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Pentecostalism and the Arts of Insistence: Examples from Botswana

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Abstract

This contribution explores the significance of religious practices that put emphasis on encouraging people to hold their position when others question the ideological or dogmatic elements of their faith. Applying the term ‘religious insistence’, it investigates these practices with a view to the ways in which Pentecostals take a position vis-à-vis the challenges they confront in the sociopolitical domain. Contributing to the study of religious activism, we show that practices of insistence are neither fully resistant nor fully acquiescent with regard to the existing situation. We argue that these practices of holding one’s ground, which we subsume under the term ‘insistence’, represent a specific modality of formulating one’s identity in regard to others that is neither about provoking structural change, as a resistance perspective would emphasise, nor about condoning a structural situation as is and remaining fully acquiescent with it. While in Pentecostal contexts insistence does not take up-front political protest as its main focus, it can still be interpreted as a form of religious activism since it often entails some form of critical response toward a given sociopolitical order or process. By drawing attention to how religious insistence manifests itself in and through Pentecostalism, this contribution proposes to enrich the study of religious activism in Africa and opens up a perspective that addresses assertiveness as a register of expression that differs from resistance and acquiescence.

Keywords

insistence – resistance – acquiescence – Pentecostalism

1 Introduction

During our studies of Pentecostalism in Africa, we have experienced many occasions when we witnessed moments in which leaders or members strongly emphasised in both words and acts an insistence on particular elements of Pentecostal ideology and practice. This contribution revisits these moments and forms of insistence in order to explore how they relate to the ethnographic study of religious activism. In retrospect, such moments of religiously inspired insistence occurred during Van Dijk's inquiries into the rise of charismatic Pentecostalism in Malawi in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but also when studying Pentecostalism in Ghana, in African migrant communities in the Netherlands, and in Botswana in more recent years (Van Dijk 1992, 2001, 2013). While conducting research on the topic, Van Dijk began being exposed to practices of insistence when he attended meetings of young preachers in Malawi. These young preachers were exceptional in many regards, not only because in such religious circles leadership by youth was rare, but also and especially because of the ways in which they enforced particular forms of moral conduct on their audiences. As Van Dijk has described at length elsewhere (Van Dijk 1992, 1995, 1998), these preachers, despite their young age frequently demanded that members of their audiences, especially the elderly, come forward to kneel and confess their sins, while insisting that those who came forward publicly declared their desire to repent and to change their way of life by stopping with drinking, smoking or visiting traditional healers to seek help or spiritual protection. While on the whole onlookers were baffled by their power to influence people to reject these behaviours, which they claimed stood in the way of becoming a saved, born-again Christian, we are intrigued by what can be explored as the power of insistence that they transmitted in these moments. By insisting that people should come forward and that they should repent, a forceful demand was placed on people in their audiences to acknowledge their indisputable, God-sent position of authority. This insistence was expressed by driving home the importance of taking a step and a stand by giving up on these matters and by endlessly repeating the message that there is no salvation without letting go (Van Dijk 1992).

In many other cases, such as in Ghana and Botswana, it now strikes us that the insistence that Pentecostal preachers and leaders expressed to their followers was and is not just a 'request'. Indeed, it moves beyond requesting since

they often make clear to their audiences that they will not rest until people come forward, including in moments when pastors and preachers use the laying on of hands as a way to transmit the power of the Holy Spirit to the person in an attempt to free that person from certain spiritual powers that obstruct his or her future fortune and well-being.¹ Having witnessed such occasions several times, Van Dijk recalls being repeatedly amazed at how the shouting, cries, stamping of feet, and the pointing of fingers at people seemed to work so effectively (Van Dijk 1992, 1995, 1998). Insisting that people obey their demands vis-à-vis behaviour and life choices is often accompanied by a particular verbal repertoire as well as with bodily comportment and gestures that leave little doubt as to the toughness of this form of insistence.

Yet in other instances, for example when doing research on Pentecostalism and marriage, Van Dijk witnessed moments of insistence that were informed by Pentecostal notions but then expressed by members and followers of the faith, such as when young couples told their family elders that they would not serve alcohol during their marriage celebrations, despite coming under significant pressure to do so (Van Dijk 2004, 2010b). In Botswana, for example, one interlocutor with whom Van Dijk interacted explicitly remembered how forcefully he had to insist that he was not prepared to take part in a cultural practice prior to the wedding celebrations that involved sharing a room that was specifically prepared with the partner he was about to marry.² This insistence on not sharing the room for the night, despite the significant pressure he experienced from both families to do so, had been influenced by Pentecostal reservations about cultural practices such as these and moral notions about premarital sexuality.³

In situations like these, religious practitioners are eager to demonstrate through the act of insisting their resolve to hold on to a particular aspect of their Pentecostal convictions, certain moral principles, or desired outcomes of their actions and intentions. In this way, insistence seems crucial to our understanding of the workings of Pentecostal ideology and praxis. While also the young preachers in the Malawian example, or the Pentecostal followers refusing to serve alcohol during weddings, are perhaps not 'activists' in the usual understanding of the word (see also the introduction to this issue), the insistence that these leaders and followers enact can be defined as a particular form of activism in the way it demands attention and movement from a social environment to accept and move toward the insisting actor's position, instead of the other way around.

One line of interpretation that can be explored productively is that in the anthropology of religion in southern Africa, religion has often been studied in relation to questions of resistance whereby the rise of new religious movements was often interpreted as being a rise of 'movements of protest' (Comaroff 1985;

Englund 2011; Van Dijk, Kirsch, and Duarte dos Santos this issue). Importantly, however, in the context of Pentecostalism in Africa the significance of insistence as a particular religious register of speech and agency has hardly been problematised or conceptualised. Given the theme of this special issue, raising the question of what kind of activism this practice of insistence represents in the way it enacts and engenders a particular and desired change in a social environment seems pertinent.

Analytically, the question is whether and to what extent the notion of resistance captures the point made above, namely the firmness with which these Pentecostals voice their positioning vis-à-vis societal developments and policies. Is *resisting* the same as *insisting*, and if it is not, how can its analytical difference be understood and interpreted? Insistence does not seem to imply the same level of activism as movements that actively organise collective forms of protest and resistance. Also, the above example of the preachers and followers illustrate that the way they insist on spiritual power to make people act in a particular manner does not make them passive or acquiescent in regard to the situation with which they are engaging. The form of insistence that they demonstrate shows very clearly that they are not complacent with the existing structures of authority in their respective societies that underscored much the authority by the elderly. Thus, taken together, such displays of insistence cannot be easily equated to resistance or acquiescence. Hence the question is how religious insistence can be conceptualised.

