

# **Sidelined by Religion? Community Involvement and Political Participation of U.S. Pentecostals\***

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### **Abstract**

*Objective.* A growing body of literature weighs the influence of religion on civic life. However, largely missing from prior analysis is consideration of Pentecostals. With novel religious beliefs and practices, it might be expected that Pentecostals are less involved socially and politically. *Method.* We test this expectation using national data from the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey. We contrast four measures of Pentecostalism: denominational affiliation, speaking in tongues at a place of worship, self-described Pentecostal/charismatic identity, and a composite of these three. *Results.* Bivariate tests suggest that Pentecostals, especially those in Pentecostal denominations or who speak in tongues, participate less in community organizations and politics than non-Pentecostals. Yet, multivariate tests reveal that social class, biblical literalism, and political party explain away the effect of Pentecostalism. *Conclusions.* Pentecostals' civic (dis)engagement appears more a function of social class and general conservatism than a unique religious culture or sense of identity. Pentecostals may be on the sidelines of civic life, but no more so than other conservative Protestants.

French observer Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1835 classic, *Democracy in America*, marveled at the public spirit evident in the fledgling nation. “How is it that in the United States... each is interested in the affairs of his township, of his district, and of the state as a whole as in his own?” he asked; his answer: “It is that each, in his sphere, takes an active part in the government of society” (Tocqueville, 2000:234). Healthy democracy depends on citizens taking an active part.

There is concern that civic engagement in the U.S. is on the wane. Entering the 21st century, Putnam (2000) contended that people volunteer less, vote less, and are even more likely to go bowling alone than in past generations. Putnam (2000) decried the loss of social capital, i.e. “social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). Scholars vociferously debate the state of social capital in contemporary society. Implicated in the debate is the effect religion on social capital. Tocqueville (2000) saw in American religion a foundation for strong democracy. Current scholarship suggests more mixed effects. While religious beliefs and congregations inspire some citizens to social and political involvement, religion motivates others to focus inward and avoid participation in broader society. A growing volume of literature probes these relationships.

Surprisingly underrepresented in current research is the fastest growing segment of American Protestantism, Pentecostals. Pentecostalism emerged as a religious movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It preaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit described in the New Testament, most notably speaking in tongues (glossolalia), are still operative. Novel beliefs often invite scorn and separation from mainstream society, but Pentecostalism gained footing especially among the socially marginalized. In barely a century, it expanded into a global movement counting one quarter of all Christians worldwide and a comparable proportion of Americans (Pew Forum, 2007). Thus, the implications for democratic society reach far beyond the United States, if Pentecostals remain on the sidelines of civic life. The purpose of this study is to explore the community and political involvement of U.S. Pentecostals. Using the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey, we are able to distinguish Pentecostals in contrasting ways to assess the relationship of Pentecostalism to contemporary civic engagement.

### **Religion and Civic Engagement**

Religion remains a recognizable part of social life in the United States. And, as Tocqueville expected, religion has motivated considerable civic activity. Writing 165 years after Tocqueville, Putnam (2000:66) acknowledged, “Faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single

most important repository of social capital in America.” Religion and religious communities provide individuals social ties beyond kinship. These ties have potential to mobilize individuals for tremendous social benefit. More than half (57 percent) of American congregations—encompassing three-fourths of all worshipping adults in the U.S.— participate in some form of social service activity, such as programs to provide food, housing, clothing, or other assistance (Chaves, 2004). Congregations also lead the way among nonpolitical organizations when it comes to offering opportunities for political activity. More than 40% of congregations are politically active in some way (Beyerlein and Chaves, 2003; Chaves, 2004).

Religious participation has implications for civic engagement. Most of the attention to religious participation focuses on attending religious services. Studies positively link religious service attendance to civic outcomes including voluntary association membership (Beyerlein and Hipp, 2006), volunteering (Becker and Dhingra, 2001), financial contributions to charitable organizations (Independent Sector, 2001), voting (Peterson, 1992; Wilcox and Sigelman, 2001), and other political activities (Beyerlein and Chaves, 2003). A prominent explanation for the positive effect of religious participation is that congregations serve as a training ground for the development and exercise of civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). But the relationship between attendance and civic engagement is complex. For example, while attendance may spur voting, it does not increase the likelihood of direct forms of political involvement (Hougland and Christenson, 1983). Furthermore, others have found attendance to negatively influence social and political involvement, once other forms of religious participation are controlled (Park and Smith, 2000; Lam, 2002; Driskell, Embry, and Lyon, 2008; Driskell, Lyon, and Embry, 2008). These conflicting findings indicate that not all religious participation is equally conducive to civic engagement; it depends considerably on the type of religious group one is participating in.

Little did Tocqueville know how varied American religion would become. In the absence of a state religion, the United States was fertile soil for religious innovators. A plethora of religious groups emerged, though not all would play the active role in civil society envisioned by Tocqueville. To the contrary, some groups define their existence in opposition to secular society. This introduces the classic distinction between “church” and “sect.” Churches refer to religious groups that are largely accommodating of societal values and culture; whereas, sects reject society in favor of a distinctive religious culture that usually poses high demands on adherents (Johnson, 1963; Iannaccone, 1988, 1992). Novel beliefs, rituals, experiences, or other forms of normative expectations place sectarian groups in a

state of high tension with their social environment (Stark and Finke 2000). Sectarian groups create clear boundaries that minimize involvement with those outside the group. High rates of religious commitment and participation characterize these groups (Iannaccone, 1988, 1992; Stark and Finke, 2000). Given the social and symbolic costs associated with belonging, sectarian groups typically draw members from among those with the least secular opportunities (Iannaccone, 1988, 1992). Over time and with rising social stature of a group or its members, some sects transition to become churches—a process that Niebuhr (1929) thought was inevitable, but others have come to question (Iannaccone 1988; Stark and Finke 2000).

