The Search for HaitiTown

A Comparative Study of Haitian the Haitian Communities in Miami and New York City

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Introduction

Haiti is not a world power. It does not have any major tourist sites. It is not a popular vacation destination. Aside from being the first independent black nation in history, it is probably most well-known for being one of the poorest countries in the Western hemisphere. Haiti usually flies under the radar of popular news media until a leader is ousted by a coup or some natural disaster devastates the country (both common occurrences).

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti about 10 miles away from its capital, Port-au-Prince. The death toll is between 230,000 and 250,000 people, with damages upwards of $7 billion (New York Times, 2010). Thus Haiti has once again been thrust into the international spotlight. However, as most people concentrate on Haiti itself, the communities of Haitians in the United States should not be ignored.

America is home to the largest population of Haitians outside of Haiti, of which most live in New York or Florida. In Miami, FL, there is a neighborhood officially known as ‘Little Haiti’ where there is a clear Haitian cultural influence. In New York City, there are many of these cultural communities, such as Chinatown, Little Italy and Washington Heights, yet there is no Haitian enclave to speak of. To understand this void, this paper examines factors that contributed to the success of the Haitian enclave in Miami that are lacking in New York City.

History of Immigration
Significant Haitian migration to the United States has occurred since 1957 (Laguerre, 1984; Stepick and Portes, 1986). The United States’ Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which ended the severe limitations to immigrants of numerous ethnic backgrounds, allowed for an easier passage, and therefore, larger numbers of Haitian immigrants into the United States. Most popularized in the media however is the wave of Haitians arriving by boat to the coasts of Florida beginning in 1972 (Laguerre, 1984; Stepick and Portes, 1986). In actuality, the majority of Haitians migrated to New York, with less than one fifth that number arriving by boat to Florida (Stepick and Portes, 1986). Tens of thousands of Haitian refugees arrived by boat until 1981 when then President Ronald Reagan ordered the U.S. Coast Guard to begin turning away any ships carrying Haitian immigrants.

Many Haitians fled their country as a result of political oppression. In 1957, François “Papa Doc” Duvalier was elected president of Haiti, beginning a reign of terror in the country that lasted for fourteen years (Snyder, 1992). When he fraudulently got himself elected as president for life in 1964, his political opponents who fled to New York City the year of his election, began to send for their families, abandoning all hope of returning to Haiti (Laguerre, 1984). The majority of these early migrants were of the upper and middle classes of Haiti, causing a “Brain Drain” of professionals and academics (Laguerre, 1984). For the most part, the United States media and government did not consider the immigrants to be political refugees, but rather economic refugees, which encouraged them to deny political asylum to many Haitians. The spike in Haitian boat immigrants in 1971 correlated with the declaration of Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier as successor to his father’s presidency. At this time there was a mass exodus of
Haitians, including many from the working and peasant classes, who fled for both political and economic reasons (Laguerre, 1984). Haiti had, and still has, one of the world’s most disparate wealth distributions and was only this year replaced by Nicaragua as the poorest country in the Western hemisphere (Stepick and Portes; Latin Business Chronicle, 2009).

Haitians have significant settlements in various American cities including Boston and Chicago, but New York City and Miami are the most prevalent, with New York having the majority of the Haitian immigrants (Laguerre, 1984).

As mentioned above, François Duvalier’s political opponents first began arriving in New York City, and the most ardent opponents of his regime lived there. Laguerre explains that many Haitians chose New York as their destination, because family and/or friends had settled there previously, and their pictures and success stories became an incentive to emigrate (1984). The process of migration in the Haitian experience borrows from the New Economics of Migration theory (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and Dewind, 1999). Many times, families will decide to send one of their members to try to succeed in New York City in order to send money back to support the family in the home country and save enough to send for another member. This is all based upon the social capital already existing in New York City, because they know they have a durable network of friends and compatriots to rely on to help find housing, jobs, etc. Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, often played a major role in the decision to move to New York, because anyone who wanted to migrate legally needed to go to there to obtain the correct documentation, and since Port-au-Prince is an urban area, New York City was a popular topic of conversation and praise (Laguerre, 1984). Haitians tend to settle in the three boroughs of
Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan, with an overwhelming majority residing in Brooklyn (Zéphir, 2001). Within Brooklyn, Flatbush, Crown Heights, and East Flatbush are the 3 most popular areas for Haitians (Zéphir, 2001). The class status from Haiti persisted in these communities with the lower and middle class immigrants generally going to Brooklyn, upper and middle class residents to Manhattan, and upper and upper-middle class residents to Queens (Laguerre, 1984).