A second and related line of interpretation can be indicated by placing this example of how preachers and followers addressed their concerns in the perspective of what Foucault has termed *parrhesia* (Foucault 2001), often defined as a mode of fearless speech (Foucault 2001; Englund 2018; Skinner 2011). As Lietaert Peerbolte (2018) also indicates, Foucault's work on this modality of speech, can be placed in the context of understanding (early) Christianity and its attention to the fearlessness of prophets, preachers, and apostles (Lietaert Peerbolte 2018, 5, 7). In Pentecostalism, much power is attributed to various forms of speech, such as prayer, preaching, prophecy, counseling, the giving of testimonies, and speaking in tongues (Burchardt 2009; Meyer 2010; Marshall 2016), and we argue that *parrhesia* can be included in these language practices. While *parrhesia* can be captured under the rubric of resistance as, by implication, fearless speech can defy structures of power and conventions regardless of possible repercussions, Foucault also points at the relational aspect of such speech. More than fearless speech, *parrhesia* is perhaps best understood as courageous speech, which as Foucault (2011) indicates demands the other and the wider social environment to acknowledge the move that the speaker is making away from and in opposition to established structures and conventions.

This courageousness shapes the particular nature of the social interaction with the message of the speaker and all that follows from it. In this sense, we understand parrhesia not as an expression of individuality per se, but rather as feeding into and adding to a relational understanding of insistence as a courageous act that demands from a social environment the acknowledgement of, in this case, a particular religious position.

In the following section, this line of interpretation is explored in relation to the notion of courageous speech by arguing that while speech is important to the notion of insistence, actions and practices of insistence may reach further than just the sheer act of speaking, as the example mentioned above already showed.

2 Resistance vs. Acquiescence: Where Should Insistence Be Situated?

Many scholars of Pentecostalism in Africa have noted the general importance of insistence in the overall framework of Pentecostal ideology and practice. Writing about the Pentecostal dominance in Ghana, where a wide variety of Christian and non-Christian religious traditions are vying for attention, De Witte states: 'At this particular historical moment Pentecostalism reigns supreme in Ghana's public sphere and it can be argued that its success ultimately depends on its insistence that African spirits are real and to be taken seriously' (De Witte 2008, 221).

Elsewhere in Africa the relationship between the firmness of the Pentecostal claims concerning their command of spiritual powers and their execution of ritual practices has been noted. Writing on the rise of Pentecostalism in Ethiopia, Haustein states: 'Pentecostals insist on the superiority and finality of their exorcisms in opposition to traditional practices.... This claim to an ultimate efficacy of the Pentecostal exorcism rules out other forms of spirit management, most importantly those that may be connected to recurrent spirit possessions' (Haustein 2011, 538).

In a similar vein, Haynes, writing about influential Pentecostal groupings on the Zambian Copperbelt, indicates how this insistence—in this case referring to the purported spiritual superiority of the Pentecostal faith—is placed in relation to making claims about the godly nature of social order: 'In contrast to the disorder that comes from Satan, Pentecostals on the Copperbelt regularly insist that "Leswa order"—God is a God of order' (Haynes 2017, 84).

Furthermore, beyond the spiritual domain and the creation of (a theocratic) order, the Pentecostal insistence on a particular religious and moral position has been documented for various domains of social action. For example,

Pentecostals in Africa position themselves in view of all sorts of behavioural change campaigns that address such issues as sexuality, gender relations, marriage, or generational authority (Prince, Denis, and Van Dijk 2009; Bochow and Van Dijk 2012; Burchardt 2009, 2010; Dilger 2007; Gusman 2013). The role of insistence in how this change in behaviour is promoted can hardly be overlooked. For example, exploring how Pentecostals in Kenya proclaim their views on the changing nature of masculinity in this country, Chitando and Kilonzo observe: 'Kenyan Pentecostal preachers insist that men must forsake patriarchal privileges and replace them with responsibility' (Chitando and Kilonzo 2018, 73).

It is therefore no exaggeration to state that the scholarly study of Pentecostalism in Africa is replete with references to instances in which Pentecostal members, leaders, and organisations have been observed insisting on some aspect of the faith's convictions and doctrines. At the same time, insistence can be shown to be multilayered. Many of the studies describe these aspects of insistence first and foremost as an element of Pentecostal rhetoric that primarily serves the purpose of establishing or strengthening the Pentecostal positionality in various social and spiritual domains. It is evident that this insistence informs practice and thus may reach beyond being mere pronouncements. Interestingly, insisting on maintaining a particular ideological position can mean that, by implication, resisting and rejecting other forms of thinking and acting are being practically enacted. In this sense, insistence becomes a critical praxis, which can be made the subject of anthropological observation.

Take, for example, a case from the study of Rasmussen (2014) in which she investigates the interaction of Pentecostal groupings with the AIDS crisis in Uganda in regard to the extent to which Pentecostalism fosters or hinders AIDS treatment. Discussing an HIV-infected and -afflicted member of and preacher at a Pentecostal church who is required to be careful about the demands placed on his physique because of his ailing condition, she records the intrinsic relationship between insistence and the practice of resisting a medical regime: 'David insisted that going to church and praying on the street was crucial for his physical and mental well-being' (Rasmussen 2014, 265). In this case the insistence on continuing his street-preaching activities was voiced in view of claiming a higher ground in terms of serving one's health that makes biomedical ideas and practices subservient to it.

Such forms of insistence have not been recorded for Pentecostals exclusively. For instance, cases of religious insistence are known from the medical field where people may insist on certain medical treatments on the basis of

religious convictions or insist on changing it, as can be the case with Jehovah's Witnesses who may insist on a different treatment regarding blood transfusion (Connors and Smith 1996; Wong 2012). Beyond the medical domain, we note that forms of insistence are also observed and described in other religious contexts such as that of the Charismatic movement in the Roman Catholic Church in America (Hervieu-Léger 1997) or that of Protestant Christianity in the Indian diaspora (Goh 2018). Again, these authors emphasize how insistence as a practice is included in a range of religious practices, including prophecy, healing, and glossolalia, which can manifest an internal change in the believer's identity, conviction, and behaviour (Hervieu-Léger 1997, Goh 2018). Hence while we are not claiming that insisting on something is inherently 'religious' per se, since insistence can also occur for example in political rhetoric, which is beyond the scope of this article, we aim to contribute to exploring analytically how particular practices of insistence can have specific meaning for constructions of identity in religious contexts, of which the Pentecostals provide a strong example.

In Africa many actions of religious movements have been interpreted in a framework that can be viewed, in James Scott's (1987, 1990) terms, as 'the arts of resistance'. This framework emphasised a perspective in which religious thought and practice was primarily seen through the lens of its relevance to sociopolitical realities in the region.⁴ These forms of religious resistance were interpreted as voicing the concerns of a body of people who had become marginalised and disenfranchised from greater power sharing, economic progress, or other forms of social upliftment in Africa's colonial and postcolonial history. While this thinking continues to be a powerful paradigm, as demonstrated by recent publications (see the work of Bompani [2008] and Engelke [2010] on Independent Churches in southern Africa), it has also been the subject of an extensive critical debate in the past.