Sectarian groups are commonly cast as bearers of conservative religion. Conservative religious beliefs and the religious cultures that form around conservative beliefs are associated with lower levels of civic engagement. Biblical literalism is one marker of conservative religion that shows a negative relationship with civic engagement (Schwadel, 2005). The embodiment of beliefs within historical, theological religious traditions is perhaps more important. It moves emphasis from religiously conservative individuals to individuals within religiously conservative groups. According to Becker and Dhingra (2001), beliefs matter less than social networks formed within congregations in motivating individuals to volunteer. Political scientists Kellstedt, Green, Guth, and Smidt (1996:187) likewise contend that “the social embodiment of religion matters politically.” Much of the recent work connecting religion to voluntary activity and politics places emphasis on religious tradition categories of evangelical/conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant, black Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, other, and none.

Religious traditions differ significantly in the extent to which they mobilize members for civic action. Putnam (2000) distinguished between bridging and bonding orientations of religious traditions. Evangelicals promote a type of social capital that is more inward-oriented and exclusive, what Putnam called “bonding social capital.” Mainline Protestants, and to a lesser extent Catholics, promote “bridging social capital” which focuses outward, is inclusive, and encourages service to broader society. Over and over again, this contrast between inward-focused religious traditions and outward-focused religious traditions appears in studies of civic engagement. Park and Smith (2000) found that churchgoing Protestants raised by theologically liberal parents were significantly more likely to volunteer than were those whose parents were fundamentalists. Beyerlein and Hipp (2006) reported that the congregational

activities beyond attendance at religious services of black Protestants, mainline Protestants, and Catholic congregations were significantly stronger in its perpetuation of bridging capital than evangelical/conservative traditions. Driskell, Lyon, and Embry (2008) arrived at comparable conclusions. Evangelical Protestants were less likely than those in other religious traditions to belong, contribute, or volunteer to non-religious community organizations. In addition, within evangelical and black Protestant traditions, church attendance was negatively associated with overall levels of community involvement. For conservative Protestants, the focus of social activity is primarily inside the church, resulting in less time and motivation for community involvement outside (Wuthnow 1999). Recent national, congregational studies repeat these conclusions; conservative Protestant churches do less social service work outside their doors (Chaves, 2004; Ammerman, 2005).

Political participation across religious traditions displays similar patterns as community involvement. Despite the push of conservative religious individuals and groups into American politics over the past three decades, participation still differs by religious tradition. Religious conservatives have mobilized around issues such as abortion and opposition to gay rights and they made their presence known at the ballot box (Kellstedt et al., 1996). Beyond voting however, religious conservatives continue to lag behind other groups politically. Evangelical/conservative Protestant congregations are the least likely of the major religious traditions to tell people at worship services about opportunities for political action or to hold discussion groups related to politics (Beyerlein and Chaves 2003). These congregations are likely to distribute Christian voter guides, leading Beyerlein and Chaves (2003) to conclude that congregations tend to specialize in particular forms of political action in ways that are structured by religious traditions.

Aggregating voting and other forms of political activity into a cumulative index, Driskell, Embry and Lyon (2008) discovered that the mean level of political participation for conservative Protestants (evangelical and Black Protestant traditions) fell below Jews, mainline Protestants, and Catholics. As they found regarding community involvement (Driskell, Lyon, and Embry 2008), they detected an inverse relationship between religious service attendance and political participation within conservative Protestant traditions. They explained this negative relationship as indicative of an economy of time; being more involved in one's religious group allows less time for other activities, such as contacting public officials, attending political meetings or demonstrations, or working for a political campaign. Campbell (2004)

also relied on an economy of time explanation to account for lower rates of political involvement within evangelical denominations. His justification was that strong in-group bonding “thickens social networks that can be used sporadically for rapid and intense political mobilization” (p. 156). This “potential for mobilization” does little to sustain on-going political activity. Time allocations reflect an ordering of priorities. For conservative religious traditions like evangelicals and black Protestants, religious activity takes precedence over political activity (Djupe and Grant, 2001). Consequently, we see again that conservative, sectarian groups are unlikely to reside at the center of civic life.

### **Pentecostals**

Talking about conservative Protestants as one monolithic group masks significant internal diversity (Woodberry and Smith 1999; Smith 2000). Pentecostals are recognized as illustrative of sectarian religion (Johnson 1963; Iannaccone 1992; Stark and Finke 2000), but rarely does this sizable segment of conservative Protestantism get its own consideration analytically. Some estimates place the percentage of Americans associated with the Pentecostal movement as high as 23 percent (Smidt et al., 1999; Pew Forum, 2007). There is reason to believe that this growing movement is not identical to other segments of conservative Protestantism on issues including social tolerance and politics (Woodberry and Smith, 1999). Recent empirical findings attest to differences across conservative Protestant subcultures at the community-level. Blanchard et al. (2008) found communities populated by more other-worldly, sectarian strands of conservative Protestantism (i.e. fundamentalist and Pentecostal) had higher rates of mortality, while the number of evangelical congregations in a community was associated with lower rates of mortality. This raises intriguing questions about the social consequences of contemporary Pentecostalism. Are Pentecostals less engaged socially and politically than other religious and irreligious individuals? To answer, we first must retrace the steps of the Pentecostal movement.

