Brazil has made weak attempts at power sharing, there are few successful examples, and even less that include Pentecostals as a coalition group. Therefore, in order to evaluate the potential for Brazilian Pentecostals to enter into a power sharing arrangement I use Arend Lijphart's conditions necessary for consensus building. His work includes multiple

conditions but primarily focus on four criteria: 1) the need for elites to accommodate demands of the subcultures 2) the need for elites of rival subcultures to be unified 3) the need for elites to be committed to achieving cohesion and stability 4) the need for elites to realize the implications of instability. In this study, I focus on the religious leaders of the Protestant/Evangelical movements. I use these criteria as a basis for my argument. While Pentecostalism is not the only answer to strengthening Brazil's democracy, I argue it is able to make a difference.

## **Methodology**

In order to make my argument, I use the case study method to examine democracy in Brazil. This research method which often uses a single case for analysis has been widely criticized. Harry Eckstein, well known for his defense of the case study method, captures the essence of this criticism by pointing out that a single instance only produces a single observation (Eckstein, 1992); creating, of course, the potential for observer bias or for drawing inaccurate conclusions. The case study method focuses on a few cases and tends to be more flexible and open ended while the large-N method offers multiple observations and more rigid analysis. This does not, however, render the method as outdated

or ineffective. Eckstein argues that a well-chosen case is useful for theoretical plausibility and for determining the validity of solutions (Eckstein, 1992). He also establishes that a well chosen case allows the research to elucidate in-depth historical, cultural and sociological factors which is more difficult, if not impossible, with a large number of cases. Questions about sampling error, aggregate data, and causal relationships abound in large-N studies. Conversely, in single case analysis the researcher is much more likely to avoid sampling error, complicated data and ambiguous causal relationships. More importantly, case studies are sufficient for invalidating or confirming theory (Eckstein, 1992). The deductive process of case study analysis allows the researcher to draw conclusions based on a set of clear premises.

Brazil, the focus of this study, presents as a fascinating case. I have chosen Brazil because this country clearly exhibits a high level of economic development while functioning with chronically weak structures and political party fragmentation (Lipset & Lakin, 2004; Reiter, 2009). Simultaneously, there is a large and growing Evangelical community which is causing a religious change. Many sources, including the CIA World Factbook, have widely documented Brazil's chronic inequality and oppression in the face of rapid economic growth. Eckstein own work on democratic stability has provided clues

to these imbalances. Historical cases reveal that rapid growth is often followed by the creation of a pure democracy which is “always more tenuous than impure democracies” (Eckstein, 1992, p. 218). He argues that the speed of development, not the quality, is the risk factor for long term security. In fact, if economic development happens too quickly, stresses are placed on the government and social sphere which may be harmful to democratic development and stability (Eckstein, 1992). This has certainly been the case in Brazil where rapid industrialization has caused innumerable effects (Lipset & Lakin, *The Democratic Century*, 2004). Understanding what role, if any, Pentecostalism plays in making a difference for Brazil is important for understanding how religion affects democracy. The case study method allows me to investigate these causal mechanisms at work in Brazil, and to evaluate nuances specific to this country. Ultimately, the findings in this research may be used to evaluate how Pentecostals may function in a power sharing relationship in other developing countries.

**Using Data and other sources.** In order to examine the effects of Pentecostalism on democratic consolidation, I use aggregate data from several sources. Most of the data included are related to the religious beliefs, views and practices of Brazilians. The range and scope of collecting census and survey data in a country the size of

Brazil prohibit researchers from gathering data on a yearly basis, and is even more difficult for an individual researcher. Therefore, I am using data collected from: the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Association of Religion and Data Archives (ARDA), The Pew Forum and the World Values Survey. The census data provided through the IBGE on religious identity is from the period of 1940 to 2000, and other data is from the late 1990's until 2006. Even though some of these findings are not as current as desired, they are still applicable. This data is analyzed throughout the study and included as findings and/or in graphs and tables. These findings are used to determine if there is, in fact, a cause and effect relationship between religion, Pentecostalism specifically, and a stable democracy.

The process of elucidating my argument includes understanding Pentecostalism as a subset of Protestantism, its distinctive features, and how it impacts democracy. This is accomplished in three distinct chapters which are supported with data, graphs and tables. In chapter one, I lay out the theoretical framework of the paper which includes an examination of Pentecostalism's distinctive features conducive for a power sharing arrangement necessary for strengthening Brazil's democracy. In chapter two, I look specifically at Brazil and the social forces that are contributing to inequality and instability. The next chapter focuses on Pentecostalism in a power sharing arrangement,

and how it will help to reduce social inequality and to increase social cohesion. In the final chapter, I evaluate whether or not my argument supports my hypothesis and the implications of the study.

**CHAPTER 1:**  
**RELIGION AS A SOCIAL DYNAMIC**

Why are the poor and marginalized converting to Pentecostalism, and what are the implications of this shifting? Does religion matter to Brazilians and does it have a role to play in a consociational relationship? These are important questions for understanding whether religion can help transcend deep cultural divides, and play a critical role in reducing inequality and conflict. In this chapter, I operationalize and analyze important terms. I also examine why Brazilians are converting to Pentecostalism, and the distinctive features of Pentecostalism that make it relevant for democratic consolidation. Lastly, I consider whether these features of Pentecostalism are conducive to a power sharing arrangement.



## Defining the terms

The current literature on Protestant growth reveals that defining Protestants and related subgroups is difficult (Crowley, 1998; Freston, 2004; Petersen, 2004; Swatos Jr., 1994), and by labeling all groups as “Protestant” makes data unreliable and incomplete (Gaskill, 1997).

The census data for Brazil aggregates all non-Catholics (that define themselves as Christian) under the term “Protestant” or “Evangelical”<sup>3</sup>.

The challenge for more accurate reporting lies in the fact that Protestants often identify as belonging to one or more category; this is especially true in developing countries. Often, studies lump entire categories of believers together making it very difficult to disaggregate findings. For the purpose of this study, I will use the following definition: Protestantism describes all those claiming to be Christian but who are not Catholic or Eastern Orthodox (Swatos Jr., 1994).

Unlike the Catholic Church there is no central authoritative body for the Protestant Church. Consequently, there are many different denominations and sects. There are mainline denominations or traditional (or historical) churches<sup>4</sup> and there are revival nominations which are less traditional churches (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006). Once you begin to define subsets

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<sup>3</sup> The IBGE labels Christians that are non-Roman Catholic as Evangelicals in all data collected for states. In IBGE data overviews/summaries Evangelicals are often referred to as Protestants.

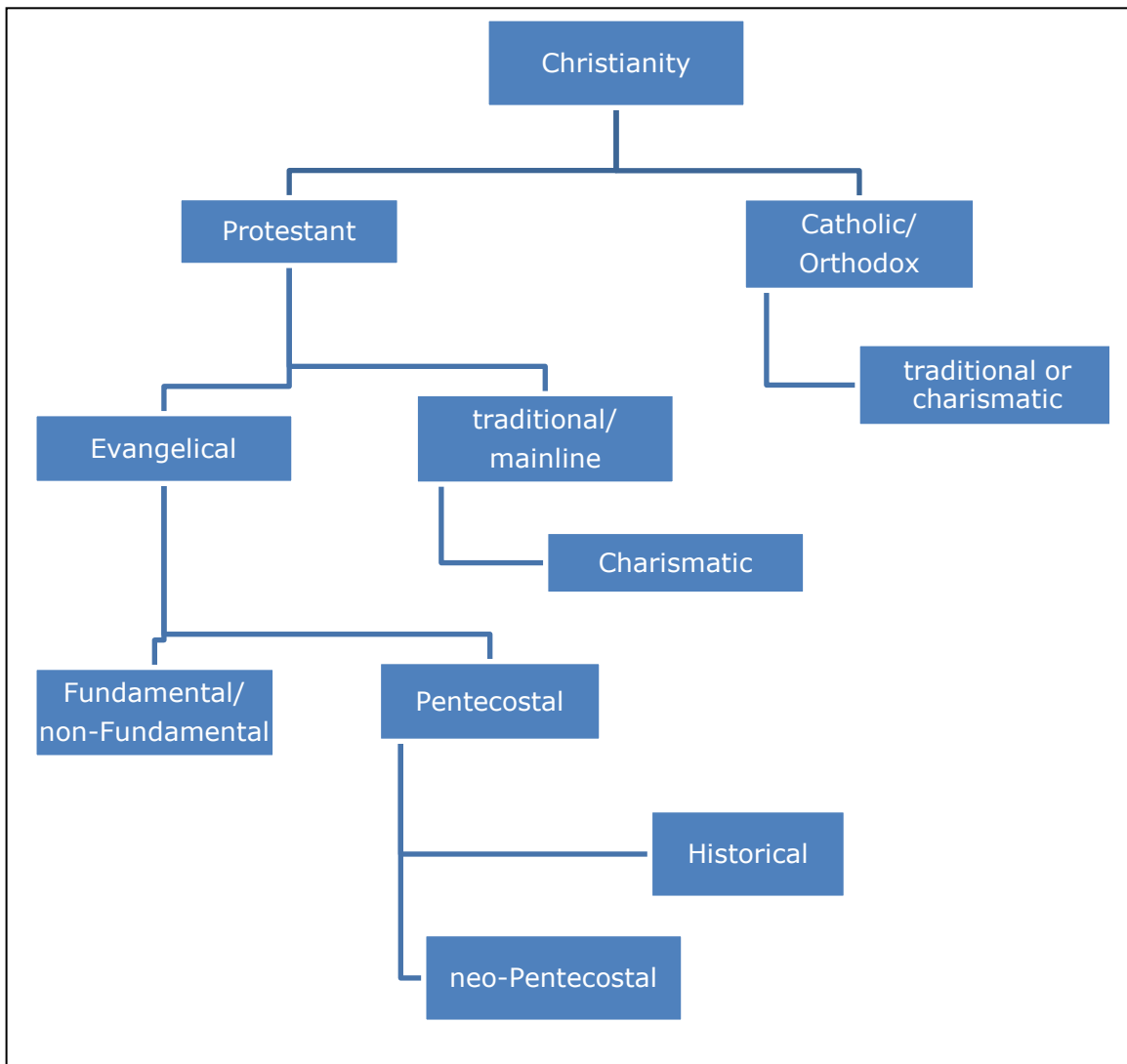
<sup>4</sup> Examples of mainline/traditional churches are Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian

under Protestantism, ambiguity and interchange become more apparent. For instance, a person may identify as all of the following: Protestant, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Charismatic. However, for classification purposes, researchers often use the term “Charismatic” to describe all non-Pentecostal Christians that believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Robbins J. , 2004).

The umbrella term “Evangelical” covers Pentecostals and Fundamentalists (Robbins J. , 2004) but not Catholics or Orthodox believers. Protestants in the Third-World are much more likely to be identified as Evangelical than their counterpart in the West (Freston, 2004). The Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE), which is responsible for collecting and reporting census data in Brazil, aggregates all Pentecostals under the category of Evangelicals. This, of course, would be problematic in the United States since most Evangelicals do not self identify as Pentecostals (US Religious Landscape, 2007).

The term “Pentecostal” is difficult to define. With the exception of the larger, global churches like the Assemblies of God (AG) and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), most are locally structured, particularly in Latin America. Historical Pentecostals are generally members of the largest Pentecostal church in Brazil, the

Assemblies of God Church or, as Crowley describes them, “Latinized examples of the more established Pentecostal congregations from the USA” (Crowley, 1998, p. 263). The Assemblies of God church (AG) was originally established by Swedish missionaries in 1911, and then later transferred to Brazilian leadership in 1930 (Pewforum.org, 2006).



**Figure 2:** Diagram of Christianity. Diagram constructed by using information about religious groups gathered from The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Online source: <http://www.pewforum.org/Topics/Religious-Affiliation/Christian/>

The second largest church is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) which is under the leadership of Bishop Macedo and openly preaches "Prosperity Theology". Both the AG and UCKG churches, though large conglomerates and with large global connection, are uniquely Brazilian. The other branch is the neo-Pentecostals, which are usually indigenous, small and self-governing churches (Acosta, 2008).

While Pentecostals are Protestant by definition, there is one important difference: the hyper focus on the supernatural. Pentecostals place heavy emphasis on spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and faith healing. These supernatural tenets of the Pentecostal faith are from the book of Acts in the New Testament portion of the Bible, and underpin the religious expression of their faith. In other words, Pentecostals believe the proof of their faith is revealed in the supernatural manifestations of speaking in tongues, prophesying and/or through faith healing.

A democracy is an arrangement for regulating conflict. But in order it to be effective, Linz and Stepan argue that civil society must be able to articulate demands while political society aggregate demands, and the state perform functions necessary to meeting those

demands (Linz & Stepan, 1996). The goal is to have a secure, consolidated democracy. Linz and Stepan define a consolidated democracy as having the following three criteria: 1) behavioral- there are no political actors or entities seeking to overturn or secede from the state 2) attitudinal- the majority of public opinion believe that democracy is the best way to govern and, 3) constitutional- all government and non-governmental actors accept democratic procedures, laws and institutions as only valid vehicle for solving conflict (Linz & Stepan, 1996).

Therefore, for this study I evaluate the effect of my independent variable, Pentecostalism, on my dependent variable, consolidated democracy, in order to show a causal relationship.

### **The Reasons for Religious Conversion**

There is a plethora of literature on Protestant conversion in Latin America, and many scholars, including Political Scientists, Sociologists, and Anthropologists are seeking to understand this religious shifting. David Martin, one of the most influential sociologists on the subject of religion, describes the growth of Pentecostalism as a massive religious mobilization on par with other world religions (Martin, 2002). And, Douglas Petersen, who has also published extensively on

Pentecostalism, describes “the rippling waves of the Pentecostal experience have flowed into almost every sector of religious and social society in Latin America” (Petersen, 2004, p. 293). In order to understand the reasons for conversion, it is important to first look at the significance of the conversion.

In Brazil, as in much of Latin America, the statistics show a consistent rate of conversion away from Catholicism. In a study conducted by Datafolha in 2007, of the more than 5200 respondents, 20.5% said they had not always followed their religion, and of those 20.5%, 67.6% were previously Catholic (ARDA, 2005). Interestingly, the shifting away from Catholicism has not been entirely to secularism, as would be expected. Instead it has been to Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism in particular. In 2006 alone, 72% of Protestants in Brazil claimed to be Pentecostal, many of whom were previously Catholic (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006). While the increase from 1940 to 2000 has been less than dramatic (12.8%), it is a noticeable difference considering that until the 1980’s, 90% or more of all Brazilians were historically Catholic. Not to mention, in some regions of Brazil, the change has been even more dramatic. For example, in the northern regions of Rondonia and Roraima, over 20% of the population claims to be Evangelical in 2000 (IBGE, 2000). Much of the religious shifting away from Catholicism

began in the democratic phase of the 1980's and has continued to trend upward. Although the religious demographics for 2010 have not been released by the IBGE, it is expected that the Evangelical community will continue to grow while the Catholic Church continues to lose ground.

There is interesting demographic data on those converting to Pentecostalism. The IBGE census in 2000 shows Pentecostals as having the least amount of schooling with an average of 5.3 years, compared to Evangelicals at 6.9 years, Spiritualists at 9.6 years, and Roman Catholics at 5.8 years. The IBGE in 2000, also identifies Pentecostals as having the lowest monthly income among all religious groups, with spiritualist showing the highest at R\$3.796,00 and Pentecostals at R\$1.271,00. Pentecostals tithe the most, tend to watch more religious television than non-Pentecostals, abstain from alcohol, disapprove of sex outside of marriage and believe in working for social justice (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006). These statistics show that the majority of Pentecostals tend to be low income, uneducated and morally conservative.

**Dealing with anomie in developing societies.** The statistics support that Brazilians are religious even though classical secularization theory would say otherwise. This theory posits that as

the world becomes more modern, people will become more secular (Casanova, 2011; Gaskill, 1997). In other words, as Brazil continues to develop, religion should decline. Rob Warner, a Professor of religion, culture and society at the University of Chester, UK, sums up the secularization theory as the “demise of religion was sociologically determined and culturally inevitable” (Warner, 2010, p. intro 3). However, many scholars have challenged the secular paradigm on the basis that it only explains the decline of religion in Western Europe (Casanova, 2011; Warner, 2010) arguing that Protestant/Pentecostal growth has actually occurred in response to modernization and the breakdown of traditional society (Casanova, 2011; Gaskill, 1997; Petersen, 2004).

Rapid industrialization has caused massive migration to and from the urban areas. This social uprooting has resulted in a lack of cohesiveness among communities and groups. What was previously provided through traditional society, but stripped away by modernization, has caused anomie or, in other words, disconnect and uncertainty. People are turning to religion as a remedy to these social stresses and disconnects. The Pentecostal churches are, as Freston describes them, “promoting bonds of solidarity” through faith communities (Freston, *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America*, 2008, p. 203). Gaskill describes this religious connection as



providing “individuals and social collectivities with systems of meaning to combat existential anomie” (Gaskill, 1997, p. 74).