This debate was noticeably stirred when, in 1991, Matthew Schoffeleers published an article in the I.A.I. journal *Africa* titled 'Ritual Healing and Political Acquiescence: The Case of the Zionist Churches in Southern Africa' (see also Van Dijk, Kirsch and Duarte dos Santos this issue). It formulated a proposition about the political position of prophet-healing and Pentecostal churches in southern Africa that ran against the grain of established paradigms of religiopolitical interpretation, arguing that:

It is a matter of empirical observation that healing Churches lean heavily towards political acquiescence. This is true not only of South Africa, where silence in matters political may rightfully be interpreted as an

effect of stringent State control; it holds good also for less dictatorial State systems.... This suggests something in the nature of a causal relation between the practice of ritual healing and the absence of political protest.

SCHOFFELEERS 1991, 1

In other words, Schoffeleers argues here that there is an intrinsic and causal relationship between the emphasis on personal and spiritual healing on the one hand, and the absence of up-front and manifest political protest on the other. The reason he gives for this is that healing practices in African religious systems (and perhaps elsewhere as well) tend to emphasise the reintegration of the ill person into the structural functioning of society—since an illness is primarily seen as an anomaly—and that healing therefore always works in the service of perpetuating and underscoring the order of society instead of going against it. Put differently, healing and the religious emphasis on healing practices make political protest impossible since healing supports and emulates socio-political order instead of undercutting it.

The article was written at the time when the apartheid regime in South Africa had not yet ended, and the regime appeared to receive significant support from the large and influential Zion Churches, which were (and still are) mustering a membership of millions from the country's black majority. He noted that one of the tenets of the Zionist faith is spiritual healing, provided by a range of religious specialists and a range of ritual practices that serve the church community. At the same time, some of South Africa's white minority presidents regularly attended the church's Easter/Passover gatherings where they addressed the thousands of members who had flocked there to celebrate the church's most significant and recurring annual ritual event (Schoffeleers 1991: 3).

The debate, if not controversy, that emerged around the publication of this article (Ngada 1992; Meyer 2004; Meyer and Reis 2006; MacLean 2012) is indicative of what at the time might have been called a dominant paradigm in the anthropology of religion that, in essence, related the rise of religious movements in Africa to political protest and resistance. On the one hand, as Englund (2011) and Marshall (2009), among others, argue, the question was if and to what extent the diverse ritual and symbolic manifestations of these churches should be perceived as expressions of political resistance to capitalist systems and (global) cultural domination, as argued in particular in Jean Comaroff's study on the Zion churches *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (1985). On the other hand, authors such as Bompani (2008) argue that in many situations religion and politics cannot be easily separated and in fact are often conflated, making religious communities address social issues while bringing them to the

attention of political leaders and policymakers using different strategies than those of up-front political protest.

In the context of this debate the continuing rise of Pentecostalism in Africa complicated matters further. Here was a form of Christianity that, through its increasing embrace of the prosperity gospel (Gifford 1990, 2004) and religious interests for the neoliberal market (Freeman 2012; Van Dijk 2010a), appeared to be decidedly not voicing clear-cut protests against the structural inequalities that global liberalism seemed to produce. Instead, it was a religious movement that was highly attractive to the new, educated urban middle classes (Freeman 2012). Indeed, as Werbner (1989) and Meyer (2004) succinctly point out, resistance and protest appeared to have been exchanged for a discourse of cultural innovation that was highly focused on new understandings of the subjective positioning of the individual in socio-cultural developments. The study of Pentecostalism in Africa and elsewhere contributed to the rise of a subfield of anthropology that became known under the rubric of the anthropology of Christianity (Robbins 2003; Bialecki 2012, 2016; Haynes 2017; Marshall 2016) in which a critical political-economic theory approach to this religious form as giving voice to the effects of economic marginalisation became less dominant. Instead, many studies focused on identity, subjectivity, and self-fashioning by exploring ritual practices such as deliverance, speaking in tongues, and ecstasy and their meaning for conversion (Meyer 2004, 2010; Engelke 2004, 2010; Englund 2003, 2011), devoting ample attention to the cultural understandings and contestations of the body and its senses, sexual moralities, public religion, and how this faith conflicted with local traditions. It began exploring the cultural, intrinsic, and internal dynamics of the power the faith has in reshaping subjectivities to understand in particular its techniques of the self in view of local, cultural contexts such as those of the middle classes in Botswana (Van Dijk 2012b, 2013, 2017b). While acknowledging that the break with the past that Pentecostalism prescribes to its members entails a critical subject position vis-à-vis cultural traditions, thereby maintaining a sense of resistance in some form or another (see Meyer 1998; Engelke 2010; see also Krause and Van Dijk 2016 for a transnational rendering of this argument), Pentecostalism could no longer be analysed under the rubric of resistance as a 'weapon of the weak' (cf. Scott 1987; see also Marshall 2014 on this point). Pentecostalism appeared to demonstrate that, potentially, forms of religious resistance are not limited to the weak in southern African societies; rather, they can also be exemplified by those who are in a stronger and more powerful position. This is because—as many have argued (Faimau 2017; Van de Kamp 2016; Burchardt 2013a, 2013b; Freeman 2012)—the growth and attraction of Pentecostalism are often located in the rise of emergent socioeconomic, urban, and educated

middle classes, who nevertheless espouse versions of religious activism that are deeply connected to Pentecostal ideological forms and notions that resist and reject certain societal developments or policies.

The question, then, is: was Schoffeleers right after all? Did the disappearance of the Marxist and resistance-based interpretation of Charismatic movements indeed give way to an interpretation that emphasises a more Durkheimian line of thinking in which healing leads to—and forms the basis of—a reintegration of the person into an existing political order without challenging it, thus leading to political acquiescence? Or, as Englund (2011) posits in what he sees as moving beyond the religion-politics conundrum, are these paradigms that oscillate between resistance on the one hand, and acquiescence on the other too mutually exclusive in these lines of argumentation? Could there be another register, a third option so to speak, in understanding the rise of particular religiopolitical practices? We find other ways of expression that are neither an open form of protest nor a sign of acquiescence, which Scott (1990) indicates with the concept of ‘hidden transcripts’ and which can involve studying things like dragging one’s feet, making certain gestures, gossiping, or giving looks. However, the question is where to position forms of insistence since these seem much less hidden and much less passive than what Scott describes in terms of hidden transcripts, while at the same time being qualitatively different from up-front resistance or being acquiescent. How do we further understand religious notions of insistence if they are not a hidden transcript either?