The genesis of the modern Pentecostal movement dates back to the turn of the twentieth century. In 1901, a group of 40 students in a Topeka Bible college led by evangelist Charles Fox Parham were reported as receiving a “baptism in the Holy Spirit” and speaking in languages unknown to them—the same experience reported of first-century apostles. The New Testament book of Acts details the apostles being filled by the Holy Spirit and speaking to crowds in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Jewish Passover) in languages the apostles’ did not know. Parham had come to believe that the “gift of tongues” (glossolalia) should characterize contemporary believers baptized in the Holy Spirit.

News spread of Parham and his students. A headline in the *Topeka Capital* newspaper at the time read: “A Queer Faith, Strange Acts.... Believers Speak in Strange Languages” (reported in Synan, 1997:92). Five years later at a mission church in Los Angeles, the Pentecostal movement would make its worldwide debut.

The 1906 Azusa Street revival is widely considered the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement. A small mission church led by an African American preacher trained by Parham was the focal point of a three and a half year revival. William Seymour preached of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, and people responded. During daily worship services “men and women would shout, weep, dance, fall into trances, speak and sing in tongues, and interpret their messages into English” (Synan, 1997:98). Crowds and intensity grew, leading one eye-witness to proclaim, “Pentecost has come to Los Angeles, the American Jerusalem” (quoted in Synan, 1997:99). Visitors to the Azusa Street revival took the teachings and novel religious experiences back to their communities. The Pentecostal movement spread across the United States and beyond its borders. Pentecostal denominations formed, such as the Assembly of God, Church of God in Christ, The Foursquare Church, and the Church Of God (Cleveland, Tennessee).

Early Pentecostals were popularly described as poor and uneducated; many were racial and ethnic minorities. Anderson’s (1979) influential history of the first three decades of Pentecostalism, entitled *The Vision of the Disinherited*, depicted the movement as a class-based protest of the socially marginal. Marginality characterized Pentecostal laity and their leaders. Converts were “economically, socially, culturally, and even physically displaced and deprived” (p.136). They were whites of rural-agrarian backgrounds, new immigrants, and native-born ethnic minorities. They were the working poor on the outside or fringe of respectable society. Thus, Anderson concluded, “Pentecostalism was a movement born of radical social discontent... an instrument forged by a segment of the working class out of protest against a social system that victimized them” (p. 222). Others have questioned this description, arguing that early Pentecostals looked demographically much like the American population on the whole (Wacker, 2001). Whatever the exact social class composition of early Pentecostalism, what is not in question is the sectarian nature of the movement. Pentecostals stood out even from other Christian denominations due to their unique religious beliefs and experiences, such as tongues, divine healing, women preaching, and their condemnation of “social sins” ranging from using tobacco and alcohol to

visiting beauty parlors and wearing makeup (Synan, 1997). These differences invoked distrust and antagonism from the religious establishment of the day (Poloma, 1982; Synan, 1997; Wacker, 2001). The other-worldly, pietistic orientation of Pentecostals directed them to focus their efforts on individual transformation rather than societal participation. This extended to the voting booth. The first generation of Pentecostals ostensibly avoided political participation, even so far as voting (Anderson, 1979; Wacker, 2001). The summary of Pentecostals during this formative period of their history was one of mutual rejection—they rejected society and society rejected them.

The nascent Pentecostal denominations grew throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1960s, Pentecostalism exploded beyond the confines of these denominations. Speaking in tongues and other gifts of the Spirit surfaced in mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. Pentecostalism rippled through non-Pentecostal denominations in the form of “charismatic renewal.” Episcopalians, Methodists, and Catholics who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit were referred to as charismatics or neo-Pentecostals. Pentecostalism as an international, trans-denominational movement flourished. From 40 members in 1901, the movement counted over 400 million members by the mid 1990s (Synan, 1997). Entering the twenty-first century as many as one in four worldwide Christians are believed to be associated with the movement (Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, 2001). Along the way, some observers point out that Pentecostalism shed its marginalized status (Wacker, 2001; Poloma, 1982), and may now be at the forefront of social ministry in the developing world (Miller and Yamamori, 2007).

Despite mounting prominence, only a small number of recent studies address the implications of the Pentecostal movement on contemporary social and political life. Smidt and colleagues (1996, 1999) used survey data from a national sample of American adults to profile what they called “the Spirit-filled movement,” a category that included respondents in Pentecostal denominations, respondents who had spoken in tongues, and those self-identified as either Pentecostal or charismatic. Considering the spirit-filled movement as a whole, Smidt et al. (1996) found movement members more politically conservative but less politically involved than persons outside the movement. Equally telling was the response of the general public to those in the Pentecostal movement. Only 14 percent of Americans reported feeling close to either Pentecostals or charismatics; over half the U.S. population (55 percent) in 1992 felt distant from one or both groups (Smidt et al., 1999:116).