In response to modernization, Brazilians are not abandoning their faith. In fact, a poll conducted in 1991 shows that 85.5% of respondents consider religion important, but this figure jumps to 91% in 2006<sup>5</sup>. The same study shows that 87.7% identify as a religious person in 1991 while holding steady at 88% in 2006 (Online Data Analysis, 1991-2006). Another poll shows that 67% pray to God every day, and 54% believe in absolute moral standards (Pewforum.org, 2006). More interesting, though, is the rate of religious conversion which began during democratic development. In 1960, 93.1% of Brazilians were Catholic, and only 4% were Evangelical. In 1980, the percentage of Catholics dropped to 90% and Evangelicals rose to 6.6%. In 2000, 73.6% of Brazilians claimed to be Catholic, and 15.4% Evangelical. Incidentally, in 1980, 1.6% of those claiming to have no religion rose to 7.3% in 2000<sup>6</sup>, while those claiming to be spiritualists, of which the Afro-Brazilian religions of Umbanda and Candomblé are included, went from 1.3% to 1.6%. In 2006 alone, 72% of Protestants in Brazil claimed to be Pentecostal, many of whom were previously

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<sup>5</sup> This figure combines the data of those who feel religion is very important with those who feel it is rather important.

<sup>6</sup> At the date of this writing the latest census data on religious identification has not been released by the IBGE (2010)

Catholic (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006). These numbers reflect a shifting away from Catholicism to Pentecostalism, and indicate the importance of religion in the lives of Brazilians.

**Liberation Theology and social justice.** Understanding the reasons for religious conversion in Latin America usually begins with a brief discussion on Liberation Theology. Liberation Theology is the progressive expression of the social justice movement within the Latin American Catholic Church. Born out of the political and social oppression of the 1960's, the movement manifested throughout Latin America, but was particularly strong in Brazil. The Catholic priests, living among the poor and excluded, helped them to organize and vocalize their needs through social awareness groups such as ecclesial based communities (CEB's) and the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) (Burdick 1993; Ireland 1999). These groups were, as Ireland, Von Sinner and Cava describe them, predominantly focused on the peasant workers, land rights, and human rights violations (Ireland 1992; Della Cava 1976; Von Sinner 2004). The Liberation Theology, however, became too focused on politics and less on meeting the needs of the people (Chestnut 1997; Motta 2011; Von Sinner 2004) becoming what Burdick (1993) describes as a "progressive political manifesto".

Granted, the Catholic Church's Liberation Theology exposed the social

ills of the marginalized and the oppressed, but it had “not sufficiently proved itself to be meaningful to poor people’s lives” (Von Sinner 2004:249). The spiritual aspects of religion that provided comfort, hope and cohesion were lost in the political rhetoric of the theology. Consequently, there was a religious opening created for the Protestant church (Ireland 1992; Motta 2011; Stoll 1990; Von Sinner 2004) of which they took full advantage.

Other common explanations for Protestant/Pentecostal conversion are that the faith provides coping mechanisms and relief from poverty-related deprecation (Chestnut 1997; Ireland 1992; Stoll 1990; Swatos Jr. 1994). These coping mechanisms include: prayer and faith healing, community support, leadership/teaching opportunities within the church, and improved self esteem. These spiritual needs are important to Brazilians, and the survey data back up this claim. For example, in 1991 the World Values Survey show that 56.9% believe that churches give answers to spiritual needs, and this figure jumped to 74.6% in 2006 (Online Data Analysis, 1991-2006). Religion offers the poor and the marginalized the opportunity for hope, and for purpose. In fact, Chestnut’s (1997) work on Pentecostals in Brazil reveals that conversion is often the bi-product of material deprecation, poverty related illness, and marginalization. It is a way for the powerless and suffering to access change (Burdick 1993;

Ireland 1992; Von Sinner 2009) to help the poor deal with abuses, create counterdiscourse to racism, and to provide for a political space (Burdick 1993).

Poor land management is also a factor for religious conversion, but is often under emphasized in the literature. Liberalization means expansion and development which translates into massive mobilization of large sectors of society. Mainly concentrated in the north along the Amazon, this expansion has triggered land conflict, rural violence, and massive deforestation (Brown, Brown, & Desposato, 2007; Mahar, 1989) which seems to be escalating. In developing countries such as Brazil, inadequate land management policies, and ineffective judicial systems create a nightmare scenario for poor peasants struggling to own land. And, even though the Catholic Church attempted to help the poor peasants, their traditional relationship with the landed aristocracy, created mistrust (Chestnut, 1997; Ireland, 1999). The Catholic priests, though sympathetic to the woes of the poor, did not suffer from poverty, illiteracy and displacement. By contrast, the indigenous leaders of the Pentecostal church have allowed the faith to thrive on the Amazonia frontier, and to provide spiritual power for those living in subsistent conditions such as migrant farmers and laborers (Chestnut, 1997).

## **How is Pentecostalism Relevant to Democracy?**

Religion has the potential to to breakdown boundaries and to provide social cohesion. In developing countries like Brazil, deep social and economic divides threaten the longterm growth and stability of democracy. In order for this to not happen, cohesion and greater access to participation is desired. There are several features of Protestantism/Pentecostalism which make it compatible with democracy, and positively affect consolidation. Ultimately, as Petersen argues, these features create an opportunity for its followers to access a “better life and a more secure future” (Petersen, 2004, p. 305).

A unique and important feature of Pentecostalism is the indigenous aspect of the leadership. Because the majority of Pentecostal churches in Brazil are locally structured, autonomous , and socially embedded, leadership is often native to the community. The Pentecostal religion is attractive to those that are excluded and/or uneducated because they have access to leadership positions, and because leaders often mirror their membership. Unlike the Catholic Church, and some of the mainline Protestant churches, leaders are not chosen on the basis of their education or appointed through a hierarchical structure. Often, Pentecostal leaders are chosen by the “anointment” of the Holy Spirit, meaning it is based on faith, and not

on skill. Or, if they are able to create a following, they start their own church.

Social cohesion is an implication of the egalitarian institutional structures of the Pentecostal churches, particularly the neo-Pentecostal churches. The egalitarian nature of the faith allows access to the Holy Spirit by everyone, thus creating an inversion of the status quo (Burdick 1993). Because the uneducated, people of color, and women have access to leadership roles inside these churches (Petersen, 2004) it is acting as a counterdiscourse to racism and class bigotry (Burdick 1993). Thereby, creating access to political and social space by those normally excluded, and opposition to traditional authoritarian structures still present in Brazil's developing democracy (Gaskill, 1997). Gaskil argues this is because the church allows believers to construct and express a sense of personal dignity and community previously denied (Gaskill, 1997, p. 74), and Meyer describes this religious social cohesion as the "politics of belonging" (Meyer, 2010, p. 743). Pentecostalism is providing horizontal linkages (Martin, 2002; Petersen, 2004; Von Sinner, 2004), and contributing to the development of a civic community (Freston, 2008) which can go along way in a society deeply mired in distrust. With 56% of respondents saying they cannot trust their national government, 57% felt the same way about their city and local government, and 34% saying they

cannot trust their neighbor at all, social cohesion on any level is a significant contribution to an unstable democracy. (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006).

The Pentecostal community is building social networks which is resulting in what Douglas Petersen describes as “accumulation of social capital” necessary for empowerment (Petersen, 2004, p. 295). His research on Pentecostalism in Latin America leads him to suggest that the Pentecostal social movement is providing a valuable contribution for civic society.

### **Working for Social Justice**

Another important feature of Pentecostalism is the need to address social injustices. In 2006, 59.8% surveyed believe reducing extreme poverty is a top priority (compared to 60.5% of Evangelicals), 62.5% felt increasing primary education is a top priority (compared to 65.6% of Evangelicals), and 52% felt improving housing conditions is a top priority (compared to 54.9% of Evangelicals) (Online Data Analysis, 2006). These statistics reveal that social issues matter to most Brazilians, and are particularly important to Evangelicals. More striking are the differences among Christians concerning the role of churches in society. The World Values survey in 2006, shows that

56.8% of Evangelicals, compared to 48.8% of Catholics and Protestants, feel churches give answers to social problems. The same survey showed 86.7% of Evangelicals, compared to 75% Catholics and 79.4% Protestants, feel churches give answers to people's spiritual needs (Online Data Analysis, 2006), thus supporting the argument that Pentecostals believe their faith offers a way to cope with the effects of poverty (Stoll, 1990; Swatos Jr., 1994). Other survey data suggest that Evangelicals feel a sense of responsibility toward society. For example, 80.2% of Evangelicals, compared to 75.3% of Catholics, believe that work is a duty toward society (Online Data Analysis, 2006), and 87% of Pentecostals believe they should work for the injustices against the poor (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006).