Bill Ashcroft provides an inspirational route out of this conundrum. In his book *On Postcolonial Futures: Transformations of a Colonial Culture* (2001), he views insistence as being different from resistance insofar as resistance is defensive (in our understanding, for example, as in attack is the best defence), while insistence is ‘productive, assertive and excessive’ (2001, 119) and in his view is thus more related to the expression of agency (2001). In a way, as Kirsch (in personal conversation) has pointed out in the context of his work on religious activism (see also Kirsch this issue), resistance always seems to require the existence of some kind of power that one is reacting to. Yet insistence does not, per definition, require the presence of power to be expressed. It creates its own ground on which notions and convictions are expressed, which may or may not address issues of power.

Second, it is important to distinguish insistence from resistance in view of a focus on the self, one’s subjective positionality, and especially—in line with the preceding discussion—how it *produces* a particular process of self-formulation (Ashcroft 2001) in religious contexts. Insistence relates to place and position as in to ‘stand on’ and to produce a subject-position vis-à-vis a

particular (social) environment regardless of whether or not this environment will be changed by this form of identity-self-formulation. The object of attention is qualitatively different in insistence as compared to resistance since it appears to consider and address the issue of self-formulation in the first place.

Being a form of identity making that emphasises holding on to a particular position, insistence draws on grounding certain vestiges of conviction on and in ever-deeper layers of unshakable truths that are often religiously or morally produced. As a process, therefore, the primary focus of insistence is that of expressing this element of a grounded self-formulation that places an often-strong demand for the recognition of its position on its social environment, and interpellates it (a point to which we will return later), while simultaneously producing a notion of the positionality of the 'other'. Insistence, in the way we interpret it, is therefore more than only claiming a particular religious and moral position; while this is a necessary first step, there is more to it since there is also an expectation, if not a demand, for the other to move closer and adopt that position too. Insistence is thereby defined in a different directionality compared to resistance. One can call insistence *a practice of putting forward recoiling demands*; while insistence does not reach out to the positionality of the other and his or her 'groundings', it places a demand on the social environment to acknowledge, accept, and recognise the grounded positionality of the actor. Operating in this way as a kind of social/relational boomerang that from its position throws out a demand at its social environment to reaffirm that position and eventually adopt it, insistence can be defined as a practice of formulating recoiling demands that have grounded self-formulations as their main objective.

This leads to the idea that by pointing at the significance of insistence in the way Pentecostals seem to take a position vis-à-vis the sociopolitical domain, practices of insistence emerge that are neither fully resistant nor fully acquiescent with regard to the existing situation. These positions of holding ground that are expressed are primarily about self-identity formulations that are not about provoking structural change, as a resistance perspective emphasises, nor are they about condoning a structural situation as is and remain fully acquiescent with it. That is, while in these Pentecostal contexts insistence is a form of religious activism that does not take up-front political protest as its main focus, it is not necessarily without some form of critical response to a given sociopolitical order or process.

We propose to enrich the study of religious activism in Africa as noted in cases of Pentecostal thought and practice by opening a perspective that addresses precisely this type of assertiveness that can be called religious insistence, and as a matter of grounded self-formulation that is a different register

of expression compared to resistance and acquiescence. Practices of religious insistence can be explored ethnographically so as to understand empirically how they represent a form of activism that aims to convince and pressure a particular social environment to move closer to, accept, and acknowledge a particular subject position.

3 Exploring Religious Insistence Ethnographically: Comparative Vignettes

In proposing a study of insistence as a form of religious practice we must first acknowledge the fact that there is a theology of insistence in Africa that can be included in its ethnographic analysis. That is, while practices of religious insistence can be studied on the level of everyday life, at the same time there is a domain of thought that simultaneously describes and prescribes the notion of insistence on the level of normativity. For example, Ghana-based theologian Asamoah-Gyadu points at the hermeneutical significance of insistence in Pentecostal ideological premises about evil powers in people's lives, thereby giving insistence an existential twist without exploring how insistence is 'done':

The African Pentecostal insistence, that it is possible to be a Christian and be dominated by desires of the flesh and demonic influences, has led to the provision of ritual contexts in which people could renounce such stumbling blocks through healing and deliverance in order that they may be empowered to victory in life.

ASAMOA-H-GYADU 2007, 407

If we compare this theology of insistence with how it can be seen to express forms of grounded self-formulation, we can come to see more sharply how insistence acts itself out in practice.

In the work of Haynes in Zambia we find one such example of the possibility of developing an ethnographic approach with respect to the direct link between insistence and its expression in particular practices:

pastors ought not to let differences in material status influence how they treated the various members of their churches. When making choices about which believers to visit or who to appoint to leadership posts in the congregation, Pentecostals in Nsofu insisted that the only thing pastors

ought to take into account was spiritual status. By following these rules, the charismatic distinction that separated pastors from laypeople would serve as the only metric by which their relationships were organized.

HAYNES 2013, 91

In this case it can be argued that insisting on knowing the spiritual status of people as a way of guiding Pentecostal pastors about whom to contact with respect to certain tasks or positions clearly shows how insistence functions somewhere in between resistance and acquiescence while not being exactly the same. On the one hand, this insistence does not express a pursuit of the status quo and a full embrace of the socioeconomic status profiling that is so common in communities of this kind. Instead, the topic and object of insistence in what Haynes is describing is that, contrary to the common patterns of socioeconomic status profiling, the pastors and the churches should do better. For instance, it expresses dissatisfaction and unease with such profiling and aims to exchange it for another method for determining status. Yet at the same time, it is neither fully resistant to nor protesting against this form of socioeconomic profiling. While insisting on a spiritual form of status profiling, it does not immediately aim to change the sociostructural order of the social environment. It may ultimately have this effect, but evidently insistence in terms of grounding status in spirituality is the prime target.

Our research on the development of Pentecostalism in Africa over the years⁵ has shown many instances of practices of religious insistence being open to ethnographic exploration. We present other ethnographic vignettes that exemplify practices of insistence through which we can examine how recoiling demands are placed on a social environment with a view to harnessing particular self-formulations. We now turn to exemplary vignettes taken from our studies in Botswana in which we show the relevance of insistence and its persuasive force as a mode of action in Pentecostal circles.

The first vignette concerns a young woman who exemplified the specific significance of insistence as a particular act of faith and religious practice. Here the case concerned marriage preparations, which in Botswana are a complex matter and take a long time to reach completion. As Van Dijk has reported elsewhere (Van Dijk 2010b, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, 2017a, 2017b), these marriage preparations may involve various ritual practices, such as for example the slaughtering of a cow from which a particular piece of meat is taken. Often, a traditional doctor (*ngaka*) inserts specific substances into that piece before it is eaten by the couple about to get married. These substances that are meant to

spiritually enhance the marital relationship, fortify it against afflictive spiritual powers, and create a lasting relation between the partners as a result of having shared the same meat, which contains the same blood and the same spiritual powers. This ritual practice is contested in some but not all Christian circles and as Van Dijk has reported elsewhere (Van Dijk 2012c, 2017a), in one case the young woman's answer was a firm refusal to participate in it. Such young people's acts of insistence can bring wedding arrangements to a halt and it leaves their families to discuss and negotiate how to cope with the situation (as also happened in this case, see Van Dijk 2012c).