Most of the immigrants who settled in Miami came by boat. The majority of Miami immigrants came from rural areas in Haiti with populations of under 10,000 people with modest occupational and educational backgrounds (Stepick and Portes, 1986). There were inconsistent policies regarding Haitian entrants at the time in Florida, making it difficult to create sustainable social capital networks. Despite this fact, many Haitians cited their few relatives as being more helpful than the government, church or private organizations during their first few months in the U.S. (Stepick and Portes, 1986). Most of the Haitian immigrants who first arrived moved into rapidly deteriorating neighborhoods that were predominantly Haitian or African American, because it was cheap and they had problems finding work. Those who did find employment found themselves mostly in lower ranking jobs than the ones they held in Haiti (Stepick and Portes, 1986).

This paper explores the differences between the Haitian communities in these two locations. In so doing, the key factors that create these differences will be discussed. Why does an ethnic enclave exist in Miami, yet not in New York City, despite New York City’s sizeable Haitian population?
**Literature Review**

There are varying definitions of an ethnic enclave, but broadly defined it is a neighborhood with ethnically identifiable characteristics and a constant influx of immigrants. One important debate within the context of ethnic enclaves is the role played by these communities. What is the value of an immigrant enclave? Whom does it serve and in what ways?

**Assimilation Theory**

One of the predominant concepts within the immigrant enclave value debate is assimilation theory. This line of thinking proposes that immigrants use ethnic enclaves as a stepping-stone for assimilation into the culture of the host society (Fitzpatrick 1966; Marcuse, 1997; Massey, 1985; Nee and Sanders, 2001).

Marcuse (1997) emphasizes that immigrant enclaves are distinct in that they are voluntary and transitional neighborhoods with a decidedly positive connotation as a pathway towards upward mobility, as opposed to the ghetto (involuntary, permanent, and negative) and the citadel (voluntary, permanent and negative). More specifically, he highlights the immigrant enclave’s transitional nature as the key to its idiosyncrasy by differentiating it from a cultural enclave, which has the same basic characteristics, but is considered to be a permanent residential grouping. Fitzpatrick (1966) argues that residence in an ethnic enclave is vital rather than voluntary. He argues that without this familiar, traditional framework as an intermediary, any attempt at assimilation will likely cause social disorganization.
Massey focuses in the spatial aspect of assimilation. According to his model, ethnic enclaves are the result of cultural, economic and social gap between the immigrant and dominant groups (Massey, 1985). He hypothesizes that the goal of the immigrant groups is to move out of the ethnic enclave in order to join mainstream society and presumably improve their positions in society. Massey claims that as the immigrant group moves into native neighborhoods and has more contact with the dominant culture, it becomes acculturated and thus fully assimilates through this spatial trajectory. Logan, Alba, and Zhang (2002) agree that the overwhelming majority of ethnic enclave communities follow this spatial assimilation course, which they identify as “immigrant enclaves.” However they go beyond the theory to identify an “ethnic community,” in which there is a concentration of one ethnicity and people are there by choice, despite having the option to spatially assimilate. One key finding of their research is that although spatial assimilation is typically associated with moving to the suburbs, suburbanization is not a necessary indicator of assimilation, because of the advent of the suburban enclave. The more diverse immigrant stream that includes people from a higher class and educational background is a major factor in this emergence. Earlier research from some of the authors involved in this study also cites the reduced importance of English proficiency, which used to be a significant barrier to immigrant suburbanization (Logan, Alba, Stults, et. al, 1999).