Pentecostalism is providing important linkages in society. The socially embedded leaders are able to connect with their congregation on a deeper level, and the church community offers believers connection, fellowship and support. The relational and social aspects of the faith, make Pentecostalism attractive to those disconnected from society. Previous research shows that Pentecostals have established horizontal linkages that create social networks, egalitarian structures which help gain legitimacy, and alternative structures for working against the status quo. Petersen describes the Pentecostal community



as "creating their own alternative institutions" (Petersen, 2004, p. 304) which are ripe for political mobilization.

However, some scholars argue that while Pentecostalism provides alternative structures and social networks which are conducive for change, Pentecostals are not directly challenging current structures (Freston, 2004; Gaskill, 1997; Von Sinner, 2004). If the Evangelical community is prime for action then why have they not been able to act cohesively? The answer lies in the structure of participation on the macro level. As Burdick argues, in order for Pentecostals to engage, it must be strategically possible (Burdick, 1993) and, more importantly, they must be able to articulate their needs better (Linz & Stepan, 1996). If the marginalized are by definition excluded, then the current institutional structures need to be altered. Pentecostals have the horizontal linkages. What they are lacking are strong, sustainable vertical linkages in order to make a difference. This may be possible in a power sharing arrangement.

### **Christianity and Politics**

In order to understand how the linkages of the Evangelical community translate into political power, there are two examples worthy of consideration. The first example is the Christian right in the United

States, and the second example is the Christian Socialist movement in the United Kingdom. Both are Christian pressure groups actively involved in politics.

The Christian right is often associated with Protestant fundamentalists, but it also includes Evangelicals and Catholics. Mostly focused on social issues such as abortion and gay marriage, the movement is often characterized as politically conservative. The Christian right encompasses many different groups, including the Christian Coalition (CC) which was founded in 1989. Claiming to be the largest conservative grassroots movement in America (Christian Coalition of America, 2012), it is a pressure group actively focused on voter recruitment and public policy change. One of the most important functions of the Christian Coalition is lobbying for legislation on social and economic issues. In addition, they mobilize membership to write letters to newspapers and political leaders, and to call local radio stations to help persuade public opinion (Christian Coalition of America, 2012). The 2012 agenda for the group includes getting the new national health care law overturned, supporting the Defense of Marriage Act, and fighting to make tax cuts permanent (Christian Coalition of America, 2012). Working as a pressure group often aligned with the Republican Party, the CC is an example of a grassroots social movement with strong horizontal and vertical linkages.

Another example is the Christian Socialist Movement (CSM) in the United Kingdom. Much like the CC in the United States, the CSM is a pressure group. However, it is also in a power sharing arrangement with one of the biggest political parties in the United Kingdom, the Labour Party. The CSM, which is committed to a socialist agenda, describes their Christian mission as working for social justice and on shaping the political agenda (Christian Socialist Movement, 2012). Their membership includes leaders on the local level as well as members of the United Kingdom's Parliament. Much like the CC, the CSM is focused on mobilization efforts, and on shaping public policy. However, the CSM is more focused on social justice issues and on closing the equality gap in all areas.

Both groups are working to connect the church to the political realm. This is accomplished through actively communicating with church groups and church leaders. Congregations are mobilized through direct mail, websites, face-to-face recruiting, and other means of communication. These extensive communication networks produce a relatively cohesive political voice seeking to impact public policy. The CSM and the Christian right have rallied their base by focusing on social issues. This has allowed them to mobilize a voter bloc, and to effectively act as a pressure group. Acting, as Lipset describes, to stimulate participation which is a necessary component of a stable

democracy (Lipset, *The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address*, 1994).

### **Pentecostalism in a Power Sharing Relationship**

The CC and the CSM provide adequate examples of organizations acting as conduits between the church and state. These social movements are part of a strong civil society engaged in mobilizing participants, and providing the basis for “institutionalized opposition” (Lipset, 1994, p. 17). Their membership bases are diverse, but they are alliances formed on value systems rather than religious identity.

While the Evangelicals in Brazil are diverse in religious and political identity, they often share similar social values. Like the CC and the CSM, the Evangelicals in Brazil have strong views on social issues which make them ripe for collaboration. Further, the Evangelical churches, which already function as social movements, have the institutional autonomy necessary for forming political pacts. However, in order for the Pentecostals to have any lasting and effective power, they will need to form an alliance with other Protestant and Catholic churches.

In this chapter, I examined the importance of religion, the causes of religious conversion, and the features of Pentecostalism which make it relevant for democratic consolidation in Brazil. I also examined the key ingredient necessary for uniting Christian groups in a collaborative relationship: social justice issues. Religion often is able to transcend cultural divides, especially if the structure of participation allows equal access by members. In the case of Pentecostalism, all members of Brazilian society are allowed access to membership, and to leadership roles. This feature has attracted converts and has created opportunities of participation otherwise unavailable to many groups in Brazil. The unintended consequence of participation has created a social movement with a strong institutional structure capable of influencing the political process.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **The Political and Social Dynamics of Brazil**

In this chapter, I focus on the political and social dynamics of Brazil which are contributing to instability. The argument is not centered on what is causing inequality or divide, but rather what is likely to help reduce it. Of particular interest, are the features of uneven development, the effects of modernization and land management prevalent in Brazil. There are multiple political and social dynamics at work, and it is critical to understand whether they are acting against or in favor of a stable democracy. In the last section of the chapter, I examine a Brazilian state with the highest percentage of Evangelicals in the country. This region provides an example of how these social and political forces are creating conflict, and how Evangelicals are a viable resource for cooperation.

#### **Defining Democracy**

In order to examine Brazil's democracy, it is important to elucidate the parameters of the discussion. Defining "democracy" is

difficult because there is no clear theoretical framework available.

Experts often disagree on what defines a democracy or what elements must be in place for a stable democracy. Nevertheless, for this study I use Lipset and Lankin's definition of democracy as a starting point:

"an institutional arrangement in which all adult individuals have the power to vote, through free and fair competitive elections, for their chief executive and national legislature" (Lipset & Lakin, *The Democratic Century*, 2004, p. 19). This definition, while bare bones, articulates the need for participation by citizens. The next step is to define the features necessary for a consolidated democracy. The criteria for consolidation, as defined by Linz and Stepan and discussed in chapter one, require that democracy: 1) be the only choice 2) be deeply internalized by the citizenry 3) be institutionally legitimized 4) be cohesive and have a robust civil society.

Granted, Brazil's relatively high literacy rate, low unemployment rate and impressive budget surplus<sup>7</sup> create an impression of stability. However, in order to understand the impact of the social and political dynamics going on in Brazil it requires digging deeper than the current economic indicators. The percentage of those living on less than \$2 a

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<sup>7</sup> The CIA World Factbook for Brazil: literacy rate is 88.6% in 2004; unemployment rate of 6.1% in 2011 (est.) and a budget surplus of 2.90 in 2011. For more information, please visit <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/br.html>

day and living below the poverty line compared to the percentage of those with the highest income<sup>8</sup>, reveals a society that is one of the most unequal in the world (Reiter, 2009). The United Nations ranks Brazil 84<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries in the area of human development (based on life expectancy, educational attainment, and income), and gives it a GINI coefficient of 53.9 for inequality (the scale is 0 for absolute equality and 100 for absolute inequality) (Human Development Report, 2011). Even more telling is the statistic showing that 84% of respondents are dissatisfied with the direction of the country (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006). These statistics reveal a different side of Brazil. And, even though there are several indications of a healthy democracy, the intense inequality, the perception of corruption and the tenuous democratic attitudes threaten to undermine it or, worse, collapse it. The threat, however, does not come from a foreign enemy or a visible authoritative regime, but from a lack of cohesion and trust among the citizens. Consequently, Brazil demonstrates a high degree of democracy, but low degrees of consolidation among its citizens.

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<sup>8</sup> The World Bank for Brazil in 2009: 10.8% living on less than \$2 a day; 21.4% living at the poverty line; 42.9% hold the highest 10% of country's income. For more information, please visit <http://data.worldbank.org/country/brazil?display=default>



Is Brazil's democracy institutionally legitimate? The answer to this question is not easily answered. On the one hand, it presents as a thriving democracy with relatively healthy, competitive elections and multiple political parties. But, on the other hand, there are indications that the system is fractured. One strong indication of poor institutional legitimacy is the rate of violent crimes committed. In 2008, the United Nations documents that there were 57,910 intentional homicides, and of those, 90.8% were males (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008-2009). In terms of corruption, a survey done by Pew Forum shows that 94% of respondents think corruption is a very big problem (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006). The political system is highly fragmented and has been plagued with multiple scandals over the years.

In order to understand what is driving these deep divides, it is important to look at Brazil's rapid development. As pointed out earlier, the rate of development affects the quality of development. It is no secret that Brazil's rise to become the strongest economy in the region happened relatively quick. While other Latin American countries were struggling to emerge from failed import substitution policies, Brazil was on track to be an economic miracle. Now as one of the BRIC countries, it is an economic powerhouse. The challenge for Brazil, however, is sustaining its neo-liberal markets in the face of a fledgling

democracy and uneven development. Because, as Petersen points out, if most democracies in Latin America are flawed then they are unable to respond to the needs of whole segments of society (Petersen, 2004).