Interestingly, in the context of Pentecostal churches in particular, we find other instances in which young men and women express their deep concerns about certain practices as well as expectations from their family elders, and thus clearly voice a 'No' and are insistent about certain principles. In the same research context as the abovementioned young woman, one of Van Dijk's interlocutors, a woman in her mid-thirties, finally got married after long adhering to the Pentecostal dogma of her church that called on her to wait until the right partner was sent her way through divine inspiration. This issue of being single is well known in Pentecostal circles (Frahm-Arp 2012, see also Cole 2010, Bochow and Van Dijk 2012). She had managed to insist on her position despite all the pressure from family members to find a partner. More importantly, she was insistent about her Christian principle of not having a child before marriage. Both matters resulted in tensions in her relationship with her family, especially her elders. Yet over time her parents had come to accept and respect her position on these matters and now supported her. Having married in her mid-thirties, and now waiting for a child to come, she brought her hope and desire for having a child soon to the attention of the leadership of her church, insisting that prayer and deliverance are important matters for childbirth. As Bochow (2014) also shows, Pentecostal prayers, teachings and deliverance rituals are considered powerful in this regard.

It dawned on Van Dijk that these acts of insistence that this powerful young woman and others like her had been demonstrating presented the significance of a recoiling demand precisely and acutely, demanding that their social environment appreciate and respect their position and requiring patience in terms of marriage and producing children, regardless of common ideas about these matters. The important point of all this is that these proclamations are often part of a series of moments of insistence that were actually about holding their ground repeatedly, not moving an inch despite mounting pressure for them to comply. This is also the case with the aforementioned woman who refused to violate Pentecostal moral notions on premarital sexuality. We argue

that expressing such views out loud is an important, but especially for young women, remarkable form of demonstrating faithful insistence for all to hear.

Here we can see a pattern emerging similar to that indicated by Haynes in her above-mentioned discussion of insistence and the example she gives of her Pentecostal interlocutors on the Copperbelt. In the cases described by Van Dijk, the acts of insistence are not to be seen as manifestly and openly proclaiming structural changes, nor are they exactly sociopolitically acquiescent. Nevertheless, in his vignettes, issues of authority appear to be critically addressed through recoiling demands that are placed on the main actors' immediate social environment to acknowledge and accept their position. While by standing their ground women in these cases seem to signal their objection to prevalent and accepted gerontocratic power relations and to opt for a position that is grounded in and based on particular, unshakable religious convictions, they do not attempt to actively change that structure. However, they are clearly not acquiescent and fully satisfied with that structure either; indeed, their actions and acclamations demonstrate their critical dissent.

In addition, especially in the example from Van Dijk's fieldwork in Botswana, insistence appears to be intricately connected to *parrhesia* insofar as we define it as courageous speech. It must surely have taken a great deal of courage, while claiming to be a modest person, for the woman to state so clearly that she would not follow common practices that many of her elders expected her to comply with, especially in view of bearing offspring. By this refusal she distanced herself from a number of these deep-seated expectations, although this refusal may harm her family relations, the good standing of her family, or her profile as a suitable marriage partner. In other instances one can also witness young people saying 'No' to their elders, especially in the context of Pentecostalism where members are encouraged to publicly raise their voice in disagreement with things their elders expect them to do. In this sense such Pentecostal instructions can be perceived as training members in *parrhesia*; inculcating a sense of victory if and when one dares to take a stand, to refuse, and to declare publicly a form of moral and spiritual superiority by withstanding practices that are considered sinful and/or unbiblical in Pentecostal dogma.

At the same time, these vignettes also show us that in the sense of an ethnography of religious insistence, the placing of these recoiling demands on a social environment may not amount to the same level of success in terms of receiving acknowledgement of that placeholding identity. Insistence is no guarantee that the recoiling demand placed on the social environment of the actor is honoured by way of the social environment moving closer to the actor's position rather than vice versa. Insistence, in contrast to resistance, seems to place

a demand on the social environment to make a move in view of the subject position and standpoint of the speaker. Ethnographically, this can be demonstrated as happening in certain but by no means all cases.

The cases presented so far deal with individual members' modes and moments of insistence. However, we contend that insistence can be transposed from the level of individuals to the level of groups and organisations. In terms of scaling up, religious insistence can also be expressed by leaders, groups, and organisations as a whole. Here too we can distinguish moments when religious bodies collectively seem to stand their ground, unwilling to move an inch in terms of their views, ideology, or practices, while placing recoiling demands on their social environments that help to construct their (collective) identity. To demonstrate this collective action of standing one's ground, we now look at the current sexual rights debate in Botswana, and how an insistent Pentecostal voice is very much present in this discussion at both an individual and a public level.

In the Botswana context, Pentecostal churches have become known for their uncompromising stance against the acceptance and decriminalisation of homosexuality (Nkomazana 2014; for comparative cases elsewhere see Van Klinken 2013; Hackman 2018; Bompani and Brown 2015). The public arena in which Botswana's sexual rights debate takes place is shaped significantly by ideas about sexuality that are informed by Pentecostal and born-again Christianity, whose pastors—many of whom are affiliated to the Evangelical Fellowship of Botswana (EFB)—claim a dominant public role as the country's moral compass by insisting on the exclusive righteousness of heterosexual relationships and marriages (Nkomazana 2014; Van Dijk forthcoming). Key members of the EFB, Pentecostal pastors, and politicians react quickly and insistently when issues of sex, sexuality, or gender identity become public conversation. These debates rapidly become a question of morals and, from the Pentecostal position, the focus is on the need to 'correct' not only individual behaviour but that of Botswana society as a whole by condemning 'evil forces' and by 'helping' LGBTQI+ members of society to 'heal'. Based on the perceived need for Botswana to 'correct' its unholy ways, Pentecostals have thus openly objected to, among other things, the legalisation of sex work and homosexuality, the distribution of condoms in the fight against HIV/AIDS in 2007, and the registration of the sexual rights organisation Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana (LeGaBiBo) between 2013 and 2015 (Tabengwa and Nicol 2013). Pentecostal leaders turned these fiercely debated topics into moral discussions by emphasising the existence of only one type of right, biblical, godly relationship, i.e., a heterosexual one.

Within the EFB, high-ranking and publicly known Pentecostal leaders voiced a clear view on the need for legislation on such issues in Botswana in a statement titled 'Building a Botswana that God wants': 'In our quest to social inclusiveness as a nation, we should not succumb to foreign pressures and inner propensities to do evil in the name of civil rights. Civil laws should be based on what is morally right' (Gasennelwe 2017). Views such as these are highly relevant for the positioning of Pentecostals, including in relation to the Botswana government. Indeed, one of the statement's authors, Pastor Butale, the former president of the EFB, later became the assistant minister of health.

