Pentecostalism and the Production of Community in the Haitian Diaspora

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Introduction:

This essay addresses the production of community (Appadurai 1996) among Haitian migrants in Guadeloupe, French West Indies, an “overseas department” of France located in the eastern Caribbean\(^1\). About 24,000 Haitian migrants currently live in Guadeloupe, and as elsewhere in the Haitian diaspora, they are marginalized by the dominant society in both material and symbolic ways. Living in sub-standard housing and typically working in poorly paid and insecure jobs, Haitians must also contend with the stigma they bear in Guadeloupean society as uncivilized, chaotic and even a threat to the public order. The origins of these images of denigration, the way they are materialized in everyday life, and the counter-images that Haitians put forward are the overarching framework for this essay.

This complicated process of displacement, resettlement, and insertion into an occasionally hostile society forms the backdrop for the local appeal of Pentecostal conversion in this migrant group. There are two religious groupings among Haitian residents of Guadeloupe. One partially reproduces the nominally Catholic orientation found in Haiti. However, the rest of the migrant population (between 40% and 60%, according to most people) has joined several all-Haitian Pentecostal churches scattered throughout the island. Their pastors are Haitian, the services are mostly in Haitian Creole, although all of these churches were founded in the past 25 years by visiting North American missionaries. We must therefore locate Pentecostalism in this setting at the

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intersection of the large-scale movement of people out of Haiti into the Caribbean and North American diaspora (beginning in the 1960’s) and the massive missionary expansion of American Pentecostalism into the Caribbean and Latin American regions (a process which began largely after World War II). The production of community among Haitians in Guadeloupe emerges at this intersection.

Life-long residents of the island often consider both Pentecostalism and Haitians as a foreign presence. For many, they are also an unwanted and even dangerous presence -- Guadeloupeans regard the storefront churches as an unwanted competitor to Catholicism and the Haitians as a disorderly people and economic drain. From the standpoint of Haitians, however, their alienation and exclusion from the dominant society is precisely the problem which they address through Pentecostal conversion. Haitian migrants appropriate a patently foreign ideology -- Pentecostalism -- as a strategic response to treatment as permanent foreigners in their current surroundings. They creatively use the resources of Pentecostalism -- its doctrines, worship styles, moral codes, and organizational forms -- specifically to produce and strengthen this transnational community in the face of material, jural, and symbolic marginality.

Christian conversion and transnationalism:

Recent anthropological studies of religious conversion shed some light on the appeal of Pentecostalism for this and other transnational communities. In general, to enter a new religion involves transformations of both subjectivity and social identity. “Conversion” typically refers to the subjective level: a complex inner process by which people reformulate their sense of well-being and self worth. The way people alter their psychological or cognitive schemata is thus a perennial topic for anthropological research into Pentecostalism. According to these accounts, Pentecostal converts undergo a “creative psychomoral process of self-transformation” (Cucchiari 1988: 436); they

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2 These images of denigration co-exist with positive stereotypes of Haitians as honest and hard-working, gifted musicians, and a long-suffering people. The complete history of these images in the Guadeloupean imaginary and their effects on the Haitian population is beyond the scope of this paper.
recover a sense of wholeness and historical agency (Saunders 1995); they experience the perfection of their moral selves (Austin-Broos 1997: 133ff). However, the very terms we use to describe this subjective re-organization are now a topic for debate. According to some, the European Protestant notion of “deep, interior” religious beliefs and the criteria historically used in the West to evaluate genuine vs. spurious conversion should not be mistaken for rigorous or valid analytic tools (e.g., Luria 1996). Others question the actual distance between people’s former and newly acquired religious convictions (Kammerer 1990 and earlier, Horton 1971, 1975) and the Weberian account of conversion as supplying a more comprehensive intellectual mastery of the world (Hefner 1993a).

Taken together, these debates move us beyond the commonplace that conversion is an irreversible and radical change -- the prototypically Christian viewpoint based on the accounts of Paul and Augustine. Conversion is instead a complex and open-ended process of self-fashioning (cf. Battaglia 1995). While it may signal a new form of selfhood, this emerges through on-going cultural practice; it is not a stable finished product. As the Comaroffs have shown in the case of southern Africa, Protestant conversion is often not a singular act, but rather a gradual transformation; not the substitution of one doctrine or identity by another, but a complex combination of the old and new (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). In fact, the shock of the new -- especially the intrusion of foreign ideology and power and the new inequalities they create -- often underlies people’s very openness to new religious messages. Those who convert may indeed enter a novel moral and cosmological landscape, but their subjective transformation is inevitably responsive to specific histories and local meanings.

Joining a new religious community also signals a change in social identity, and this too suggests how Christian conversion is entangled in the contradictions of everyday life. Converts typically acquire a new reference group, a new locus of self-definition in the wider social array (Hefner 1993b). In everyday terms, they take up a new position in a particular enclave of believers, tangibly marked off from the rest of society by dress, group activities, forms of consumption and display, and other daily or ritual behaviors.
This produces a new public and visible persona, whatever its effect on one’s cognitive or affective bearings. This second level concerns self-identification, especially denominational affiliation and adherence, rather than personal transformation (Green 1993). In this sense, claiming a new religious affiliation is a movement in and about social life. Moreover, it can play a crucial role in cultural reproduction and resistance, and this theme as well colors much recent research into the Pentecostalism. Publicly joining a Pentecostal group potentially offers a counter-identity, and hence marginally more room to maneuver, for people caught in oppressive and unavailing circumstances. Particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America, Pentecostal churches have helped galvanize an oppositional culture, solidify group identity, and even alter national ideologies and alliances (see Martin 1990, Burdick 1993, among many others).