Nee and Sanders (2001) set out to discover why certain immigrants assimilate better and faster than others. They claim that the rate and scope of assimilation is determined by financial, social and human-cultural capital. According to this model, the more capital an immigrant group possesses, the greater their likelihood of integrating into
and participating in mainstream society; those with less capital are stuck in less desirable jobs within the ethnic economy.

Many of these studies exclude black people, relegating them to a mere mention of the difficulty involved in applying the assimilation theory to this group. A sizable portion of the immigrant population is racially black, so the inability to apply this assimilation theory to them greatly discounts the findings. Logan, Alba and Zhou note that African Americans are more limited in housing mobility and assimilation, but state that African Americans with high income and education levels are more likely to live in the suburbs (2002). However, this does not address black immigrants who might suffer higher prejudice due to accents or the larger culture gap, therefore the blacks in “ethnic communities” may not be there by choice and may not have as much mobility as is suggested. Nee and Sanders’ social capital model is even more limited in that it is tested on a sample solely comprised of Asian groups. This is a major drawback for the validity of these findings, especially given the exceptional enclave and assimilation patterns of Asian enclaves (see Foner, 2001; Logan, Alba, Dill, et. al, 2000; Zhou and Logan, 1991, etc.).

In general, assimilation theorists make a couple of glaring assumptions. First, they assume acceptance on the part of the dominant group. This is especially true for Massey who bases his theory on the hypothesis, “The degree of segregation between any two groups at a point in time is a function of the social, economic, and cultural distance between them,” (1985: 321). Racism and prejudice, even given his model’s exclusion of blacks, must be taken into account when considering a group’s ability to assimilate, spatially or otherwise. They also assume the immigrant’s preference for the host society’s
culture. Fitzpatrick spends a lot of time stressing the familiarity and comfort of the ethnic enclave in his attempt to demonstrate how it helps an immigrant to transition into the host society, but he does not address how this can have a negative effect. It is possible for immigrants to get so comfortable living in what is habitual that they shun the larger society and operate solely within the confines of their enclave (Foner, 2001). Nee and Sanders make a similar error in stating that the reason for an immigrant choosing to have an entrepreneurial job in the enclave economy over a career in the dominant society is a lack in cultural capital. They fail to consider that one might have abundant cultural capital relevant to the host society but still choose to participate in the ethnic enclave as cited above by Logan, Alba, and Zhou (2002).

**Segmented Assimilation**

On the other side of the debate are those who argue that the ethnic enclave can be a positive and profitable community in its own right and not simply a springboard into mainstream society (Portes and Jensen, 1989; Portes and Wilson 1980; Crowder, 1999; Logan, Alba, Dill, et. al, 2000).

Zhou and Logan (1991) offer a modified version of the assimilation theory and acknowledge the positive role of ethnic enclaves. They support the idea that socioeconomic status is an indicator of residential patterns, but add that marital status and the presence of children are also important determinants for certain immigrant groups, including the Chinese. They also provide strong support for the viability and financial reward of the ethnic enclave citing that Chinese families, regardless of where they live, sustain links to the enclave.
In 2000, Logan, Alba, Dill, *et. al.* presented findings that followed an ecological model of ethnic competition. They found that the groups that had replaced the white entrepreneurs that had withdrawn from certain activities had created ethnic niches that persist today, while others are still at the periphery of the broader economy and are kept subordinate in this way. The researchers make an important distinction between assimilation and dispersion in explaining the breakdown of some ethnic niches, theorizing that certain groups may not necessarily be assimilating into the dominant group, but rather spread out amongst a broader range of work sectors. There is a lack of clarity throughout the study, largely due to interchanging of terms, which makes it hard to link and understand ideas.

While the previous two theories accept assimilation theory to a small extent, Crowder (1999) rejects it completely, especially spatial assimilation. He looks specifically at the West Indian population, which Massey admittedly excludes from his model (Massey, 1985). Crowder dismisses the theory on the basis that West Indians are racially black and therefore do not fit the model of spatial assimilation due to racism. Crowder supports the positive interpretation for ethnic enclaves, stating that West Indians use them to their advantage as it distinguishes them from African Americans, thereby avoiding being at the bottom rung of society. He also notes that they benefit from their native systems of capital accumulation and credit that they have maintained within the enclave.