We can see how the insistence of knowing what is morally right as well as the boldness of claiming the space and acting as a moral compass aims to redirect Botswana's policies and demands that they should move in the direction of EFB viewpoints. The EFB's public insistence on the unbiblical nature of same-sex relations and their decriminalisation led to a lobbying of politicians, persuading them to join them in their resistance against the abolition of the part of the Penal Code that criminalised homosexual sex as a moral and unnatural offence. In fact, EFB members went further and started a joint venture with the religious umbrella organisation of African Independent Churches, who see themselves as separate from the Pentecostal EFB, and the Seventh Day Adventists to put together a document based on conservative, mainly Christian views. The attorney general of Botswana eventually used this document to argue against decriminalisation of same-sex sexual activity.

However, as we have indicated earlier, such situations of insistence in which people and groups are persuaded to move in a certain direction are not always successful. On 11 June 2019 judges from Botswana's High Court unanimously decided to decriminalise homosexuality and same-sex sexual relations. Yet the point remains that Pentecostals scaled up their insistence on the correctability not only of the individual but of society at large, and translated this into wider circles of public debate and political decision making when they felt it was necessary to do so.

As mentioned earlier, insistence considers and addresses the issue of self-formulation. In the context of Botswana, this self-formulation is evident in the Pentecostal EFB positioning itself in the public discourse as the country's moral compass. As the current ethnographic research by Molenaar shows, this is intimately related to and inspirational for individual modes of insistence. Bene,⁶ a woman Molenaar met during fieldwork in July 2018, described how she experienced her journey from being a lesbian woman to being an ex-lesbian, thus shedding light on how believers experience powerful forms of insistence in view of sexual orientation. Bene identifies as an ex-lesbian and

not as a heterosexual since, according to her, her sexuality is something that will always require 'work'. She explained that in line with what we know about other ex-gay Pentecostals (Hackman 2018), her sexuality will always be her weak spot and in order to remain the good Christian that she is now, she will always have to work at not falling back into her 'sinful' sexuality. Bene told Molenaar that when attending Pentecostal church services she was increasingly confronted by messages insisting that people should accept 'help' if they were of a nonheterosexual orientation. The church leaders that she met offered help in becoming 'healed' from her same-sex orientation, first by offering her a time and space to 'come out' and, at the same time, to break away from her 'sinful' sexuality. They would subsequently provide her with a structure to help her stay away from her former sexuality. When Molenaar asked about her journey from identifying as a lesbian to an ex-lesbian, Bene mentioned that there was one pastor at her church who particularly inspired her to hold on to that position. He led the church service in which she came out and made her break with her past, and he organised and led some of the counselling sessions she still attends. During these sessions she had learned how to 'take control' of her sexuality, as she put it; learning both 'appropriate behaviour' as well as studying the biblical support for her transformation from lesbian to ex-lesbian. The counselling sessions supported her self-transformation into becoming a 'better Christian'.

Fellow churchgoers began acting as a 'mirror', as Molenaar discovered later during a subsequent conversation with Bene and some of her friends. One of them said that Bene was now 'more like a female'. When Molenaar asked what she meant by that, she explained that she sees a difference in the way Bene dresses, and that she now 'dares to show to the men how pretty she is'. One of the women professed that 'the power [Bene] has experienced, God's power, God's helping powers, I hope I will feel that too one day in my life'. The inspirational power of the charismatic *moruti* [pastor, or teacher in Setswana KM] was particularly visible at that moment. Bene was quick to respond in a strong voice and by making hand gestures, imitating *moruti's* conduct and tone of voice by insisting on this point: 'You will if you will look at your life *very* closely, and dare to see your sins. Once you *really* see them, God will pick you and through *moruti*, He will help you'. Then, aware of Molenaar's research, she turned and emphasised: 'That is why we should only allow marriages between men and women, God can help us to do what is right'.

Bene explained that when the pastor called for people to come to him, confess, and break away from their sins, she felt that 'the words he said were directed to me, God spoke to me via *moruti*. That day He chose me and He saved me'. She started to attend counselling sessions soon afterward 'to keep me on the

righteous, Christian path.' In other words, she was convinced that the pastor's insistence on accepting the help offered and being 'healed' from her lesbian sexuality in fact changed her sexual identity. She recognised, acknowledged, and accepted this apparent unshakable truth. Her story shows how particular practices of insistence place a demand on individuals within the Pentecostal community to move toward their worldview, and how this insistence encourages people to work on a different self in order to fulfil the defined conditions.

Bene invited Molenaar to join her at a church service because she was eager to present the pastor's persuasive emphasis on God's power that had helped her break away from her 'sinful' sexuality. A couple of days later Molenaar went to one of the Pentecostal churches with Bene and witnessed the pastor conveying his message, inviting followers to come forward to confess their sins, and receive grace. For the church, Bene's 'salvation' or 'healing' is an important proof and example of her being on the right path, i.e., by publicly claiming that heteronormativity is the natural condition that should be accepted by society at large. Bene and other people like her who have been 'healed' in Pentecostal circles are seen to provide proof that sexuality is a choice, and that, although it requires work and perseverance, it is possible to change one's sexuality and become a godly person. Pentecostal churches used her 'healing', among others, to stress their conviction in church services and during discussions with sexual rights organisations, and became integrated into their public standpoint on these matters. Bene's example is thus relevant in terms of understanding how the Pentecostal view on sexual identities leads to a form of insistence that interlinks both individual and societal levels of engagement with the issue. As Hackman (2018) also demonstrates, a person's proclaimed sexual identity can apparently be 'corrected' through the power of the word.

It seems capable of demonstrating the Pentecostal privilege in addressing the superiority of God's power to change matters even in situations where this seems otherwise impossible.⁷ While Pentecostal leaders take a different view of sexual minorities in only exceptional cases, in general many Pentecostals in Botswana often voice an explicit antihomosexual viewpoint with respect to their congregation and the wider public. The prevailing notion in Pentecostalism that sexuality is a rational, individual choice and hence something one can change is not unique to Botswana and has been described by several authors elsewhere in the region (see for instance Posel 2005; Hackman 2018).

This has become an important argument in the public Pentecostal discourse on sexuality in Botswana. Cases like Bene's provide examples that Pentecostal leaders may use in their public speeches and that apparently mirror their belief that nonheterosexual relationships are socially learned, deviant behaviour.

As this implies that people can be sexually and morally ‘corrected’ (see for Pentecostal notions of correcting sexuality Hackman 2018), the Pentecostal position generally remains critical to accepting and protecting LGBTQI+ rights.

In all ethnographic examples presented here, the point of standing one’s ground is that it does not always, automatically, or self-evidently translate into resistance. While insistence is there, the extent to which this becomes transformed into resistance against something appears as a second step in the process, given that, as discussed earlier, insistence may remain ‘theological’ or rhetorical. As such, religious insistence is often marked by a hardening of views, positions, and identities. This approaches the notion of a ‘buffered self’ (see Taylor 2007) that can remain unshaken and unperturbed by outside agents, their views, and their desires. The following section explores further how insistence, as it is expressed in acts and in speech, appears capable of intersecting the flow of social life and events by relating it to the notion of interpellation.