Modernization has been positive for Brazil in many ways. The GINI index which measures income distribution in a country, was at 63.3 in 1989, but has consistently dropped since 1993 to an all time low of 54.7 in 2009 (Data/GINI Index). The illiteracy rates have also dropped significantly and so has unemployment. Unemployment in 2003 was at 9%, but at the last report in January 2012 it has dropped to 5.5%<sup>9</sup> (IBGE, 2000). It is likely that as job opportunities increase, quality of life increases as well.

Even though all these indicators point to an increased quality of life, other indicators point to persistent inequality, exclusion from resources and insecurity. For example, the IBGE reports the monthly average family income per capita in 2006 as R\$596.00 (approximately \$327.86 USD), but half of these families are living below R\$350.00 a month (roughly equivalent to \$192.54 USD). This translates into an income gap of the richest 10% making 18.2% more than the poorest

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<sup>9</sup> Compare this figure to the unemployment rate in the United States which was 8.3% in January 2012 <http://www.deptofnumbers.com/unemployment/us/>

40% in 2006<sup>10</sup>. The illiteracy rates also show a huge disparity, at 6.5% for whites and 14% for blacks and browns in 2006<sup>11</sup> (IBGE, 2000). In the processes of globalization, all traditions are radically changed and cultural identities are threatened (Casanova, 2011). Gaskill argues that these processes are the catalyst to anomie so evident in Latin America (Gaskill, 1997). Survey data help to support this argument: only 35% believe that most people are better off in a free market economy, 75% believe the government should guarantee every citizen food and a place to eat, and 79% believe that moral decline is a big problem (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006).

Capitalism has opened up new markets and new opportunities, creating rapid expansion and development. In fact, Brazil has transitioned from a predominantly agrarian society to a largely urban one. In 1960's only 44.7% of the population lived in urban areas and by 2010 this number had climbed to 84% (IBGE, 2000). This shift is creating overcrowding in the urban areas thereby exacerbating existing social stresses. The government has responded by opening up previously undeveloped land as an escape valve for the social tensions

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<sup>10</sup> In 1996, the difference was 23.4 times greater. For more information, please visit: [http://www.ibge.gov.br/english/presidencia/noticias/noticia\\_visualiza.php?id\\_noticia=987&id\\_pagina=1](http://www.ibge.gov.br/english/presidencia/noticias/noticia_visualiza.php?id_noticia=987&id_pagina=1)

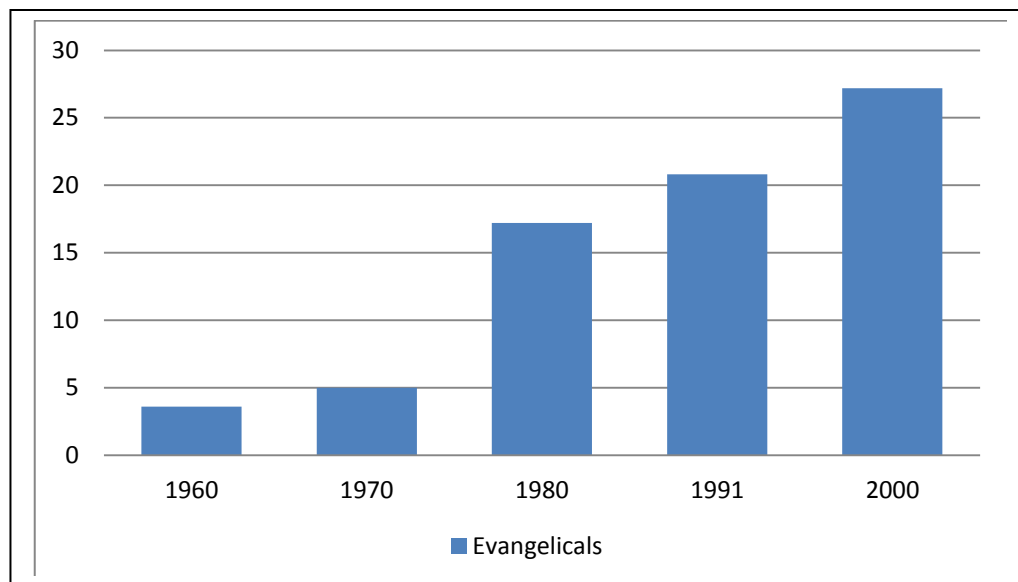
<sup>11</sup> In the same data set, only 4% of blacks and browns had completed higher education, compared to 12% of whites

occurring in the cities (Millikan 1992). Most of this development has been in the Amazonian region of the north, creating high rates of migration. Just in the period of 2000-2010 alone, the northern region has experienced an increase of almost 23% in population. This massive migration is producing large scale land conflicts, resulting in oppression and increased violence.

### **Rondonia: A Micro Analysis of Land Conflict**

Not only has Brazil's northern region experienced the largest population growth, but it also has a large Protestant/Evangelical community. According to the IBGE, Rondonia stands out as having the highest percentage of Protestants/Evangelicals in the country. Over the past 40 years Rondonia has had an explosion in Evangelical growth. In 1960, only 3.6% of the population were Evangelical, by 1980 that figure climbed to over 17%, and by 2000 to 27.2% of which 10.4% were Pentecostal (IBGE, 2000). The demographics have also changed over the years. In 1960, 70.5% of the population was brown/mixed, 24.1% was white and 5.1% was black. In 2000, these statistics changed dramatically with 50% reporting as brown/mixed,

42.6% white and 4.6% black <sup>12</sup> (IBGE, 2000). The change in demographics is most likely due to a high percentage of migration to the area. In 2010, the IBGE records Rondonia as the highest percentage of those not born in the municipality (58.6% of residents). This data suggest that as migrants move to the area they bring change with them. In fact, from 1960 to 2000, those living in this region claiming to be Protestant went from 1.1% of population to 19.8% (IBGE, 2000). Since Pentecostals are highly motivated to “convert” others, it is likely that high degrees of migration have impacted religious conversion in the regio. In fact, the IBGE describes Rondonia as a hotbed of Evangelical conversion.



**Figure 3.** The Growth of Evangelicals in Rondonia. Expressed in percentages for the years 1960-2000. Data compiled from IBGE census. Source: Online source: [www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/tendencias\\_demograficas/tabela02.pdf](http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/tendencias_demograficas/tabela02.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> There was a slight change in the indigenous population from .4% in 1991 to .8% in 2000. The IBGE claims that approximately 30% of indigenous aged 10 and up do not have a legal birth certificate.

The region is in the southwest corner of the Amazon and borders Bolivia to the west. For centuries this region was a desolate jungle inhabited only by indigenous peoples and accessible by few. Eventually, border disputes between Bolivia and Brazil prompted the government to begin development in the region as a way to secure the border. In the early 1960's the government began clearing the forests of Rondonia in order to provide affordable land to landless migrants overcrowding the cities (Millikan, 1992).

Highway systems were built to connect Rondonia to the center-south region (Millikan, 1992) and, small-farmer settlements were created through the government's National Integration Program (PIN) (Chestnut 1997; Millikan 1992). This first project reported a migration of 100,000 families to Rondonia during 1971-1974; three-quarters of which were poor families from the Northeast (Millikan 1992; Mahar 1989). Then in the 1980's the World Bank, in conjunction with the national government, launched the Northeastern Brazil Integration Development Program (Polonoroeste). Among the many goals of this program was to offer public land to landless farmers and to absorb the economically disadvantaged from other regions (Embrapa, 2011). These developments have created massive migration of the poor trying to gain access to affordable land in Rondonia. Development has also opened up land for cattle ranchers, loggers and other agricultural

industries. Thereby, causing large masses of people settling in the Amazonian region.

In fact, the IBGE records a population growth in Rondonia of 490,000 in 1980 to over 1.5 million in 2010 (IBGE, 2000). Included in this mass migration are the landless poor, land speculators and drug traffickers (Millikan 1992), triggering land conflict, rural violence, and massive deforestation (Brown, Brown, & Desposato, 2007; Mahar, 1989). The government's transfer of public land to private ownership, and subsidies and tax breaks have caused illegal transactions, chaotic land rights, and slave labor working conditions (Millikan 1992; Pace 1992). Large landowners and developers often employ wage earners at subsistent wages. The chaotic land development has also affected the indigenous in the area. Even though the government has demarcated indigenous lands, the protective lines are unclear, and regularly disregarded.