A 2006 survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life also profiled the Pentecostal movement in the United States as well as in nine other countries (Pew Forum, 2007). Pew researchers broke the Pentecostal movement into two subcategories: Pentecostals (those in Pentecostal denominations) and charismatics (persons who described themselves as Pentecostal or charismatic, or who spoke in tongues). Both U.S. Pentecostals and charismatics had lower levels of income and education than the population overall. For example, 27 percent of the entire U.S. sample possessed a college degree as compared to 16 percent of charismatics and 10 percent of Pentecostals (p. 37). In terms of trusting others in society, Pentecostals and charismatics were less trusting than other Christians or all Americans; Pentecostals were the least trusting of these groups. Pentecostals, and to a lesser extent charismatics, were more likely to believe that religious groups should express views on political questions. The Pew survey did not ask questions of political participation however. It did inquire about participation in a variety of community organizations. Pentecostals and charismatics seemed to participate at comparable percentages to other Americans, although the voluntary activity of these groups happened mainly through churches.

Missing in these studies is consideration of social class or other demographic or religious characteristics on the outcomes associated with Pentecostalism. These studies are more descriptive than explanatory. They report percentages and utilize simple bivariate comparisons. Without careful multivariate analysis, it is impossible to rule out Marty's (1975) assessment that Pentecostals' political opinion is principally a product of their social class standing. In addition, these studies contain limited measures of direct social and political involvement. Consequently, gaps remain in our knowledge about the current role of Pentecostalism in civic life. We will attempt to fill these gaps by incorporating improved measurement and more rigorous methodology to test two hypotheses.

1. Pentecostals will participate less in non-religious community organizations than persons of other religious orientations or no religion.
2. Pentecostals will be less involved politically than persons of other religious orientations or no religion.

### **Data and Methods**

Our data come from the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey. Collected by the Gallup Organization in fall 2005, the Baylor Religion Survey gathered detailed information about religious affiliation, belief,

practices, and a range of other social and political content from a national random sample of 1,721 English-speaking adults (for more information about survey and sampling, see Bader, Mencken and Froese, 2007).

Our community involvement variable mirrors the civic engagement index created with these data by Driskell, Lyon and Embry (2008). The 2005 Baylor Religion Survey has questions about respondents' current level of involvement with various organizations. The list of organizations includes 1) arts or cultural organization; 2) an elementary, middle, or high school; 3) charitable organization or group; 4) civic or service group; 5) ethnic or racial organization; 6) internet-based club, group, or chat-room; 7) neighborhood group or association; 8) political party, club, or association; 9) school fraternities, sororities, or alumni association; 10) sports, hobby, or leisure club/group; 11) therapeutic or counseling group; 12) trade union or professional association; 13) youth groups or organizations; and 14) other group/organization. For each organization, respondents indicate whether they belong, contribute, volunteer, and/or hold a leadership position. Our interest is in the aggregate level of community involvement. Consequently, we summed items to produce an index that has a possible range from 0 (an individual does not belong, contribute, volunteer or hold a leadership position in any of the 14 groups listed) to 56 (an individual belongs, contributes, volunteers, and holds a leadership position in all 14 groups). The actual range of the summated index is 0 to 28. The index possesses a high level of internal consistency as reflected by a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.83.

To measure political participation, we created a political participation index identical to Driskell, Embry, and Lyon (2008). It is a sum score of political activities that respondents participated in leading up to the 2004 presidential election. Ten items comprise the index: (1) reading newspaper or magazine stories about the election; (2) visiting Internet sites related to the election; (3) giving money to a political campaign, party, or candidate; (4) writing, calling, or visiting a public official; (5) attending a political rally or meeting; (6) attending a class or lecture about social or political issues; (7) participating in a public protest or demonstration; (8) working for a political campaign or voter registration drive; (9) watching or listening to a political debate; and (10) voting in the 2004 presidential election. Cronbach's alpha for the political participation index is 0.71.

Measuring Pentecostals can be a difficult task. A person might be Pentecostal by affiliation, by belief or experience, or by self-identification (Smidt et al., 1996, 1999). Extending prior research on the

topic, the Baylor Religion Survey allows us to consider all three possibilities. Our first measure of Pentecostalism is through church or denominational affiliation. A detailed coding of religious affiliation is possible with these data. Dougherty, Johnson, and Polson (2007) used information about respondents' religion, denomination, and congregation to place respondents into religious tradition categories of Catholic, black Protestant, evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, Jewish, other, and none. For this study, we separate out Pentecostals from black Protestant and evangelical Protestant traditions. Guided by Melton (2003), we identified people as Pentecostal if they reported an affiliation with Assembly of God, Church of God in Christ, Four Square International, or Full Gospel groups. In addition, persons affiliated with holiness, Church of God, or non-denominational congregations were coded as Pentecostal if their congregation encouraged speaking in tongues, as determined by a separate question on the survey that asked "how would your place of worship feel about... speaking in tongues?" In the end, a new religious traditions variable was created with categories of Catholic, black Protestant (non-Pentecostal), evangelical Protestant (non-Pentecostal), Pentecostal Protestant, mainline Protestant, other, and none.