This process has many historical precedents. People have long used radical forms of Protestantism to create “free social spaces” which offer at least partial protection from the injurious hierarchies of the larger society (Martin 1990: 268, 287). This social advantage underlay the early appeal of Methodism for English workers, for example, as well as the growth of missionary Christianity in southern Africa, Jamaica, and elsewhere. However, to produce and protect emerging transnational communities is a different task, and the appeal of conversion will hence differ compared to the historical picture of Christianity in a single colony or national society. For example, when a group differs visibly from the majority society, and when most of them do not possess the proper legal documents, they may derive specific benefits from the “protective social capsule” (Martin 1990: 284) offered by such congregations. They may use its oppositional moral rhetoric -- pitching the saved against the sinful -- in order to negotiate multiple boundaries in terms of language, race, and nationality. Finally, the relevant horizons of a transnational community, including the personal expectations and life projects of its members, transcend the immediate surroundings and include the homeland and other scattered settlements. The connections already present in global missionary organizations may help maintain linkages with geographically dispersed communities. These particular social
advantages emerge from a few recent ethnographies of Pentecostal churches in transnational communities. For Léon (1998), the Latino church Alcance Victoria (Victory Outreach) in Los Angeles prospers by weaving together Mexican, American, and Christian evangelical themes and thereby articulating this group’s unique mestizo history. Toulis (1997) shows how several generations of Jamaican migrants in England utilize Pentecostalism to redefine group identity and defend against injurious British stereotypes of West Indians.

These same general conditions are faced by Haitians in Guadeloupe. Articulating its recent history and re-defining its position vis-a-vis a hostile receiving society figure among the core tasks of cultural reproduction for this group. By necessity, this is more a matter of invention and conscious choice than inertia and received tradition. The term “production of community” captures this explicit and inventive quality (Appadurai 1996: 193). The word “production” here means two things: production as invention (not discovery) and production as pro-active accomplishment. To begin with, Haitian migrants must produce, not discover, the perceptions of belonging and ethnic boundaries because massive migration has disrupted so many of the usual vehicles which transfer such knowledge across generations (e.g., household forms, ideas about property and propriety, social and ritual obligations) (Ibid.: 43-44). Moreover, people produce these perceptions of community as they run up against symbolic and material domination from the majority society. In Guadeloupe, French immigration policies aim to undercut or eliminate the Haitian presence; popular stereotypes would fix it as permanently devalued; and the forced economic and residential marginalization of Haitians obstruct most forms of political mobilization. The elaboration of Haitian diasporic identity and the hard work of institution-building take place in the face of such obstacles, and as a complex response to them.

The production of community among Haitians in Guadeloupe:

The current global dispersion of Haitians began in the mid 1960’s with the exodus of the political enemies of “president for life” Francois Duvalier along with other members of the middle and upper class. By 1972, a broader cross-section of Haitian
society had begun to leave due to increased economic deprivation and political repression. Poorer than the preceding migrants and more likely peasants or underemployed city dwellers while in Haiti, this group crept into American popular consciousness as the “boat people,” originally a journalistic phrase connoting desperate poverty and abject flight. This wave of migration has continued until today, waxing and waning in accordance with political events at home as well as the immigration policies abroad. Strictly speaking, the connotations of “boat people” are incorrect: it takes considerable money, ingenuity, and time in order to plan the passage out of Haiti (see Richman 1984). The term is instead emblematic of the devalued reputation of Haitian migrants and their economic and symbolic marginalization once they arrive in the USA and elsewhere (cf. Lawless 1992, Farmer 1994). Haitian migrants typically face negative stereotypes and outright hostility in the societies wherever they settle. Simultaneously, and as a partial response, they establish new enclaved communities at some symbolic distance from the receiving society, and they organize new forms of connectedness with kin, friends, and business or political partners both in Haiti and in other such settlements thousands of miles away. The consolidation of the Haitian transnational community in Guadeloupe, French West Indies thus resembles similar processes underway throughout the Haitian diaspora (and among many other groups of transnational migrants, as well).

It is axiomatic to say that groups of Haitians living in New York, Montreal, Guadeloupe, and elsewhere constitute transnational communities: social fields which cut across national borders and link together the migrant’s home and host societies through the exchange of persons, commodities, money, and ideology (Appadurai 1996). These exchanges are continuous and multi-directional. Haitian transnational communities do not resemble immigrant minorities which have permanently ruptured with their collective pasts, or labor migrants with a ticket in hand for the return home (cf. Basch et al. 1994:

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4). This general picture holds true for the approximately 24,000 Haitians living in Guadeloupe, an “overseas department” of France located in the eastern Caribbean. Almost all of these individuals were born in Haiti, the majority hope to move eventually to the USA, and those holding current visas and work permits travel in a wider circuit between Guadeloupe, Haiti, other Caribbean nations, France, and the United States. The local worlds they construct on the island of Guadeloupe thus emerge from the shared experience of dislocation, and they exhibit an ephemeral or unstable quality. The Haitian population in Guadeloupe has a range of possible futures (cf. Glick-Schiller et al. 1987). It may persist in its present form as a loosely organized group of undocumented and marginalized workers, continually replenished by new arrivals from Haiti and involved in multi-stranded family and economic relationships between the two islands. Part of this population may eventually gain French citizenship or assimilate through marriage with Guadeloupianans. The population may also disappear over time through large-scale resettlement in the USA or mass deportation back to Haiti (the fate in 1995 of the former Haitian population on St. Martin, a dependency of Guadeloupe).