The affects of migration and capitalist development on Rondonia have included an increase in violence. Numerous studies by independent organizations and by government entities confirm that Rondonia suffers from poor land management, and large scale corruption by the police and the politicians. The IBGE shows the percentage of homicides increasing from 36% to 42% for 15-24 year

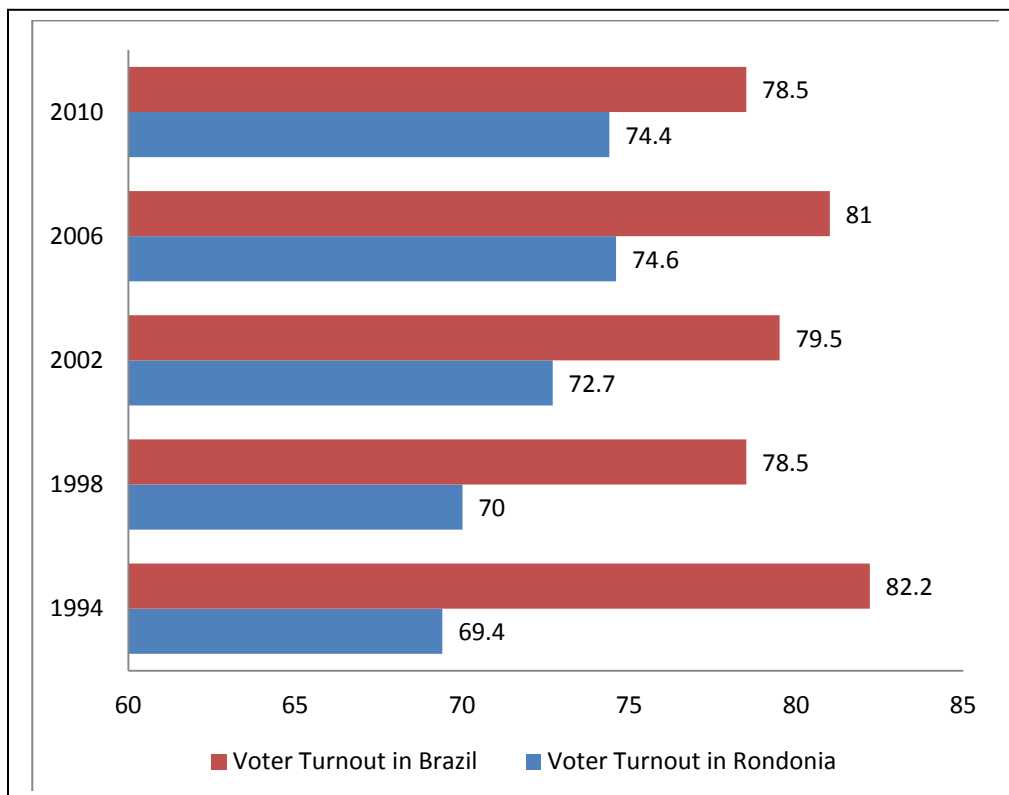
olds (between 1997 to 2007) and 80.96% of deaths among 15-19 year old males in 2008 was due to external causes (IBGE, 2000). Most of the research attributes this violence to land struggles (Motta 2011; Millikan 1992; Mahar 1989; Von Sinner 2004). Pace describes this conflict as pitting small farmers/extractors against the land grabbers/developers (Pace, 1992). Often, large landowners/grabbers evict occupants, workers or small farmers in order to occupy or sell the land. If eviction does not work they resort to intimidation or violence including kidnapping, torture, and even murder (Mahar, 1989). The Human Rights Watch reports multiple cases of torture and rampant violence against the poor and landless peasants, including abuses by the local police (Human Rights Watch, 2008). The International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) has issued a report on the plight of the poor peasants in Rondonia, documenting slave labor and several massacres including the most famous in 1995 when paramilitary police fired on a group of squatter families killing more than 12 people (IAPL , 2008).

**Evangelical Growth in Rondonia.** Rondonia provides a snapshot of the social dynamics affecting those struggling to participate in a developing democracy. Like most of Brazil, it is plagued with uneven development and poor public policy development. The end result is increased violence and inequality for many sectors of



society. The portability of the Protestant religion has allowed the religion to grow and thrive in this region. The faith, and the support of the religious community, is providing an outlet to a chaotic world of violence, illicit activity and upheavel.

Given the persistence of fragmented political parties in Brazil, it is hard to know the impact of the Evangelical community. However, there is a curious development occuring in Rondonia. For starters, the percentage of voters in Rondonia has continued to climb over the years, remaining steady in the 2010 elections.



**Figure 4.** Voter Turnout in Brazil and Rondonia. Aggregate voter data expressed in percentages for years 1994-2000. Data compiled from electionresources.org. Online source: <http://electionresources.org/br/president.php?election=2010&state=PE>

While substantially lower than the national average, the data show that Rondonians are taking more of an interest in presidential elections. Also noteworthy, is the 2010 presidential election. Even though Dilma from the Worker's Party (PT) won the election, Serra from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) took 52.6% in Rondonia, compared to Dilma's 47.4%<sup>13</sup> (Federal Elections in Brazil, 2010). Rondonia was one of eleven states/territories to go to Serra in the final elections. Further, Serra's party, the PSDB, has had a strong showing in Rondonia over the years. In 1994 and in 1998, the PSDB presidential candidate, Cardoso, was elected president and won Rondonia overwhelmingly (Federal Elections in Brazil, 2010). In Rondonia in 2002, the PSDB presidential candidate had a strong showing, but did not win the final election, and in 2006, the PSDB presidential candidate won in the runoffs, but not in the final elections.

The PSDB is described as a party in the center by the US State Department, but it has recently formed an alliance with the Democratic Party (DEM) which is described as center-right (US Department of State, 2011). While there are many political parties in Brazil, the PSDB is the main opposition party to the PT which is described by the US State Department as center-left. The DEM is a member of the Christian

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<sup>13</sup> In the final general elections, Dilma received 56.1% and Serra 43.9% of the Brazilian vote

Democrat Organization of America (ODCA) and the PSDB is an observing party. Both parties are focused on stabilization and growth of the economy, land reform and social justice. The high concentration of Evangelicals in Rondonia is likely contributing to the strong showing of the PSDB in the region.

While regions like Rondonia continue to expand and develop, violence and conflict are escalating. Land owners, squatters and the indigenous battle over land in a chaotic and lawless environment. This is a common occurrence in Brazil, particularly in the Amazon region. These conflicts, violence and upheaval threaten democracy. In order for Brazil's democracy to sustain development and to become deeply rooted, the conflict must be reduced. After all, if large sectors of society feel excluded from the process of growth and development, they are likely to be a factor for resistance. Therefore, considering the possibility of religion in a power sharing relationship is a worthy endeavor.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **Pentecostalism at Work**

Many competing forces are at work in developing countries which make it difficult to consolidate a democracy. Often, long standing cleavages exist, and no amount of economic success is likely to make a difference. In fact, rapid economic development often causes large income divides such as seen in Brazil. If these inequalities persist, conflict and instability escalate thereby threatening consolidation (Boix, 2006; Cramer & Kaufman, 2011; Eckstein, 1992; Petersen, 2004). In this chapter, I examine the theoretical framework for power sharing and the conditions necessary for reducing conflict. Finally, I consider Pentecostalism as a viable component in a power sharing arrangement, and how it can make a difference in reducing inequality.

The path to stability, though, includes many variables and potential outcomes. While economic development is commonly credited as a necessary for democratic stability (Boix, 2006) religion also has a role to play, especially in a country where religion is very

important. In Brazil, 91% believe religion is important <sup>14</sup>, 88.9% find comfort and strength from religion<sup>15</sup> and, 54% believe religious leaders should influence government <sup>16</sup> (ARDA, 2005). These statistics suggest that religion is a vital force in the lives of Brazilians, and they underpin the argument that religion has a role to play for reducing inequality and conflict. However, I argue that it is the distinctive structure and features of Pentecostalism that makes the difference.

Eckstein argues that religion can only be a factor for democratic stability if the structure of participation reflects the governments pattern of authority (Eckstein, 1992). In effect, the religion must work with and not against the government. The structure of participation is a necessary component for a stable democracy because it represents how and who participates. Traditionally, in most Latin American countries, the landed aristocracy controlled the power which excluded many sectors of society. Consequently, as Lipset and Lakin argue (2004), many Latin American countries had to build their democracies from scratch, including Brazil, leaving persistent cleavages. But, with modernization and liberalization opening new markets, new actors in civil society are emerging. Freston describes these actors as

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<sup>14</sup> This figure is for 2005 and has actually increased since 1991 when it was 85.9%

<sup>15</sup> This figure is from 1997, no new data available

<sup>16</sup> 2005; for more information, please visit

[http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_31\\_5.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_31_5.asp)

“autonomous volunteer organizations which act in the public sphere as intermediaries between the state and private life” of which Pentecostals fall neatly into this category (Freston, 2004; p.40). According to a recent study, Protestantism is positively correlated with strengthening democracy, especially when it comes to protecting human rights, fighting for social justice and ensuring basic freedoms (Tusalem, 2009; Freston, 2004). The same study shows that transitional countries with a high percentage of Protestant groups are more likely to consolidate their democracies (Tusalem, 2009). This is likely due to the features of Pentecostalism that enhance pluralism and civil society (Freston, 2004; Gaskill, 1997; Ireland, 1999; Petersen, 2004), and because it reflects the structures of participation necessary for stability (Eckstein, 1992). In effect, Pentecostalism allows the socially excluded to become legitimate and included. This produces the indirect effect of participation necessary for a consolidated democracy.