A second way to classify Pentecostals is by belief and/or practice. Speaking in tongues is a hallmark of Pentecostalism that transcends denominational boundaries. Someone might be Baptist, Episcopalian, or Catholic and speak in tongues. Though not Pentecostal by affiliation, such a person would fit by merit of personal experience. Thus, we look at the question "spoke in tongues at a place of worship," asked in the Baylor Religion Survey. Respondents answered yes or no. Of course, people may also speak in tongues outside their place of worship. Unfortunately, the only question asked in the Baylor survey about an individual engaging in this practice included the qualification "at a place of worship." This makes our measure of tongues more restrictive than would be ideal; still it permits a useful indicator of Pentecostal experience.

A third measure of Pentecostals is self-identification. The 2005 Baylor Religion asked respondents to indicate whether various terms described their religious identity. A list of 12 terms followed and respondents were to indicate yes or no for each. Charismatic and Pentecostal were two of the terms on the list. A dichotomous variable separates people who identified as either Charismatic or Pentecostal (coded 1) from those who said neither label described them (coded 0). Unfortunately, the religious identity question produced a high degree of missing data. Less than half of respondents gave answers for all 12 identity items. Closer examination revealed that many respondents selected yes to one

or more terms and simply did not mark a response for remaining items. We corrected for this by treating those individuals who did not answer Charismatic and/or Pentecostal items but did answer yes to some other identity item as not Pentecostal/Charismatic (coded 0). Subsequent analysis of cases with imputed values found no evidence that the imputations biased estimates in statistical models.

To match the few other empirical studies of Pentecostal engagement that do exist (Smidt et al., 1996, 1999; Pew Forum, 2007), we construct a final composite measure of Pentecostalism. Our composite category combines respondents that possess any of the aforementioned markers of Pentecostalism (Pentecostal affiliation, speaking in tongues, Pentecostal or charismatic identity). Persons that responded affirmatively to even one of these markers is classified as within the Pentecostal movement (coded 1). Respondents that do not fit any of these categories are considered outside the Pentecostal movement (coded 0). This measure is identical in construction to the category of “Spirit-filled movement” used by Smidt et al. (1996, 1999) and “Renewalist” used in the Pew Forum (2007) report.

We also include a set of control variables: gender, race, age, education, income, marital status, number of children, employment status, religious service attendance, biblical literalism, and political party. We employ dichotomous variables to measure gender (1=female), race (1=white), marital status (1=married), employment status (1=currently employed), biblical literalism (1=believe the Bible “should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects”) and political party (1=Democrat). Age is a ratio level variable that ranges from 18 to 93. Education and income are interval level variables. Education is coded from 1=8<sup>th</sup> grade or less to 7=postgraduate work/degree. Income has a similar seven point scale from 1=\$10,000 or less in annual earnings to 7=\$150,001 or more. Number of children refers to children under age 18 still living at home; it ranges from 0 to 8. Religious service attendance is a nine-item scale ranging from 1=never to 9=several times a week.

### *Plan of Analysis*

Analysis begins with a descriptive overview of who is Pentecostal. We present demographic profiles for persons categorized as Pentecostal by affiliation, by religious experience, by self-identification, and by association in any way with the Pentecostal movement. Data are weighted in this portion of the analysis to more accurately depict the U.S. population overall. Next we look at community involvement and political participation by the four measures of Pentecostalism. Analysis of variance and

t-tests are used to test these bivariate relationships. Finally, we estimate a series of multivariate models to test the relative effects of Pentecostalism controlling for other relevant demographic and religious influences. The nature of our dependent variables makes customary ordinary least squares estimation inappropriate. Community involvement and political participation variables are counts of the number of community organizations and the number of political activities in which a respondent was involved. Values are positive integers of limited range. Poisson regression is a preferred estimation strategy for count data (Kennedy, 1998). We use Poisson regression for political participation. Because the variance of community involvement exceeds its mean (a condition known as overdispersion), negative binomial regression is used. Negative binomial regression is an extension of Poisson models used to estimate parameters for a variable with overdispersion (Berk and MacDonald, 2008). All bivariate and multivariate analyses rely on unweighted data, since the use of sample weights in multivariate regression models is known to bias standard errors and tests of significance (Winship and Radbill, 1994).

## **Results**

A key to understanding where Pentecostals stand in current society is to decipher who today is Pentecostal. Table 1 helps answer this question. The table compares demographic information from the full sample to respondents affiliated with a Pentecostal denomination, respondents who spoke in tongues at a place of worship, respondents who self-identify as Pentecostal or charismatic, and our Pentecostal movement composite. While these categories share common characteristics, they are not identical. For example, determining how many Pentecostals are in the United States depends on what criteria we use to define Pentecostal. Persons in Pentecostal denominations represent 5.6 percent of the U.S. population, according to these data. This closely matches prior estimates (Smidt et al., 1999; Pew Forum, 2007). A similar percentage (6.7) reported speaking in tongues at a place of worship. Persons who selected Pentecostal or charismatic as religious identities that described them constitute 11.5 percent of U.S. adults. Here again, this estimate closely approximates the Pentecostal/charismatic identity category of Smidt et al. (1996, 1999). The most generous estimate of Pentecostalism is the composite measure, which swells the total percentage of U.S. Pentecostals to 15.8. Compared to the full sample, all four measures of Pentecostalism show higher percentages of women, non-whites, and non-working individuals. Education and income appear lower for Pentecostals than for U.S. adults overall. Pentecostals attend church more often and are two to three times more likely than the average American

to believe the Bible literally on all subjects. They are also somewhat more likely to be Republican. So, Pentecostals do stand out in notable ways from the average U.S. citizen.