Whatever their future, Haitians in Guadeloupe’s main commercial city of Pointe-à-Pitre are now building connections to the transnational social field as well as consolidating a distinctive local community. However, due to the tight housing market and the desire of this largely undocumented group to avoid official scrutiny, there is no bounded Haitian neighborhood. Haitians live scattered throughout the city’s poorer

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4 The 1990 census -- the most recent comprehensive report of the Guadeloupian population -- lists 12,000 Haitians out of the departmental total of 387,034 (INSEE 1992). However, most Guadeloupian and Haitian officials -- social workers, lawyers, and pastors -- estimate the real number as twice this official figure.

5 Most studies of Haitians in the French Antilles, primarily Guadeloupe and French Guyana, focus on their arrival and first 10 years of settlement, and hence do not discuss their present adaptations and likely future. See Celeste 1989, Bebel-Gisler and Hurbon 1987, Hurbon 1983, and Daveiran.d. (for Guadeloupe) and Cherubini 1989 (for French Guyana).

6 A sizable number of Haitians also live in rural Guadeloupe, principally around Sainte Rose and Lamentin on the island of Basse-Terre, where most commercial sugar, pineapple, and banana plantations are located. For logistical reasons, I restricted my research to the Pointe-à-Pitre area, the commercial and industrial center of the department. About 125,000 people (35% of the entire population of Guadeloupe) live in the metropolitan area (which includes the communes of Pointe-à-Pitre, Les Abymes, Baie-Mahault, and Le Gosier). This is the most densely-inhabited region in the French Antilles (Atohoun and Cazenave 1994: 20).
zones, usually in small, subdivided houses which the government is gradually destroying to make way for multi-story subsidized housing blocks. As the organizing framework for the production of community, therefore, migrants do not have recourse to residential institutions (neighborhood stores, block associations, etc.). They have instead drawn upon religious difference and all that it symbolizes for personal morality and identity. This has created two separate but overlapping social fields in the Haitian migrant population. One resembles the dominant nominally Catholic religious orientation found in Haiti. In Guadeloupe, however, they rarely attend church. The French language Mass, the white French priests, and the displays of prestige and wealth visible during Sunday mass combine to keep most of them away. The rest of the migrant population has joined six all-Haitian Pentecostal churches scattered throughout the metropolitan area. They come together in their unadorned church buildings several times a week for formal services, evening prayer meetings, choir and music practice, religious education, and other activities. These churches are virtually the only all-Haitian spaces on the island -- the only place where Haitian Creole is exclusively spoken and where migrants gather without the slightest fear of harassment or legal suspicion. An accurate and objective count in this shifting population is nearly impossible, but most people peg the rate of affiliation to Pentecostal churches at 40-60%: a striking contrast to Haiti, where no more than 15% of the population identify themselves as non-Catholic (Conway 1978 and 1980, Romain 1985).

Although members of these two socio-religious groups often live or work alongside each other, they mark their differences in several ways. Haitian Catholics tease men who have converted by indiscriminately calling them pastor and asking when they will have a church of their own. Protestants tease back, introducing their Catholic friends

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7 There is no all-Haitian parish in Guadeloupe, and no year-round Haitian priest. A handful of priests from the Spiritan order (Holy Ghost Fathers) in Haiti spend the summer months at a Pointe-à-Pitre church, and often migrants will go to meet them at this time. According to one of these priests, Haitians’ reluctance to worship at Catholic churches in Guadeloupe stems not only from language obstacles, but also from the absence of several post-Vatican II innovations which revitalized Catholicism in Haiti, such as use of upright African drums and well-known Haitian folk melodies for hymns.
to me with “She hasn’t converted... she’s still controlled by the devil!” More importantly, the two groups also inhabit urban space in very different ways, and this has serious consequences for the production of community. Pentecostals typically avoid the main gathering spot for Haitians: a large breezy square between two housing projects where Haitian men gather every morning to play bôlet, the Haitian lottery. Doctrinal injunctions against gambling keep them away from this prime site for socializing and catching up on news from abroad. Because of their religion’s policy against meddling in government, they also avoid the weekly meetings in a rented building of Guadeloupe’s only Haitian political organization. Most Haitian Catholics, in turn, never visit the Protestant churches.

In urban Guadeloupe, then, two social processes are unfolding at the same time: the consolidation of a distinctive transnational Haitian community and the decision to join small-scale, mostly Pentecostal churches, far out of proportion to the numbers back home. I examine below how these processes support each other. I argue that Pentecostalism supplies a supple institutional and imaginative resource to bring a transnational community into existence out of the sheer facts of migration and displacement (Basch et al. 1994), and this largely accounts for the religion’s unprecedented appeal. Pentecostalism enables the production of this community in several respects. It allows migrants to take control over their incorporation into the immediate society, to construct reliable pathways of travel and exchange with the transnational network, to memorialize the homeland they have left, and to collectively represent the baffling conditions they currently face.

In general terms, recent Haitian migrants to the USA face much the same tasks, but they resolve them differently. These differences illustrate the specific contradictions arising in the Haitian community of Guadeloupe, and they remind us that a given diaspora is not a homogenous zone, despite the overlapping kinship, economic, and communication networks that produce it. Haitians have incorporated into United States society with a “triple minority” status (as Black, non-English speakers, and foreign-born with uncertain legal status) as well as the persistent stigma as carriers of AIDS (Farmer
1992) and tuberculosis (Nachman 1993). These hegemonic discourses on Haitian identity underlie the widespread discrimination in governmental policy (especially the treatment of refugees and agricultural workers) and everyday life (Stepick 1998, Miller 1984). In response, migrants have taken control of the terms of collective identity by explicitly cultivating multiple on-going ties with Haiti. They make connections in many different ways: sending money and commodities between the two countries, communicating by telephone or cassette tapes, consuming various transnational mass media, claiming a political voice in both settings, and of course traveling regularly within the Diaspora.