4 Knowing How to Insist as Knowing How to Interpellate

In the vignettes presented above we can see that the forms of religious insistence that we discussed appear capable of producing particular—and often sharp—changes in individual lives and public debates, in some cases even leading to policy changes. Ashcroft (2001) may be right in his notion that there is a productive element in insistence that resistance does not harbour. Insistence places an active demand vis-à-vis the social and political environment to make a move, come closer, amend, show flexibility, and/or become attentive to concerns, (moral) imperatives, and opinions on the part of the insisting party.

How can we interpret this doing of insistence analytically? In other words, how can a social environment be pricked and stirred to change its course by moving closer to a person, group, or organisation that holds a particular position? While thus being productive in constructing a grounded identity, a form of self-formulation on either an individual or a collective level that holds on to a position, it also produces a recoiling demand on its social environment. Beyond mere rhetoric, proactivity is boomeranged as the other and opposing person, institution, or social force is invited to move toward the insisting party, adopt its points of view and position, and become sympathetic to the implication this may have for personal or collective choices. Whether or not this is successful, whether it results in the parties being at loggerheads, or whether it requires intermediary negotiation is another matter. In addition to moulding

specific 'buffered' identities (Taylor 2007), it also moulds the interaction with that environment.

Referencing Louis Althusser, we can call this the production of a two-pronged interpellation (see also Van Dijk, Kirsch & Duarte dos Santos this issue). The Althusserian (1971) interpretation of how ideological power interpellates the subject offers an interesting line of thinking about how interpellation can be compared to the kind of insistence studied in the cases presented above. In Althusserian thought on interpellation, power holds and halts the subject—as in the example he gives in this piece of a police officer halting a passerby—by creating an interaction that truncates the flow of affairs and that pinpoints the subject in a pre-given, political-power-generated position (see also Montag 2017). In terms of religious insistence, a similar dynamic seems to be at play on an institutional level in which the act of insistence interpellates the flow and affairs, and makes it possible to pinpoint a change in the course of developments at the level of institutional relations and arrangements. Preachers shouting at individuals in their audiences and insisting that they give up on their sinful behaviour act out this kind of interpellation, i.e., a pinpointing of subjectivity that requires intervention to bring it in line with a certain desired moral behaviour, as the police officer does in Althusser's example. Yet, Pentecostal pastors not only interpellate on a personal level, as in Bene's case, but also on a collective level, trying to influence policies, cultural practices, and public opinion. For example, their insistence that homosexual relationships and homosexual sex are unbiblical seriously questions and interrupts the abolition of the Penal Code prohibiting same-sex sexual relations.

Through such instances of insistence, as illustrated by the Pentecostal organisations described above, there is also a level of interpellation at play that not only predetermines subject positions but also involves the manner in which other public institutions are drawn into a very specific relationship with Pentecostal churches, their leaders and spokespeople, their faith-based organisations, and their media presence (see also Beckford 2012).⁸ In the cases discussed we can see that other institutional and social actors (e.g., the Botswana Parliament) face demands or are required to turn themselves, as it were, toward the Pentecostal position and call things to a halt. This is exactly what Botswana Pentecostals' religious insistence seems to be doing as they invite the political leadership to come and listen to their concerns, participate in church services, and create liaisons in such matters as campaigns to raise public awareness in the context of fighting Botswana's key social issues, such as the AIDS crisis or sexual diversity.

It is important to note that as in these Pentecostal circles much emphasis is placed on the communication of the associated insistence, which implies

interpellation. This interpellation of the flow of affairs as a fashioning of the self as well as a fashioning of forms of interaction with a given social environment is part of a behavioural repertoire that Pentecostals are meant to acquire. While religious activism is not a collective affair *per se*, in these cases Pentecostalism in particular seems to operate as a mode of directing/instructing/preparing for the kind of individualised action that, in many cases, insistence seems to represent. Confirmed believers are expected to hold their ground, express their convictions, be firm, and not bend toward opposing views in whatever individualised situation they find themselves. They are thus taught that their insistence does indeed interpellate the course of developments in their immediate social environment. They are made aware of this interpellative force that is imbued in holding a position and by demanding that their social environments recognise and adopt their position.

As we have argued, these insistences occur in situations where Pentecostals who are confronted with what they perceive as immoral cultural practices must then make a choice about such issues, for example if they will offer wedding guests alcoholic beverages. Since this may lead to conflicts if and when Pentecostal confirmed believers refuse to bend to the will of others, a sense of competence in managing their position becomes important (Van Dijk 2012b). Counselling, a widespread and much appreciated practice within Botswanan Pentecostal circles (Van Dijk 2013, 2020; Moeti 2015), operates in a similar way, preparing counselees to take a position and hold that ground, and teaching them how to interpellate the flow of affairs when planning a marriage, conducting other life-crisis rituals, or when confronted with what is framed as 'challenges' in the context of marital conflict, family issues, or misfortune in one's health or daily and financial affairs. During such counselling sessions hours are spent on teaching counselees how to withstand social pressure, how to avoid being part of cultural practices believed to be anti-Christian, or how to not give in to the temptation of participating in 'unholy' lifestyles (see also Burchardt 2009). This includes the Pentecostal emphasis on pre-marital sexual abstinence, its instructions for youth to resist any peer pressure to become involved in intimate relations, and to hold ground vis-à-vis societal pressures to start having children before marriage.⁹ As documented elsewhere by Van Dijk (2013, 2015, 2020), such insistence training may involve the use of psychological material, doing exercises, or exposure to seminars with experts that may have knowledge about financial, medical, or ethical matters and who may indicate the proper biblical understandings of these as well as the demonic traps that can exist in any of these areas.

In such insistence training one may also notice the extent to which particular challenges are deliberately addressed by the Pentecostal counsellors and

other leaders that provide these forms of interaction. One such challenge of insistence is holding on to views that are increasingly rendered untenable and/or unacceptable in the face of social, political, and scientific developments and discoveries. As was demonstrated above, instead of being a sexual identity, it is believed that women can be made into lesbians because of the disruptive experiences they may have had in early life. Claiming to know how to render these experiences open for inspection and redressing allows Pentecostal leaders to address the issue of an unwanted lesbian identity. Insisting on a particular religious or other ideological view not only seems to suggest that the person insisting, in this case the pastor, aims to take a moral position that allows inconvenient truths to be denied or to be rendered inappropriate, uncivil, and unbiblical, it also includes an acquiring and claiming of certain types of knowledge that would usually see the expression of an opposing viewpoint.