<Table 1 about here>

Differences across Pentecostal categories emerge beyond size. Half of respondents affiliated with Pentecostal denominations had a high school diploma or less in contrast to only a third of persons who spoke in tongues or self-identified as Pentecostal or charismatic. Persons defined as Pentecostal due to speaking in tongues were more likely female (70.8 percent), more likely to have an income under \$35,000 (57.5 percent), and had the highest percentages for weekly religious service attendance (60.0 percent) and biblical literalism (62.3 percent). In general, religious identity and the composite category of Pentecostalism look more similar to all U.S. adults than do Pentecostals denoted by religious affiliation or speaking in tongues.

Table 2 displays mean scores for community involvement and political participation. In terms of community involvement, we see all four measures of Pentecostalism associated with lower means than non-Pentecostal comparison groups. Differences in group means were only significant for religious affiliation, religious experience, and composite variables however. Persons affiliated with a Pentecostal denomination or congregation ranked at the bottom of the seven affiliation categories. Pentecostals by affiliation had a mean community involvement score of 2.78. The highest mean belonged to those from “other” affiliations outside larger and more mainstream Christian denominations (mean=5.47). Mainline Protestants and Catholics followed with means of 4.64 and 4.41, respectively. The more conservative religious traditions (evangelical and black Protestant) and the religiously unaffiliated stood closer to Pentecostals, although these three groups still had means above 3.00. The mean community involvement score for those who spoke in tongues at a place of worship was significantly lower (3.26) than it was for those without this religious experience (4.24). Claiming a Pentecostal/charismatic identity does not have the same impact. The mean for those claiming this identity (3.77) was not significantly different than for respondents who did not identify as Pentecostal or charismatic (4.18). Aggregating these three measures of Pentecostalism, our Pentecostal movement composite category is significantly lower in community involvement (3.61) than for non-Pentecostals overall (4.29). Hence, the bivariate findings presented in Table 2 lend preliminary support for our first hypothesis. Pentecostals, except when measured by self-identification alone, are less involved in community organizations outside the doors of their churches.

<Table 2 about here>

The political participation of Pentecostals in 2004 also lagged behind non-Pentecostals. The pattern of effects was consistent for Pentecostal affiliation, experience, and identity. Persons affiliated with Pentecostal denominations or congregations again fell at the bottom of all religious traditions, having participated in 3.44 political activities. Persons affiliated with other smaller and non-Christian religious groups had the highest level of political participation at 5.11. Those with no religious affiliation ranked near the bottom in community involvement, but they stood near the top in political involvement with a mean of 4.91 political activities. Mainline Protestants and Catholics again represented the middle of the spectrum (4.43 and 4.41, respectively), while black Protestants and evangelicals scored on the lower end (4.14 and 4.06, respectively). In the same way, those who spoke in tongues participated less in the political arena than those did not speak in tongues. The mean number of political activities for those who spoke in tongues at their place of worship was 3.71, whereas the mean for the non-tongues group was 4.45. Even claiming a Pentecostal or charismatic identity corresponded to reduced political participation. Those who self-identified as Pentecostal or charismatic engaged in 3.97 political activities leading up to the 2004 presidential election; those not identifying with these labels participated in 4.43 activities. Our composite measure additionally distinguishes those inside Pentecostalism as significantly less involved politically (mean=3.89) than those outside the movement (mean=4.47). These bivariate relationships follow what we would expect according to our second hypothesis. Yet, Table 2 presents only bivariate relationships. It remains to be seen whether lower rates of community involvement and political participation observed for Pentecostals are in fact effects of religion or other characteristics.

Table 3 presents a more rigorous test of our two hypotheses. We estimate four negative binomial regression models to examine the effects of our four Pentecostal measures on civic engagement, when controlling for other demographic and religious factors. Differences in the civic engagement of religious traditions appear in Model 1. Persons affiliated with Pentecostal denominations are involved in significantly fewer community organizations than are mainline Protestants, Catholics, persons in other religious traditions, and the unaffiliated. Yet, Pentecostals are not statistically distinct from non-Pentecostal evangelicals or black Protestants after controlling for other influences. Model 1 indicates that conservative Protestants look pretty similar in regard to community involvement. None of the other measures of Pentecostalism appear as significant in Table 3. Neither speaking in tongues, claiming a

Pentecostal or charismatic religious identity, nor being attached in any way to the Pentecostal movement is related to level of community involvement, once we add religious and demographic control variables. The findings in Table 3 offer no support of a unique Pentecostal effect on community involvement, refuting our first hypothesis.

<Table 3 about here>

Lower rates of Pentecostal community involvement reported in Table 2 seem to be mainly a function of social class, religious conservatism, and political party affiliation. Education, income, biblical literalist, and Democrat are significant correlates to community involvement in all four models. We saw in our descriptive statistics that Pentecostals, particularly those distinguished by denominational affiliation or speaking in tongues, tend to have less education, lower income, a literal reading of the Bible, and a political party affiliation other than Democrat (a plurality being Republican). It seems these characteristics explain more of their engagement with community organization than does their affiliation, experience, or identity as a Pentecostal. One other significant control variable worthy of note is religious service attendance. It is significant and positive in all four models of Table 3. People who attend religious services frequently are more involved in community organizations, on average. This might stand as a countervailing influence for Pentecostals, given their high rates of church attendance. No significant interaction effects emerged between Pentecostal affiliation and attendance however.