A particular rhetoric of identity has emerged along with these activities. Most of the Haitian residents in New York interviewed by Charles (1992) and Zéphir (1996) pointedly do not identify themselves as Black American. This category symbolizes to them an unacceptable degree of subordination and powerlessness -- arguably the most devalued position within the American racial hierarchy. They instead privilege their Haitian nationality or even particular class or political loyalties rooted in the social divisions on the island. This position makes possible certain types of coalition building (e.g., with other Caribbean immigrants), and it also allows them to escape the restrictive images of Haitians which dominate within American society as a whole (see Basch et al. 1994). By claiming their on-going cultural membership and political voice in Haiti, these migrants can counter-act those social designations that marginalize them where they currently reside. By constructing a multi-stranded social field connecting Haiti to the USA, migrants can pursue many different forms of prestige, wealth, and social position, and these provide a hedge against political turmoil and poverty, in the one setting, and racial or ethnic discrimination, in the other. By asserting their on-going ties with Haiti, therefore, migrants can incorporate into American society on their own (more favorable) terms.

The same strategy, however, would almost certainly fail in Guadeloupe. Haitian migrants there have not yet climbed into the middle-class, and hence have less money to invest in family- and nation-building projects back in Haiti. Most do not have proper
residency papers, and therefore cannot travel back and forth. Due to unfavorable exchange rates and French currency restrictions, it is difficult even to send cash remittances to Haiti from Guadeloupe. Moreover, this diaspora setting does not have its own radio station, television shows, or newspapers, and hence it lacks the mass media which materialize transnational social connections for residents of New York or Miami. Finally, Haitian residents of Guadeloupe are denigrated precisely because they are Haitian, not because they are categorized as Black. Whites in Guadeloupe make up a tiny minority; most people are descendants of African slaves and Indian indentured servants brought there, as to Haiti, as plantation labor. (Indeed, the two societies were founded as virtually the same type of French slave-based agricultural export colony.) The subordination of Haitians in Guadeloupe thus occurs entirely in other terms than in the USA, and it demands another response. Transnationalism is equally appealing for Haitians in Guadeloupe, but it must be expressed through another idiom, calibrated to the specific history of migration to Guadeloupe, Haitians’ differential incorporation into this society, and the local images of denigration attached to them (cf. O’Nell 1994).

**Pentecostalism as counter-identity and social critique:**

The ways that Haitian Pentecostals talk about conversion and visibly announce their new religious affiliation directly addresses the contradictions and political contours of daily life in urban Guadeloupe. At the same time as converts bring their lives into accordance with Pentecostal doctrine, the church provides them with a new reference group and collective identity. These twin processes contribute to the emergence of a distinctive Haitian transnational community on the island.

To begin with, joining a Pentecostal church allows converts to defend themselves against the devalued images of Haitians which circulate in Guadeloupean society. These images actually form a palimpsest reflecting an almost 30 year history of migration, and they begin with the first appearance of large numbers of Haitians in the mid-1970s. Haitians were originally brought in as cane cutters in the midst of a bitter struggle over
unionization in the declining Guadeloupean sugar industry (Hurbon 1983). Without their knowledge, Haitian migrant workers were used in 1975 as strike-breakers by the owners of sugar plantations, and this unleashed a wave of violence (including lynch mobs) against them on the part of pro-union Guadeloupians. Although the violence was fairly quickly quenched by progressive politicians and activist Catholic priests, it left an enduring image of Haitians as opportunistic foreigners opposed to the interests of the ordinary Guadeloupean (see Bebel-Gisler and Hurbon 1987: 71-88).

The next stage in the formation of a hegemonic image of Haitian migrants came in the 1980s, as Haitian immigration increased from the relatively controlled deployment of poorly paid agricultural labor to a wave of small merchants and unskilled laborers who came without documentation or who stayed on past the date of their visa. This is the source for today's transnational Haitian community in urban Pointe-à-Pitre. They arrive in the city through a circuitous route. Beginning in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, people fly to Curaçao and then to St. Maarten, both self-governing states associated with the Netherlands. St. Maarten is separated by a lightly policed border from St. Martin on the other half of the same island. Most people told me they simply walked to the French side and then purchased a ticket by plane or boat to Guadeloupe, some 160 miles away. Once settled in Pointe-à-Pitre, most men work in the construction industry as masons or laborers, and most women become commerçantes (or in Haitian Creole, madan sara), vendors who purchase commodities in bulk (from yet other Haitian women who routinely travel between Pointe-à-Pitre and such cities as Miami, Port-au-Prince, and San Juan) and then sell them on the streets of Guadeloupe's major towns.

This particular economic adaptation gives rise to two widespread images of Haitians. The first portrays the immigrant as an economic drain on society: someone who takes in money through daily wages on construction jobs or sales of clothing, towels, and housewares on the street, and then sends it all back to Haiti. "They work, they take our money, but then they never spend it here" is the gist of this reading of the Haitian as greedy foreigner who is not really willing to settle down, who maintains a continued
allegiance to their country of origin and whose allegiance, in some imaginary way, harms Guadeloupean society. However, this derogatory image actually does not address job competition. In contrast to current anti-immigrant rhetoric in the USA, I have never heard complaints that Haitians steal jobs from Guadeloupeans. Even people who criticize the Haitian presence will openly admit that Haitians hold jobs that Guadeloupeans would never take.