Brazil’s system of government consists of an executive, judicial and a bicameral legislative branch, and functions as a majoritarian model. The president and senate are elected by a majority vote, and the chamber is elected by proportional representation. However, the proportional representation is not on the basis of religion, but on the percentage of population in each state and federation. There are multiple political parties and pressure groups which include Evangelical

churches and the Catholic Church. Several Brazilian presidents have implemented coalition cabinets including Lula and Rousseff, the current President. These cabinets often include the largest political parties: Workers' Party (PT), Progressive Party (PP), Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) just to name a few. And, while the Evangelical churches have tried to form broad coalitions, nothing formal has materialized.

In fact, Brazil is plagued with low party identification, poor party discipline and undeveloped party platforms (Mainwaring, 1991). Mainwaring (1991) describes Brazil's party system as highly fragmented, and with limited accountability. There is often a great deal of party switching by candidates and poor party loyalty among citizens.

### **How Protestantism Can Reduce Fragmentation**

What is the role of power sharing, and how does it work? Because power sharing emphasizes collective interests through coalition and consensus building the goal is to produce a stable, entrenched democracy that reduces conflict (Lijphart, 2008). It also provides for more participation by a broader range of citizens, allowing inclusion of all population groups (Lijphart, 2008). This is crucial in

deeply divided societies where many groups are often excluded. The difference between the consensus model and the majoritarian model is the former tries to disperse and restrain power while the later concentrates power in the hands of the majority. The consensus model is more beneficial for inclusion and participation, particularly in developing democracies. Some of the features of an effective consensus democracy include: broad coalition cabinets, parliamentarism, a proportional electoral system, and elite accommodation (Lijphart, 2008). While Lijphart (2008) concedes that parliamentarism is ideal for consociationalism, presidentialism is not incompatible with the theory. What is most crucial, however, is the interaction by and with the elites. In a power sharing arrangement, the elites are required to accommodate and collaborate with rival relations, and must be committed to cohesion and achieving stability (Lijphart, 2008). This, in effect, means that the elites of the religious institutions must work together to achieve consensus. Or, another option is for religious elites to collaborate by forming a pressure group. The model would be similar to the CC and CSM as discussed earlier.

**Consensus Among Religious Elites.** Accommodating the demands of rival relations, is not an easy undertaking. The current Protestant/ Pentecostal churches are scattered all over the political map, and have demonstrated little willingness to compromise. In order



for Evangelical churches to act as a collective pressure group, they will have to form a consensus on issues. An important issue to rally around is better land management, particularly decreasing illegal land grabs and fraud. Land rights as a social issue is already an important political hot button. It is an effective impetus to forming a coalition necessary for influencing public legislation. Groups like the Landless Workers and the Catholic Church's CEB's, which have been fighting for land rights for decades, are entrenched social movements ripe for consensus.

In order for elites to establish long term consensus, democratic stability has to be the primary goal (Lijphart, 2008). Otherwise, the need for power and domination undermine support. Elites are likely to be committed to stability and consolidation if they understand it is the only way to gain access, and that there is political strength in numbers. In other words, in a stable democracy there is a seat at the table for them. Without a commitment to stability, though, the system will continue to be fragmented and stalled in conflict. Consequently, the religious institutions are at risk of losing their influence or by being dominated by hegemony. These are reasons enough to pursue a power sharing arrangement. This is particularly true for all Protestant groups as they compete for adherents in a competitive market, long dominated by the Catholic Church.

**Evangelicals as a Power Sharing Partner.** The key, is for the religious elites, acting as a pressure group, and in collaboration with a political party to mobilize around a prominent cleavage (Lipset & Lakin, *The Democratic Century*, 2004). The most likely scenario is for the religious leaders from the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) and the Assemblies of God (AG), to collaborate with leaders from the mainline Protestant churches and the Catholic Church. The large Pentecostal churches, have the organizational structure, the large membership base, and the financial wealth necessary for forming a faction. In fact, the UCKG owns several television and radio stations, and is already heavily involved in the Brazilian Republican party. A former notable UCKG member is Jose' Alencar, Lula's Vice President in 2002 and 2006. He was able to mobilize a significant number of Evangelicals in both elections. Currently, there are over 60 Evangelicals serving in the Brazilian congress, and the past presidential elections have courted the Evangelical community. Attempted coalitions have had short term success, but contention remains a problem.

If consensus is necessary for coalition, then the "glue" is likely to be found in the fight for social justice. Social action is evident in the number of Non-Profit Private Foundations and Associations (Fasfil) recorded by the IBGE. In 2005, there were 338 Fasfil's in Brazil of

which 35.2% worked for citizen's rights, 24.8% were religious institutions, and 7.2% worked in the field of health and education. There was a 22.6% increase in Fasfil's between 2002-2005, and an 18.9% increase in religious organizations in the same period (IBGE, 2000). A recent survey done in 2006, shows 77% of the general public and 87% of Pentecostals believe they have a responsibility to work for justice for the poor, and 75% of the general public and 81% of Pentecostals think the government should guarantee every citizen enough to eat and somewhere to sleep (Spirit and Power: A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostalism, 2006). When you combine this data with the organizations fighting for land rights, it is evident that social justice matters to Brazilians. This is no surprise considering that the Social Justice theology is already rooted in Brazilian culture. In many ways, the Social Justice theology is the Protestant version of the Liberation Theology of Catholic Church, but it is not necessarily grounded in class warfare/Marxism. It also does not run counter to democracy or capitalism. Rather, the theology infuses religion into politics through a "calling" placed on the believers. In this way, the Social Justice theology is capable of transcending race, gender and socioeconomic position. Thus, it provides a powerful basis for consensus.

In a successful power sharing arrangement, stability is the goal and it is accomplished through political pacts and/or coalitions (Freston, 2004; Gaskill, 1997; Lijphart, 2008; Tusalem, 2009). The elites of the Protestant, Pentecostal, and Catholic churches would ideally form an alliance with a political party focused on reducing social injustice. The focus of issues include: better land management, a more fair and accessible legal system, a less corrupt police force which would eliminate para-military forces, and improved educational funding/systems. These issues will allow elite leaders to build coalitions with minimal friction, and lasting potential. ultimately, though, the focus of social justice is to reduce inequality.

Is the Evangelical community capable of a power sharing relationship? The Evangelical community is fragmented and lacks a single governing body like the Catholic Church which makes direct political involvement and a power sharing arrangement difficult. Nonetheless, Evangelicals have already shown a capacity for social network and institutional building, and for political mobilization. They are already exerting political pressure. In fact, the CIA World Factbook refers to Evangelical churches as pressure groups, along with the Catholic Church and land rights' movements (The World Factbook, 2011).

The competitive landscape among religious groups is enormous, though, and while the Catholic Church does not present a hegemonic threat, there is little possibility for alliance. Further, the traditional Protestant churches do not trust the neo-Pentecostal branches, especially the UCKG. Recent corruption charges against the UCKG leadership reveal deep tensions and divides across denominations. These issues, combined with a deeply mistrusting culture is likely to make any power sharing arrangement difficult and short lived. Nevertheless, the Evangelical community is strong and growing, thereby making it a deniable force. More conceivable, is a pressure group that includes religious leaders, but does not necessarily include churches. Similar to the CC and CSM, the organizational model is one of autonomy. The group functions independently, but in conjunction with churches and a political party. The group educates and mobilizes the churches members in order to influence and shape public policy, thereby acting as a conduit between the two.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **Conclusions and Implications**

With democracy sweeping the globe, and the fight for human rights becoming more pertinent, the role of religion has not diminished. In fact, data suggests that in many parts of the world religiosity is growing. This is particularly true in the developing world. New freedom means religious options, and this is creating a religious shifting. Nowhere is this more evident than in Brazil. A country with a deeply religious identity. The world's largest Catholic country is now home to the largest Pentecostal movement. Brazilians' have not abandoned their faith, but are finding relief in and expression through the Pentecostal faith.