Table 4 lists the multivariate findings of political participation regressed upon Pentecostal measures and control variables. Once again, we find that the effect of being Pentecostal is largely explained away by demographic and other religious characteristics. Persons in Pentecostal congregations and denominations participated in a comparable number of political activities as other major Christian traditions leading up to the 2004 election. Model 1 documents that only those in other traditions and the religiously unaffiliated were significantly different from denominational Pentecostals. Both were more active politically than those in the Pentecostal tradition. Again, neither religious experience, religious identity, nor the composite measure distinguishes Pentecostals politically. Coefficients for all these variables are negative in Table 4 as expected, but none meets the criterion for significance at the 0.05 level. Bivariate relationships between political participation and Pentecostal variables seem to hinge on demographic factors, most notably education, income, and political party. Across all four models, males, education, income, religious service attendance, and Democrats are associated with more political

participation. When religious tradition is not included (Model 2 and Model 3), biblical literalism also appears as a significant negative influence.

<Table 4 about here>

## **Conclusions**

Nearly two centuries after Alexis de Tocqueville toured America a plethora of religious groups now dot the landscape. Not all of these groups foster the type of vibrant civic engagement that Tocqueville thought was a hallmark of American religion. Our purpose in this study was to examine the contributions of Pentecostal Christians to contemporary civic life. Pentecostalism, an international, transdenominational movement, represents one of the fastest growing segments of Christianity. With as many as one quarter of global Christians identified with the movement, the implications for civil society are profound.

At first glance, Pentecostals do appear on or near the sidelines of civic life. They are less involved in community organizations outside the doors of their churches. They also participate less in politics. Speaking in tongues or belonging to a church where this gift is emphasized are stronger distinguishing characteristics than is describing oneself as Pentecostal or charismatic. Nevertheless, all four measures of Pentecostalism are associated with some extent of reduced civic engagement.

The social marginalization of Pentecostals seems more demographic than religious however. Pentecostalism is a movement that remains attractive to those of lower education and lower income in the United States. This fits the classic formulation of sectarian religion. Novel beliefs and rituals invite stigma. Those most accepting of such stigma are those whom society has rewarded least. Educated, affluent individuals have a greater stake in secular society. Consequently, religious groups composed of lower social classes do not show the same participation in secular society. Participation is concentrated within their religious group. Not coincidentally, Pentecostals show high levels of church attendance and low levels of community and political involvement. Once we start to disentangle social class and religion however, we discover that simply being Pentecostal (regardless of how this is measured) does not relegate people to the sidelines of civic life. There are a number of plausible explanations. The growth that Pentecostalism has experienced, in some regards, may have led to a decrease in marginalization. With the charismatic renewal movement post-1960, well-heeled Episcopalians and those of other mainstream denominations helped diversify the socioeconomic base of Pentecostalism. It also could be that

participation in the Pentecostal movement has contributed to the rising social standing of adherents, by encouraging healthy living and responsibility. Another possibility is greater recent mobilization, at least politically. Our findings make it impossible for us to comment on these possibilities. Whatever the causal impetus, we find Pentecostals to be less disengaged than anticipated.

Another aspect that explains Pentecostal disengagement is the general conservative orientation of many in this movement. Pentecostals tend toward a literal view of the Bible and affiliation with the Republican Party. In both of these ways, Pentecostals look very similar to other conservative Protestants. While separating Pentecostals out from other evangelicals may make sense for some social outcomes (e.g. Blanchard et al., 2008), we find no basis for these distinctions in our analysis of community involvement and political participation. The extent of involvement appears very similar for evangelicals, Pentecostals, and black Protestants.

There are limitations to our study that deserve repeating. Our variable of speaking in tongues in a place of worship is a modest proxy at best for this religious experience. Speaking in tongues is understood by many to be a private prayer language. Unfortunately, our tongues variable misses people who engage in this religious experience outside congregations. Our analysis also relies on very broad assessments of civic engagement. It could be that Pentecostals are deeply involved with one specific community organization or one type of political activity. It may be useful for future research to focus more narrowly on alternative forms of engagement to uncover if Pentecostals differ from other groups.

Nevertheless, a note of optimism should ring from these findings. Pentecostalism, at least as it presently exists in the United States, poses no impediment to democratic participation. Educated, affluent individuals regardless of religious orientation are more involved socially. As the Pentecostal movement expands beyond its disinherited roots, the engagement of Pentecostals with their social environments will likely expand as well. Pentecostal groups could hasten this shift by advocating higher education and civic participation. High rates of religious participation give Pentecostals a strong basis for collective mobilization. A more civically engaged Pentecostal movement could prove a powerful force for global democracy.