Portes is arguably the most vehemently vocal advocate for the success to be found in the enclave economy (Wilson and Portes, 1980; Portes and Stepick, 1985; Portes and Bach, 1985; Portes, 1987; Portes and Jensen, 1989, etc.). The most crucial distinction to
note in his enclave economy model is his definition of an enclave. Rather than relying on residential qualifications, he defines an enclave on the basis of the commercial institutions established in an area stating that ethnic enclaves are “a concentration of ethnic firms in physical space—generally a metropolitan area—that employ a significant proportion of workers from the same minority” (Portes and Jensen, 1992:418). In 1989, Portes and Jensen attempted to dispel the definition of the enclave economy on the basis of residence, cited examples of how/why immigrant enclaves were not just transitional ghettos, but successful means of upward mobility, disproved the notion that ethnic enclave employers treat their employees worse than outside employers, and hypothesized that marriage, kinship and family composition (not education, work experience or knowledge of English) were the biggest determinants of whether or not an immigrant was disposed toward entrepreneurship.

The findings in the research are based solely on the Cuban population in Miami, which is very limited, especially given the unique government policies in support of Cuban enclaves in Miami. Logan, Alba, Dill et al, also critique Portes’ model as an example of an exceptional case (2000).

Logan, Alba, Dill, et al, (2000) provide a few pointed critiques of the assimilation model. They fault, as I did, the assumption that mainstream society is not prejudiced and welcomes minority advancement. The authors claim that the hypothesis of the theory is hard to test because it provides no definite time frame for the completion of the process of assimilation to be complete. They also question how this theory applies to the dominant group and ask why they have not been dispersed throughout the economic
levels or if they are subject to a different set of economic rules. Fitzpatrick (1966) seems to provide an answer, albeit a very vague one to the question of time frame for assimilation. He claims that education is the key to ensuring assimilation and that once the kids are acculturated into the larger society, the solidarity of the ethnic enclave weakens when the children get older. So one could infer that this process takes at least one generation, most likely two. Still, the absence of a definite timeframe is a potential hole in the assimilation model. Zhou and Logan (1991) critique the assimilation theory’s concept that decentralization results in assimilation, because although this is true for Chinese groups relative to white people, it does not hold true relative to other Asian subgroups. However, I would counter this argument by saying that assimilation theory is widely identified as a theory that explains groups relative only to the dominant group; this concept is at its core.

Marcuse (1997) directly criticizes the enclave economy model’s claim that it is an effective avenue for economic mobility (Portes and Jensen 1989) claiming that the enclave economy has been proven to be exploitative of women, thus holding back their progress. Portes and Jensen admit that economic mobility is limited to males in the Cuban case, but offer statistics that show that Cuban women get paid more within the enclave economy than they do without (1989). Nee and Sanders explain away the existence of success stories within enclave economies as the result of certain immigrant streams with population characteristics that make them more enterprise-minded and, as mentioned earlier, that those who lack cultural capital relevant to the mainstream society (but have the available social and financial capital) are more likely to own small businesses in the ethnic economy. One of the more pertinent oppositions to Portes comes
from Logan, Alba and Zhang (2002) where they explain that people’s exposure to whites is much greater in the suburbs than in the city, regardless of whether or not they live in ethnically concentrated neighborhoods. It follows then, they claim, that even those ethnic enclave entrepreneurs who live in suburban ethnic enclaves have assimilated to some degree.