The second dominant image arising from the current wave of migration emphasizes not only the greed of Haitians, but also their sheer numbers. "They are crowding us out" is the popular expression for this cliché, and the metaphor is rooted in the tangible experience of street life in Pointe-à-Pitre. Most Haitian market women do not have the capital to open their own stores. They display their wares on the sidewalks, but their tables and boxes spill into the street, stand in the way of shoppers, and block the entrances to established retail stores. The competitive energy of these Haitian vendors subverts the desires of long-time residents for order and cleanliness in the old downtown, which dates to the colonial era. Guadeloupean residents of Pointe-à-Pitre consistently complain that Haitians are pushing them out of their own city, and that their overwhelming competitiveness will harm the island. A final, but more diffuse, hegemonic image dovetails with the fears just mentioned. Out of news reports of political instability and violence from Haiti arises the notion that Haitians are essentially a disorganized people who cannot rule themselves effectively. The fear just below the surface of this particular notion is that Haitians will bring this disorder with them. This stereotype of Haitians also has historically deeper origins in Guadeloupeans’ ambivalence about their dual African and French inheritance. Haitians occupy the “savage slot” in the fractured culture of the island (Trouillot 1991): an exemplar of Africanness which many Guadeloupeans both despise and envy, and hence a potent symbol in the highly-charged discourse over Guadeloupean national identity⁸. This symbolism seeps into ordinary interactions. I was told several times by Haitians that the local residents don’t feel

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comfortable interacting with them, and that this stems from the obvious disparity between Haiti’s long history of independence and the pervasive influence of French norms in current day Guadeloupe.\(^9\)

By obeying certain codes of behavior and public display, Haitian Pentecostals put forward a counter-image to the ones listed above. This is true, first of all, in a literal sense, that is, in the visual image of church members. In Guadeloupe, I became a member of a Pentecostal congregation -- the Church of God of Prophecy -- one of the all-Haitian Pentecostal churches in the Pointe-à-Pitre metropolitan area. From the start I was struck by people’s careful grooming and clean, pressed clothes, the Bibles which they prominently hold at their sides or hug to their chests, the erect bearing adopted by church leaders. The meticulous care for one’s physical appearance is uniform, although the particular dress code varies by age and gender.\(^{10}\) For many people, this overall emphasis on formality and sexual modesty derives directly from doctrine: church members easily quote Biblical passages which for them justified the rules for both men’s and women’s appearance. Based on my interviews with missionaries and prior research in rural Haiti, I would trace it to several other sources as well: the American Pentecostals who helped found this church, memories of the appropriate Protestant habitus from Haiti, and simple conformity to the rules of appearance in the other Haitian Pentecostal churches in town.

However, in addition to its historical and doctrinal origins, this code of appearance operates as a political economy of signs directed both outwards to Guadeloupeans and inwards to those Haitians engaged in producing a distinctive transnational community. Like all clothing styles, it has a number of both explicit and implicit meanings which fit the divisions of the everyday social world (Hebdige 1979: 9).

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\(^9\) Although these pejorative stereotypes usually predominate in conversations about Haitians, Guadeloupeans also invoke two positive images of Haitians. Compared to Dominicans, Haitians are considered good, dependable workers and less likely to use drugs. Moreover, many Guadeloupeans appreciate Haitian popular music and recall with pleasure the concerts by visiting Haitian bands.

\(^{10}\) Young unmarried men had perhaps the most leeway. The older married men -- a second distinct grouping in this church -- invariably wore ties and sometimes sports coats, while all women wore modest skirts or dresses (jeans and pants were explicitly banned).
101). At one level, such details as shined shoes, coats and ties, and modest dresses project the bourgeois norms of stability and civility which Haitians by reputation lack. This is an intended meaning: church members often told me that Haitians must take care to dress well, because they are guests in the country and do not want to make trouble. Nonetheless, by deploying the visual codes of formality and modesty, Haitian church members did not end up looking like Guadeloupéans. Guadeloupéans remarked to me that the colors they wore were too brash, the women’s dresses too extravagant for walking through a **ghetto** (the same word is used in French as in English) to a storefront church. At this level, they give the impression of misplaced prosperity or a bid for bourgeois respectability which overshoots the mark. The Pentecostal code of appearance thus only partially succeeds as a foil for the widespread negative stereotypes of Haitians.

However, that is not its only or even major use. The appearance of Haitian Pentecostals operates not only to defend against dominant clichés, but also to criticize the surrounding society and provide a compelling counter-example. This critique is aimed particularly at women’s appearance and behavior as well as the French state’s usurpation of domestic authority. To begin with, church members routinely criticize Guadeloupéan women for dressing too provocatively, and they single out the informal jeans, cut-off shorts, and T-shirts which women wear in the street and the cramped courtyards and alleys where Haitians and Guadeloupéans live. The same criticism of women’s dress comes up in pastors’ sermons which decry the dangerous moral laxity of life in Guadeloupe. The neat, pressed conservative dress favored by Pentecostal women becomes an emblem of moral virtue by contrast to the standard Guadeloupéan women’s appearance. Through this maneuver, migrants take a well-known gender norm from Haiti, amplify it through Pentecostal doctrine, and then deploy it as a moral rebuke of the surrounding society.

The striking economic autonomy of women in Haiti co-exists with a public ideology of male authority and sexual prerogative, as well as the expectation of sexual conservatism and even disinterest on the part of women (Lowenthal 1987). This gender
ideology has several sources. In part, it arises from the long-standing patriarchal household structure of rural Haiti, which allows men sexual liberty while requiring women to be virgins before marriage and monogamous afterwards (Bastien 1961, Comhaire-Sylvain 1961). In part, the distaste for sexual pleasure accurately articulates the experience of those Haitian women who must barter with sex to obtain the necessities of survival (Brown 1991: 163 ff). Finally, it represents a bargaining strategy in and of itself. Having what men want, but claiming not to want what men have, works to women’s advantage in a gender system which links sexual and economic exchange (Lowenthal 1987). In any case, this overdetermined gender ideology produces a singular code of appearance, typified by the below-the-knee dresses or skirts and head kerchiefs worn by most women in Haiti in both informal settings such as rural markets and in the formal religious services.