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**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Full Sample and Measures of Pentecostalism**

	Full Sample	Pentecostal Affiliation	Spoke in Tongues	Pentecostal/Charismatic Identity	Pentecostal Composite
% of U.S. Population	-----	5.6%	6.7%	11.5%	15.8%
Female	53.0%	68.7%	70.8%	59.2%	61.5%
White	86.4%	76.3%	75.8%	77.5%	76.0%
Age (mean)	49.8	49.0	51.9	47.8	46.9
High school diploma or less	26.7%	49.9%	39.0%	36.6%	34.0%
Income of \$35,000 or less	32.0%	49.4%	57.5%	48.9%	47.9%
Married	56.9%	56.9%	53.6%	53.8%	53.2%
#of children at home (mean)	0.6	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.9
Employed	64.2%	47.1%	48.4%	55.6%	58.4%
Attend religious services weekly or more	30.5%	55.8%	60.0%	47.9%	46.6%
Biblical literalist	22.3%	59.8%	62.3%	43.6%	45.5%
Democrat	35.4%	28.2%	32.9%	22.0%	27.2%
Independent	19.7%	21.8%	10.0%	20.1%	18.6%
Republican	38.4%	43.6%	44.0%	47.7%	44.8%

2005 Baylor Religion Survey (weighted data).

**Table 2**  
**Community Involvement and Political Participation by Pentecostal Classification**

	Mean Community Involvement Score	Mean Political Participation Score
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		
Pentecostal	2.78 <sup>a</sup>	3.44 <sup>a</sup>
Evangelical, non-Pentecostal	3.42	4.06
Black Protestant, non-Pentecostal	4.12	4.14
Mainline Protestant	4.64	4.43
Catholic	4.41	4.41
Other	5.47	5.11
None	3.63	4.91
<i>Religious Experience</i>		
Spoke in tongues at place of worship	3.26 <sup>b</sup>	3.71 <sup>b</sup>
No tongues experience	4.24	4.45
<i>Religious Identity</i>		
Pentecostal/Charismatic	3.77	3.97 <sup>b</sup>
Not Pentecostal/Charismatic	4.18	4.43
<i>Composite Measure</i>		
Member of Pentecostal movement	3.61 <sup>b</sup>	3.89 <sup>b</sup>
Not in Pentecostal movement	4.29	4.47

2005 Baylor Religion Survey

<sup>a</sup> Means differ significantly at  $p < .05$  (ANOVA F-test)

<sup>b</sup> Means differ significantly at  $p < .05$  (two-tailed t-test)

**Table 3**  
**Pentecostal Effects on Community Involvement**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	-.329	-.137	-.163	-.069
<i>Controls</i>				
Female	.031	.037	.023	.025
White	-.167	-.148	-.101	-.140
Age	.003	.005*	.005*	.006*
Education	.120***	.126***	.128***	.127***
Income	.068**	.077***	.064**	.055*
Married	-.035	-.049	-.016	-.013
Number of children	.046	.048	.037	.042
Employed	.098	.100	.113	.113
Religious service attendance	.066***	.066***	.062***	.061***
Biblical literalist	-.163*	-.252**	-.296***	-.286***
Democrat	.181**	.213***	.204***	.181**
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>				
Pentecostal	(omitted)	-----	-----	-----
Evangelical, non-Pentecostal	.177	-----	-----	-----
Black Protestant, non-Pentecostal	.196	-----	-----	-----
Mainline Protestant	.388**	-----	-----	-----
Catholic	.347*	-----	-----	-----
Other	.498**	-----	-----	-----
None	.313*	-----	-----	-----
<i>Religious Experience</i>				
Tongues	-----	-.148	-----	-----
<i>Religious Identity</i>				
Pentecostal/Charismatic	-----	-----	.039	-----
<i>Composite</i>				
Pentecostal movement	-----	-----	-----	-.054
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	206.41***	196.84***	176.01***	163.49***
N	1476	1473	1377	1340

2005 Baylor Religion Survey. Negative binomial regression coefficients.

\* Significant at  $p < .05$

\*\* Significant at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* Significant at  $p < .001$

**Table 4**  
**Pentecostal Effects on Political Participation**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	.722***	.853***	.875***	.923***
<i>Controls</i>				
Female	-.073**	-.069**	-.080**	-.081**
White	-.008	-.006	-.011	-.018
Age	.002	.002*	.002*	.002
Education	.048***	.054***	.054***	.053***
Income	.041***	.041***	.037**	.036**
Married	-.006	-.012	-.001	-.008
Number of children	-.024	-.014	-.017	-.024
Employed	.039	.042	.040	.035
Religious service attendance	.020***	.010*	.010*	.011*
Biblical literalist	-.063	-.079*	-.084*	-.076
Democrat	.110***	.122***	.119***	.117***
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>				
Pentecostal	(omitted)	-----	-----	-----
Evangelical, non-Pentecostal	.089	-----	-----	-----
Black Protestant, non-Pentecostal	.079	-----	-----	-----
Mainline Protestant	.118	-----	-----	-----
Catholic	.111	-----	-----	-----
Other	.229**	-----	-----	-----
None	.261**	-----	-----	-----
<i>Religious Experience</i>				
Tongues	-----	-.077	-----	-----
<i>Religious Identity</i>				
Pentecostal/Charismatic	-----	-----	-.023	-----
<i>Composite</i>				
Pentecostal movement	-----	-----	-----	-.051
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	177.78***	159.07***	145.66***	138.36***
N	1455	1459	1357	1326

2005 Baylor Religion Survey. Poisson regression coefficients.

\* Significant at  $p < .05$

\*\* Significant at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* Significant at  $p < .001$