Inherent in both of these arguments however is that the ethnic enclave is created out of necessity. Whether its purpose is a transitioning phase or a source of economic viability, it is an essential step in the path of immigration. The process of creating an ethnic enclave can be explained using the social capital and cumulative causation theories. When migrants make the decision to move to a certain area, the risks of migration are much lower if there is a person or group of family/friends/compatriots already there, and many people use this network of social capital to create financial gains for themselves such as jobs or housing (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and Dewind, 1999). This migration sustains itself because as the network in the community grows, the risks of migration continue to lower and the migration becomes institutionalized in the community, thus creating a community of one particular ethnic background (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and Dewind, 1999; Crowder, 1999). The sustainability of these networks and communities depends upon the ethnic solidarity of its residents (Crowder, 1999). As for the economic viability of ethnic enclaves, a couple of theories explain the relative success or failure of these communities. Logan, Alba, Dill, et. al explain that a possible reason is the concept of invasion and succession, in which another group “invades” the primary groups ecological niche, beginning a competition for space that sometimes causes the original enclave to withdraw (2000). Another theory suggests that the success of the
enclave depends upon the skill set of the immigrants settling in the area (Light and Rosenstein, 1995; Portes and Jensen, 1989).

My research will offer a discussion of these themes as they relate to the Haitian immigrant population, specifically in Miami and New York. The two main debates discussed above focus on economic viability and success. My work will shed more light on the communal aspect of ethnic enclaves and how this factor contributes to the visibility and viability of an ethnic enclave. Although there have been studies about the relation of these theories to the West Indian population as a whole, there is little literature on the specific groups within the Caribbean diaspora. An analysis of Haitians alone is especially important, because they are one of the few if not the only francophone West Indian population that does not speak English in their home country. Any advantages that are usually accrued to West Indian populations due to their English proficiency cannot be applied to Haitian immigrants.

**Methods**

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to complete this project. A large portion of my evidence was derived from statistical data provided by various sources, many of them government based. Some of these statistics included public transportation figures, real estate pricing, and air travel data. My research also consisted of content analysis. This included deriving information from different websites, articles, and books.

A series of interviews with seven New York City residents, from one of my earlier related projects, were used as well. It was intended that similar interviews would be conducted with residents from Miami, but complications arose preventing that endeavor. For this reason, the interviews act primarily as complimentary evidence to the
data found in my other modes of research. The interviews centered on the respondents’ ties to Haiti, their Haitian identity, and their ideas about ethnic enclaves.

The snowball effect was used to find participants for that series. The interviewees consisted of four females and three males with an age range of 21-76 years old. They are all New York City residents, representing the boroughs of Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens, including one respondent from Long Island. All of the respondents were fully Haitian (both parents are Haitian). Four interviewees were born in Haiti and the other three were born in the United States. However, all but one of them grew up in America. Four of the participants are students, two are well into their careers, and the other is retired. All but one (excluding the retiree) is currently employed. All of the respondents were those who volunteered their time, as there was no compensation provided for their participation.

I have a few hypotheses as to why there is a more cultural enclave in Miami than in New York City. I believe that Haitians in Miami will have stronger ties to Haiti. I also believe that the Catholic Church played a significant role in helping to establish a Haitian enclave in Miami whereas it is too overextended to provide the same assistance in New York City. Lastly, I hypothesize that there is less competition for space in Miami, which makes it easier to establish an enclave without intrusion or opposition.

**Analysis**

The Haitian community in New York City is geographically dispersed, although there are concentrated pockets of Haitian residency such as the East Flatbush area in
Brooklyn and Cambria Heights section of Queens. In addition to a large number of Haitian residents, these communities each house a good number of Haitian owned business and services. Many people will readily call this area an ethnic enclave, but there aren’t enough identifying characteristics in these areas to definitely label them as Haitian. This is especially true in the East Flatbush area where there are representations from a multitude of Caribbean countries. Haitians have not carved out their own distinguishable area to avoid getting lumped into the overarching identification of a West Indian or Caribbean enclave.

In northern Miami, there is an approximately 3.5 square mile community known as Little Haiti (City-Data.com, 2010). Named for the large Haitian presence there, this area qualifies as an identifiable ethnic enclave. The majority of the shops clustered in that area are Haitian owned or Haitian oriented. It is not unlikely to see signs in Kreyol, the language spoken by the vast majority of Haitians. By virtue of its name it is quickly identified by Haitians and non-Haitians alike that this neighborhood is distinctly Haitian. There are also other neighborhoods in Southern Florida, such as Pompano Beach and certain areas of Ft. Lauderdale that have a concentrated presence of Haitians, much like that of New York City, but none of them have the same level of visibility and viability that Little Haiti does.