In this sense, the forms of insistence that we find in Pentecostal circles appear to imply, as Van Dijk (2020) has shown recently, the need to keep abreast of, respond to, and relate to ever-increasing levels and developments of biomedical and technical knowledge and understanding (Connors and Smith 1996). Jehovah's Witnesses concerned about the God-given properties of blood need to have a fair understanding of medical practices of blood transfusion in order to accept or refuse them (Wong 2012), which links insistence and interpellation to particular forms of knowing as well.

The ability to interpellate is therefore also a question of how insistence requires particular skills and competencies of expression, vocabulary, articulation, and persuasion as transmitted in particular via counselling, preaching, and lobbying. More than resistance, insistence appears to require a particular trajectory of vocalisation of concerns—involving *parrhesia*—that relates and appeals to ideas of what one wants to achieve. In the example discussed above, the young woman insisting that she is a Christian knew how to voice, articulate, and appeal to a level of civic-mindedness and respectability in the Botswana context that is represented by a strong adherence to Christian faith,¹⁰ and that may interpellate the authority that the elders can hold without rejecting it altogether. In that sense, insistence is a form of learned behaviour that requires confirmed believers to be taught and trained in standing one's ground and in claiming a higher moral ground to justify their insistent behaviour.

5 Conclusion: Religious Insistence and Its Social Presence

In the current debates about the sociopolitical role of Pentecostalism in Africa, emphasis is placed on an approach that moves away from conceptualising

Pentecostalism as a representation and reflection of something beyond its intrinsic and irreducible religious praxis. Ruth Marshall (2009) thus argues that, politically, Pentecostalism intrinsically offers 'in and of itself, a mode of historical and political transformation' (2009, 34) that cannot be fully explained by pointing at other factors, such as the rise of neoliberal economies, globalisation, the rise of nation states and their civic and public domains. She argues that the intrinsic capacity of Pentecostalism to offer specific refashioning of the self and relationships provides an ongoing process of instituting subjects through performative acts of faith that demonstrate the significance of a kind of self-making, a self-making that requires the negotiation of a range of social, economic, political, and spiritual powers (2009, 146, 154).

While such a self-interested refashioning certainly holds true for Pentecostalism in Africa as a highly popular 'technique-of-the self' (Van Dijk 2001; Bochow and Van Dijk 2012), this article aimed to offer a perspective on the extent to which this religious interest in a grounded position of the self can be seen as a particular form of activism. Highlighting the role of insistence creates an understanding of how this Pentecostal preoccupation with holding one's ground is projected onto a wider social environment. As Nguyen (2009) demonstrates within the Pentecostal context in West Africa where there has been a rise of so-called self-help groups in the fight against AIDS, a similar trajectory of grounding a self-identity can be observed. While these self-help groups are based on what he calls a 'confessional technique' of the self through which access to the group and the production of an identity is offered,¹¹ this self-help casts a recoiling demand on the wider social environment for recognition and acceptance. Similarly, such self-help can neither be easily captured by a resistance-type of interpretation, nor by an acquiescent-type of understanding since in many situations these self-help groups do not organise overt protests. On the other hand, they are clearly not acquiescent either since their sheer existence and presence indicates the shortcomings of the existing healthcare system.

We argue that in the Pentecostal groups we studied the art of insistence exists as a self-defining and accepted form of activism that Pentecostal leaders, members, and organisations appreciate for its relative weight in expressing individual and collective acts of faith. The levels of prestige that Pentecostal faith interests seem to prescribe for confirmed members can and should be seen as a particular register of activism that is within reach of and fascinating to middle-class, urban, and upcoming persons. In our view, this contributes to the appeal that Pentecostalism is making to these classes. After all, the forms of insistence that we have indicated do not necessarily require people to enter into collective action such as storming the barricades or causing public

unrest since it is primarily expressed on a personal level. Rather, insisting on the basis of religious convictions requires the other to react, responses that in many cases the one insisting can easily demand by assuming a position on a moral pedestal.

In that sense, religious insistence forms an alternative ‘political spirituality’, to invoke the work of Marshall (2009), since it not only helps to constitute the subject but also constitutes the specific relationship of a Pentecostal collective, grouping, or organisation with its social environment by the way it interpellates its flow of affairs. Religious insistence seems to promote interpellation at the level of individual and collective subject positions. The reason for this power of insistence can be compared to what Ferguson (2017) recently called sheer ‘presence’: as we understand it, being there and representing a particular subject position becomes a presence in a social environment that the same social environment cannot deny.¹² We therefore argue that religion and insistence hang together in surprising ways, ways that may be culturally shaped but in which groups such as the Pentecostals have found a particular way of being activist that does not upset the political order or pretend to be acquiescent vis-à-vis that order. Instead, it interpellates that order and makes the public domain reactive to its position, both individually and collectively.

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Notes

- 1 On the notion of what are known as deliverance rituals and 'breakthroughs' see Meyer 1998; Van Dijk 1997, 2012a.
- 2 This research on marriage in Botswana took place from 2009 to 2012.
- 3 The prohibition on premarital sexuality is particularly strong in Pentecostal circles (Ojo 1997; Burchardt 2009; Bochow and Van Dijk 2012; Van Dijk 2013; Bochow 2014; see also Van Dijk, Kirsch, and Duarte dos Santos this issue).
- 4 This refers particularly to the works of authors that provided historical-materialist accounts of the rise of religious movements as being forms of protest and resistance, such as—and in addition to Comaroff (1985)—Shepperson and Price (1958), Van Binsbergen and Geschiere (1985), Van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers (1985), and Fry (1976).
- 5 In Van Dijk's case this research has ranged from exploring the rise of Pentecostalism among youth in the context of the largest city of Malawi, Blantyre, to studying Pentecostal transnational relations in Accra, Ghana, and from Ghana into the Ghanaian migrant communities in The Hague, The Netherlands and Gaborone, Botswana. From there Molenaar and Van Dijk have each been conducting prolonged research on Pentecostalism in Botswana in view of its engagement with relationships, sexuality, and marriage.
- 6 Fictional name.
- 7 This has also been recorded in Botswana in view of some of the Pentecostal churches' insistence on God's power being able to heal people affected by HIV/AIDS (Togarasei 2010).
- 8 Beckford shows how in Britain there is a 'state's "interpellation" of selected religions as partners in the delivery of public policies...' (Beckford 2012, 1).
- 9 Much has been written on the Pentecostal emphasis on 'A' (Abstinence) and 'B' (Being faithful to one's partner) in contrast to 'C' (to Condomise) (Burchardt 2009; Gusman 2009, 2013).
- 10 See Werbner (2016) and Van Dijk (2017a) for this relationship between respectability and Christianity in other contexts in Botswana.
- 11 In the self-help groups Nguyen (2009) is describing people are trained to self-disclose their HIV-status and to self-formulate their life choices in light of their situation.
- 12 Public address, James Ferguson, Univ. of Konstanz, 5 July 2017.