A very similar code governing women’s appearance and, by implication, sexuality emerges from conservative American Protestantism: the social and theological landscape in which Pentecostalism arose nearly 100 years ago. The Church of God Prophecy, the root denomination of the group I joined in Pointe-à-Pitre, was founded in Cleveland, Tennessee in the early 1950s out of an earlier schism with the Church of God, which itself was organized in 1908 during the first decades of the American Pentecostal revival\(^\text{11}\). Pentecostals orient themselves to the immediate experience of God through specific “gifts of the Spirit,” especially speaking in tongues and other spontaneous expressions, such as holy laughter, individual prayer, testimonies, etc. (see Cox 1995, Anderson 1979: 79-97), and this emphasis has historically divided Pentecostals from fundamentalist Christians with their strict Calvinism and absolute reliance on Biblical texts. Nonetheless, the two movements grew in strength and intensity at roughly the same time (1900 to 1930), and during their formative period they both defined themselves as anti-modern, a reactive force against the surrounding secular society which they

considered irredeemably wicked and corrupt. The role and behavior of women became (and remains) an important battleground for this backward-looking cultural and religious struggle (Balmer 1994). Conservative American Protestantism idealizes women’s spirituality and enshrines reproductive and domestic roles as women’s sacred calling. Conversely, women who reject such putatively God-given callings (which in fact derive from bourgeois Euroamerican family life in the nineteenth-century) contribute to the spiritual degradation of society. In everyday terms, the dress, demeanor, and ritual containment of conservative Christian women in America have come to symbolize their role as the safeguard of morality (Caplan 1987). This doctrinally-based gender ideology characterizes the Church of God of Prophecy (along with most other American Pentecostal denominations), and it has been communicated to Haitian pastors in Pointe-à-Pitre through the training literature they read or through direct instruction by the North American missionaries who helped found this church. This gender ideology motivates pastors to warn women against wearing make-up and jewelry, and it also motivates women members to chastise each other for not keeping their heads covered in church (a direct application of the Pauline injunctions about feminine submission; see Austin-Broos 1997: 246).

The resemblance between these two ideals of femininity -- one derived from the organization of gender and sexuality in Haiti, and the other from the cultural nostalgia of conservative Protestantism in the USA -- accomplishes several things. First, Haitian women who convert (and women comprise more than half the members of most congregations) have little difficulty accepting the Pentecostal church’s dress code, the spatial segregation between men and women during worship, and other aspects of its gender ideology. I heard no complaints from members of the Church of God of Prophecy about the restrictions placed on women’s behavior and appearance. Undoubtedly, many migrants do not accept these rules and simply stay away, but these Haitian churches still do not lack for members. The absence of complaints may also stem from the micro-politics of the ethnographic encounter. Women would not have voiced their criticisms to
me, given my status as an white outsider, a man, and even more importantly, an unmarried man. Of all my personal characteristics, the most awkward, and easily the prime source of suspicion among people was my status as an unmarried man who yet had means and was the appropriate age (mid-thirties at the time of fieldwork). While this awkward situation certainly dissuaded some women from speaking to me, it too grows from the sacred significance of domestic obligations which apply, after all, for men as well as women\(^\text{12}\).

Women’s response to Pentecostal gender norms is therefore not a simple matter. Nevertheless, women participate vigorously in most worship activities, and this suggests a second serendipitous convergence between Haitian and Pentecostal behavioral codes. Although this religion accepts scriptural notions of feminine submission, it also supports women’s prophetic role and their equal potential to manifest the gifts of the spirit (Conkin 1997: 311; Cox 1995: 123ff). At the Church of God of Prophecy in Pointe-à-Pitre, as many women as men speak in tongues and lead prayer meetings, and proportionally more women deliver testimonies from the pulpit and participate in the choir. Although women are banned from the role of deacon and pastor, their testimonies about God’s power hold the congregation’s rapt attention and function essentially as preaching. Women thus act as autonomous and independent participants in those worship activities which are actually more central, in terms of the Pentecostal doctrine of spiritual gifts, than sermons or instructions delivered from the pulpit. As many have noted, women in Haiti are often vocal and active members of the public sphere: they are the dominant buyers and sellers in the nation’s system of rural markets (Bastien 1985) and they occupy important roles in Vodoun and lay Catholic organizations (Brown 1991). Migrant women thus move quite easily into the roles offered to them within Pentecostalism.

\(^{12}\) The complaints church members did voice in my presence more directly indexed they attached to me as a white American. A few people sometimes vociferously complained about mismanagement or incompetence of particular pastors, deacons, and other church leaders. They occasionally asked whether my home church could support an offshoot in Guadeloupe. In doing this, they were simply repeating the pragmatic search for missionary interest and material support that led to the founding of the Church of God of Prophecy (and most other Haitian Pentecostal churches in Guadeloupe) in the first place.
This convergence of Haitian and Pentecostal norms for gender-appropriate behavior helps in the ideological defense of the Haitian enclave within Guadeloupe. In particular, it allows church members to frame the difference between themselves and the dominant society through moralistic metaphors of holiness and sinfulness. Haitian Pentecostals accomplish several things at once by dressing modestly and vehemently criticizing local women’s behavior and appearance. At one level, they proclaim their acceptance of Pentecostal doctrine. At another level, their very appearance refutes the standard Guadeloupean stereotypes of Haitians as threatening, disorganized, and chaotic. But at a third level, they portray Guadeloupean society as morally corrupt and worthy only of their disdain. By abiding to this particular code of appearance, church members affirm their difference from Guadeloupeans, but now in terms that work to their advantage. They reinstate (and visibly display) themselves as saved, and the French residents of Guadeloupe as sinful and hopelessly lost.