Pentecostalism is providing alternative structures for social and political expression previously denied to many. Now the oppressed and marginalized are forging community networks, and accessing legitimacy which makes them an undeniable force. The impact of this mobilization and cohesiveness begs the question: does Pentecostalism undermine or strengthen democracy?

## **Pentecostalism as a Positive Force**

If the goal of democracy is to give citizens access to the decision making process, then Pentecostalism is a positive force. If, as Lipset and Larkin argue, religion positively affects democracy when the structure of participation is open, then Pentecostalism is a positive force (Lipset & Lakin, *The Democratic Century*, 2004). If cohesion and inclusion is a necessary feature of a stable democracy (Lijphart, 2008), then Pentecostalism is an agent of stability. In this paper, I have argued that Protestantism, Pentecostalism in particular, strengthens democracy. The distinct features of Pentecostalism are helping sectors of society create social and political space through civic society. More importantly, their faith is being expressed through new roles of leadership, inclusion and expression. There is a sense of community and responsibility not seen in the past.

## **Pentecostalism as a Social Force**

Unlike the Catholic Church, the Protestant faith in Brazil offers relief to the suffering while also seeking social justice. What the Liberation Theology of the Catholic Church attempted to do is now being expressed through the Social Justice theology of Protestantism. The religious are combining their religious values with their fight for

social equality. The mostly indigenous movement of Pentecostalism is providing the mechanisms of equality regularly denied to the oppressed and excluded. This is translating into new identities of expression. However, while Pentecostalism is providing a process of inclusion, it has not manifested itself into a completely cohesive way politically. Much like the political parties, the religious community is fragmented and competitive.

Current research suggest that Evangelicals are not unified or interested in participating in the political process. Certainly, the Brazilian political landscape makes it hard to imagine a religious institution accessing participation on any level. However, the Protestant churches have already shown a propensity to participate but, more importantly, to mobilize. In the 2010 election alone, there were a total of 71 evangelical deputies and senators elected, up from 43 in 2006. In the same election, Silva, presidential candidate and AG member, garnered 19% of the vote in the primary election even though she was representing a little known party. With the Universal Church claiming approximately 2 million adherents in 2000 and the Assemblies of God Church claiming approximately 7 million, the numbers are staggering (there are approximately 26 million Protestants of which approximately 17.6 million are Pentecostal) (Pewforum.org, 2006). When you consider these membership numbers



and other potential resources, it is evident that the Protestant churches have institutional strength.

These strong bases combined with powerful leadership, make Pentecostalism an undeniable force. Certainly, the data on how Brazilians feel about religious leaders and institutions are telling. In a 2005 survey, 54% of respondents believe that religious leaders should influence government<sup>17</sup>, and 77% have confidence in religious institutions, 46.7% believe churches give answers to social problems (up from 41.6% in 1991), and 62.1% believe churches give answers to moral problems (up from 43.8% in 1991) (The Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005). This data suggest that religious leaders (and institutions) are influential, trusted and valued when compared to other institutions.

The current federal government structure includes a form of proportional representation, but not on the basis of religion (it is based on the percentage of population in each state and federation). This seems like an oversight, considering the significance Brazilians place on religion. In fact, in a 2006 Pew Forum survey, 51% of respondents said that religion was most important to them (compared to 29%

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<sup>17</sup> In the same data, 67.5% respondents also said that religious leaders should not influence how people vote. For more information, please visit [http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_31\\_5.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_31_5.asp)

saying their nationality and 9% saying their ethnic group). This number was even higher for Pentecostals, with 80% saying their religion was most important (Pewforum.org, 2006). These figures and others presented throughout the paper, clearly indicate that Brazilians are religious, and that religion plays a significant role in the decision making process (social and political). If this is in fact the case, then how does Pentecostalism factor in as a positive force for consensus? In this paper, I have argued that a power sharing relationship is one answer.

### **Sustaining Democracy**

Modernization and capitalism have indeed given Brazil a place at the global table. However, rapid development has created one of the world's most unequal societies beset with violence and oppression. The effects of anomie leave people feeling unsafe and insecure. The case for Rondonia shows that the demand for land and further expansion does not abate. Consequently, massive migration, chaotic land laws and inability to address abuses, often result in land grabbers and illegal squatters resolving their disputes through violence and oppression. These factors are threatening Brazil's democratic stability.

In order for Brazil's democracy to sustain development and to become deeply rooted, it is important for conflict to be reduced. After all, if people feel insecure and are unable to participate in society, they are likely to feel unsatisfied with the political process. This makes the Protestant church a valuable resource. They have already shown a capacity for social networks, and for political mobilization. The logical next step is to factor them in as a consensus builder.

I have demonstrated that while Brazil's pattern of governing is not ideal to the consociational model, it is still possible to increase consensus. As Lijphart pointed out, what is most important for consensus building are the elites. If the elites are committed to consensus, and to stabilizing democracy, then power sharing is more likely to occur. This research shows that the Protestant churches, Pentecostals in particular, demonstrate a high degree of power which is translating into a formidable power bloc. Further, past voting behavior has shown that politicians recognize this, and have begun courting the evangelical vote. What is necessary for consensus, is an organized attempt at power sharing. But, first it must be generally accepted that religion, Protestantism particularly, has a positive role to play.

What is likely to affect this change? First, the political elites must be willing to invite the religious leaders/elites to the table. This should not be difficult because many of the political elite are already evangelical, and because evangelicals have already demonstrated their ability to vote in a bloc. Secondly, the religious elite must be willing to form a consensus. The most likely scenario is a separate pressure group in alliance with a political party. The examples of the Christian Coalition with the Republican Party in America, and the Christian Socialist Movement with the Labour Party present as possible models for Brazil. In this model, the pressure group, working as a grassroots movement, acts as a bridge between the church and political party to affect public policy. The key issues include: social justice and land reform.

What is likely to motivate religious leaders to unite as a pressure group? Mainly, it would be to avoid a religious hegemonic power (such as the Catholic Church), but also to be included in the decision making process, and to access legitimacy for the church and for its members. Lipset and Lakin argue that as democratization continues, more social actors will emerge (2004), creating the need for more social and political space. The church has a role in providing this space.

## **Implications**

What are the implications of a power sharing relationship which includes Protestants/Pentecostals? While it is always hard to foresee the political consequences of change, it is possible to look at past behavior, and predict future behavior with a degree of certainty. This is one of the major benefits of using the case study method. It allows the researcher to look at the nuances of a particular case in order to make a reasonable assertion about future events. Brazil presents as a fascinating, and worthwhile case. As a developing nation it has many positive features and advantages. However, as I have already established, there are deep divides that are threatening cohesion, and consolidation. Therefore, it is important to evaluate measures that are likely to reduce these inequalities and risks. Brazil has already taken steps to increase consensus by using proportional representation, but it has not fully factored in religion. I have argued that Protestantism has the features necessary for reducing conflict, for increasing cohesion, and for creating access for those traditionally excluded.

## **Drawbacks**

However, there are many drawbacks to this argument. First, and foremost, the competition among religious groups is enormous, and

while the Catholic Church does not present a hegemonic threat, there is little possibility for alliance. Mistrust among congregations and adherents is a problem, and so is corruption prevalent in the Prosperity Theology churches. Further, ongoing tension among religious leaders combined with a deeply mistrusting culture is likely to make any power sharing arrangement difficult, and short lived. Another drawback is the fragmented political party system. The parties have been unable to forge any lasting alliances or to develop cohesive party platforms. Lastly, combining religion with politics may possibly increase conflict. Even when representation is guaranteed as in a power sharing arrangement.

### **Final Thoughts**

Brazilians are religious. Contrary to secularization theory, there faith is important to them and it impacts their daily lives significantly. Religion offers hope to the suffering and expression to the marginalized. This, combined with the recent transition to democracy, is creating a competitive religious environment in Brazil. Evangelicals are creating large social networks which is translating into political mobilization. Churches are cohesive units able and willing to impact Brazilian society. In order to elucidate this argument further, it is

recommended that more cases be included. By examining other developing countries with large and growing Pentecostal communities, it is possible to determine the likelihood of Protestants/Pentecostals entering into a stable and long term power sharing arrangement. One example that comes to mind is the large and growing Pentecostal community in South Korea.

The need to understand religion and its role in improving or undermining democracy is a necessity. In the developing world, where rapid change is causing instability and chaos, religion seems to be providing many with coping mechanisms. Nowhere is this more true than in Latin America. The transition to democracy in many of these countries has opened new frontiers including the religious marketplace. What were previously predominantly Catholic cultures are now experiencing a religious shifting, and this does not appear to be abating. Therefore, understanding the role of religion and its effects on democracy is a worthwhile endeavor. More importantly, though, is understanding what role it has to play in helping the marginalized access social and political space in a rapidly developing, global world where change is inevitable.

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