This code of appearance explicitly does not aim at cultural assimilation to local French-derived norms. After all, the distinctiveness and even visible difference of Haitians is taken as objective and ineradicable fact by Guadeloupeans, Haitians, and Dominicans (the other migrant population). Members of these three groups can easily pick out each other on the street through the hints given off by occupation, gait, and gesture. If visual cues were not enough, then language alone would suffice. The French-based creoles spoken by Haitians and Guadeloupeans are mutually intelligible but not identical, and the Haitians’ distinctive grammar, idioms, and accent always stand out. Therefore, most Haitians cannot blend seamlessly into the flow of city life, no matter how they dress. Unable to erase their tangible difference, and portrayed by Guadeloupeans in the most derogatory terms, Haitians respond by transforming difference as such into moral rebuke.

Haitians use the moral discourse of Pentecostalism to criticize two other closely related aspects of the surrounding society: the relations between generations and the role of the state in domestic life. These particular critiques do not aim at Guadeloupeans
themselves. They instead reproach informal expectations and formal state apparatus which challenge the cultural reproduction of the Haitian community. In the summer of 1994, a pastor visiting from an unaffiliated Pentecostal church in Aquin, Haiti, held a series of revival meetings at the Church of God of Prophecy which attracted hundreds of Haitian Pentecostals throughout Guadeloupe. He made the breakdown of parental authority a standard theme in sermons. He illustrated this point with lines about a young Haitian man in Guadeloupe “who buys a great-looking LaCoste shirt, but then turns around and swears at his mother,” or a Haitian woman in Guadeloupe with beautiful teeth and a good figure “who just walks all over her parents.” Such lines garnered laughter and sustained applause at the revival. At an interview at his home, I asked him why he chose these themes. “Here in Guadeloupe,” he explained, “it is harder to keep your children obedient. There are laws that say you can’t slap your child. If you try to hit him, even if he’s 10 years old, he’ll say ‘I know about 17.’ [This is the emergency telephone number for the police.] Here children insult their parents, but in Haiti they respect their elders. Here, they teach them about sex in the schools, they give them free condoms. Children are more free here: they get a job, they make a little money, and then if they get into trouble, the state comes and takes him away. Imagine that! They take the kid away from home, away from the parents.”

In his sermon and his conversations with me, this pastor supported the call for children’s obedience and respect with copious Biblical quotations. We could read his litany of complaints simply as a reflex of conservative Christian doctrine. However, such sentiments also address much more immediate and local problems, and they help draw a boundary between the Haitian enclave and Guadeloupean society both now and for the next generation. Continuous with his critiques of local norms for women’s behavior, this pastor holds up the behavior of Haitian youth as a negative example which his flock should avoid. In objecting to the general loss of parental authority, he also warns about the extension of state power into the properly domestic tasks of child discipline -- a danger that has no precedents in Haiti. At times in his sermons, he moved from the
general theme of obedience to the importance of speaking to one’s children in Haitian creole. “Even if your children are born here,” he once said in an aside from the pulpit, “they should speak the language of their mother, of their husband or wife. So, if they go back to their country, they’ll be able to understand!” Of course, this exhortation and his subsequent insulting comparisons between Guadeloupean and Haitian creole has no biblical backing, but they support the rest of his message about buttressing the family as the site of cultural reproduction and guarding against pressures for children to assimilate to non-Haitian norms (a concern also faced by other Haitian transnational communities; see Stepick 1998).

Discussion:

These condemnations of secular Guadeloupean society represent the only organized, collective response from Haitians to the images of denigration which circulate about them on the island. While couched in a religious idiom, they serve as a guide not only to conservative Pentecostal morality, but also to specific tasks in producing this transnational community. These tasks include defending against obvious negative stereotypes, launching a counter-critique of the indifferent or hostile Guadeloupean majority, and strengthening traditional parental authority against both the French state and children who are fluent in French, not Haitian conceptions of child welfare and family control. What makes Pentecostalism so congenial for these tasks? The doctrine of sanctification and the oppositional social stance adopted by the earliest American Pentecostals offer two key resources. Sanctification within the Pentecostal faith ultimately depends upon God’s grace, but individuals must nevertheless strive for it through methodical self-examination, discipline, and avoidance of worldly sin (Synan 1997: 7, see also Martin 1990). The logic of sanctification opposes “the world” to the

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13 Pentecostalism constitutes the spiritual path as a three-stage work of Grace, beginning with conversion (a “new birth”), followed by the process of sanctification, and finally baptism in the Holy Spirit, made evident by such gifts as speaking in tongues. The second stage is the most important for the production of community, for the effort to attain sanctification requires an individual subjective commitment which itself drives a critique and rejection of the surrounding society. The doctrine of sanctification derives
state of sinless grace. This world, however, impinges upon one all the time, and following the Pentecostal path of sanctification demands that one continually identify and reject the obstacles it presents, including temptations of the flesh such as smoking, drinking, dancing, unregulated sexuality, and others (see Austin-Broos 1997, Anderson 1979: 195-222). This theological stance justifies the critique of Guadeloupean norms for the behavior of women and children as well as the intrusion into the family of the French welfare and police apparatus. Haitians in Guadeloupe thereby graft a moral opposition, available to them in doctrinal form, onto the mundane fact of their own marginality. They populate the categories of the saved and the sinful with figures drawn from the local social world: not surprisingly, Haitian church members and Guadeloupeans. Following the Pentecostal path of sanctification means identifying and rejecting not only the mundane (as opposed to the sacred) world, but also the local social world which marginalizes and threatens them. This is a combined theological and sociological rejection. Stated in more positive terms, the same moral framework drives the search for personal salvation and the demarcation of a boundary between Haitians and Guadeloupeans, a boundary people use in various ways to produce the transnational community.

In this regard, Haitian church members actually draw on the social template originating in the earliest years of the religion. The first generation of American Pentecostals separated themselves from dominant values and quotidian elements of their own society. Indeed, one historian describes this as a mutual rejection of Pentecostals and the majority population (Synan 1997: 187ff). Early Pentecostal pastors denigrated as sinful not only liquor and tobacco, but also life insurance, secret societies, doctors, and Coca-Cola: all elements of the emerging urban, bureaucratized, and consumer society of

from the Holiness movement of 19th Century American Protestantism, and ultimately the theology of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. It refers essentially to a Christian's second conversion. In this scheme, one's first conversion involves forgiveness from outward sin, but the second one eradicates inward or original sin, the residue of Adam's fall. Sanctification for Pentecostals thus represents spiritual perfection: a perfect victory over sin, likened to the complete love of God achieved by most Christians only in the moment before death.
early 20th Century America. Mainstream Protestants, in turn, branded the Pentecostals as
fanatical, primitive, and cultic. Moreover, the first converts were people largely excluded
from full participation in the dominant society. The Azusa Street revival of 1906 -- the
storied birthplace of the American Pentecostal movement -- began with a group of black
servants and custodians led by a southern Holiness preacher whose parents were former
slaves. In the following years, visiting churchmen reported (often in disapproval) that
poor blacks, whites, Mexicans, and Asians worshipped together in the same church, and
this in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles which was firmly ruled by a white business and
political elite (Cox 1995: 45ff). Pentecostals’ marginalization from and critique of
American society preadapts this religion to the situation in present-day Guadeloupe, not
necessarily as an ideological compensation for poverty (heavenly rewards which distract
one from earthly suffering) but rather as a form of collective defense and remoralization.
Haitian migrants in Guadeloupe are locked out of most avenues to political power, and
they respond to this exclusion with a doctrinally-based rejection of their own. Their
condemnation of contemporary secular Guadeloupe thus capitalizes on the particular
doctrinal and institutional stance laid down in the early history of this religion.

This essay began by arguing that religious conversion involves a subjective
transformation as well as the acquisition of a new public identity or reference group. In
both senses, claiming a new religious affiliation addresses the convert’s everyday world
and its lived contradictions. The case examined here illustrates how closely people have
calibrated Pentecostalism to the local social landscape. It suggests the world-creating
possibilities of a world-rejecting religious morality. To explain this, I have focused
chiefly on how people construct the social boundary between Pentecostal church
members and those who are still “in the world,” categories congruent with Haitian
migrants and Guadeloupeans. I have paid far less attention to the motivations which
drove particular individuals to join the church and the personal renewal or remoralization
they found there. This makes my argument somewhat inadequate as a complete study of
Pentecostal conversion. However, this lack suggests something important about the role of religious morality in the production of transnational communities.

Achieving a sense of locality and community depends, according to Appadurai, on producing local subjects: “actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbors, friends, and enemies” (1996: 179). He writes also that locality is “an inherently fragile achievement ... [which] must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds” (Ibid.). “Local subjects” refers to people who conceive of their public identity in the same way, not necessarily who share the same inner experience. In this light, the Haitian Pentecostal community in Guadeloupe emerges out of innumerable acts of self-predication: public declarations that announce that one is Christian, that one is saved and open to God’s grace. Making these declarations -- made in sermons, public prayers, baptism ceremonies, and witnessing to non-believers -- situates converts in a determinate position within the local social array: firmly belonging to the network of Haitian congregations and disdainful of the surrounding society. A deep interior change in one’s cosmological bearings or sense of self is simply not necessary for this process to occur. As long as converts continue to make these declarations and re-order such daily practices as dress, bodily comportment, consumption of alcohol and cigarettes, etc., the degree to which they personally subscribe to the doctrine does not affect its success in the production of community.

While this much may hold true for Pentecostalism in all societies, the transnational setting in particular suggests the fragility of the process. Haitians, like other residents of contemporary Guadeloupe, are interpellated in many other ways. They participate in the habits of consumerism, and they become the “subjects” of state welfare, educational, and police services. Self-identifying as Pentecostal thus demarcates a social boundary that operates in two directions. It counter-acts images of denigration originating from the outside, but it also helps to maintain control over the production of local subjects on the inside. Recall that most Haitian migrants to Guadeloupe would rather move to the USA, and most also maintain active connections with family there and as
well as in Haiti. Conceiving their future in non-local terms, Haitian Pentecostals struggle against the other identities that are proffered to them, especially those which seem attractive to the younger generation. These norms and identities -- in particular those connected to sexuality and the family -- would embed them more deeply in the imported practices and commitments of metropolitan France. Haitian converts thus enlist Pentecostal morality in a very delicate, and perhaps ultimately contradictory task: producing local subjects who yet remain aloof from the dominant and immediately available range of identities and practices. This task and dilemma pervades the uses of Pentecostalism by Haitians in Guadeloupe, and it fundamentally underlies the cultural reproduction of this and other transnational communities.
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