New York City does not meet the standards of economic enclaves as defined by Alejandro Portes: “a concentration of ethnic firms in physical space—generally a metropolitan area—that employ a significant proportion of workers from the same minority” (Portes and Jensen, 1992:418). Although there are Haitian owned businesses in the areas of elevated Haitian population in New York City, these enterprises tend to be
dispersed among other West Indian or African American firms. By this definition, Miami can be qualified as an economic enclave, but they also have the features of a cultural enclave. There have been various factors attributed to the definition of a cultural enclave, but there is no widely accepted definition as there is for an economic enclave. In light of this, I have formulated a definition for the purposes of this paper: a community in which the majority of its residents belong to one ethnic group and there are visible cues that denote the area as "belonging" to a particular ethnic group. For example, signs in the group's language, distinctive art/foods/music, etc. readily available, and most or many of the residents are speaking in the native tongue/dialect.

Butler and Wilson introduced the concept of “pre-enclave and enclave economies” (1988). They explain that these communities are not necessarily distinct except that in neighborhoods denoted as pre-enclave, “…this type of sub-economy is in a less developmental stage which in some cases may develop into the more organized, stronger enclave economy” (Butler and Wilson, 1988:129). The key to a strong and lasting enclave economy is the interdependence of the businesses within the ethnic community, meaning that the products and services needed by each business within the enclave can be satisfied by other businesses within the enclave or at least by people of the same ethnic background (Wilson and Portes, 1980).

Miami and New York City are on varying levels between the pre-enclave and strong economic enclave as described by Butler and Wilson. New York City has the business and population numbers that should be conducive to a thriving economy, however they have not become an enclave. While New York City has the base economic structures, they are lacking the community cohesiveness and clustered physical space
necessary to blossom into a thriving ethnic enclave. Miami’s Little Haiti has a strong cultural identity, making it a distinct and politically viable community closer to achieving the status of being a strong economic enclave, and already a distinguishable cultural enclave in its own right.

In the interviews I conducted with the Haitians living in New York City, I asked them what their conception of an ethnic enclave was. There were varying degrees of complexity within their definitions, but the most common answer was that it was an area in which many people of one ethnic group live. Based on this basic definition, most of the respondents believed that a Haitian enclave exists in New York City. When given my previously stated definition, only one interviewee believed that such a community exists for Haitians in New York City. However, when asked if a neighborhood like that existed anywhere in the U.S., all but one of them replied that Miami was one of the places where these factors were present.

In Little Haiti, they have a marketplace that is modeled after the Iron Market in Port-au-Prince. It isn’t odd to see someone selling a live chicken, some advertising them as sacrifices for voodoo rituals. It is difficult to find someone in the streets speaking a language other than Kreyol. Haitian flags are in many store front windows. One visitor who posted a review on TripAdvisor.com said, “It is what it is-Little Haiti!! Roadside fruit and vegetable stands,shops,the amazing and unique art and most importantly the wonderful and strong people of Haiti! If you love or are interested in Ayiti, it is as I said-what it is-a little bit of Haiti. For a taste of delicious Haitian food I recommend TAP TAP Restaurant…” This gives you a sense of the cultural vibrance of the neighborhood.
Participating in and reaching out to one’s community is one way to show cultural solidarity. Paj La, the self-proclaimed “Haitian Yellow Pages and business directory” is an online tool created to showcase Haitian businesses in Haiti and in Haitian communities around the world (pajla.com, 2010). It is organized by category, not location and it is free to post. Listing one’s business or services on this website, shows an awareness of the resources within the community (the site itself) and creates awareness for one’s business within the community. Being a part of something like Paj La shows that the business is invested in its community and seeks to create links among people of its culture.

New York and Florida dominated the listings, which was to be expected considering their sizable Haitian populations as compared to other areas of the United States. I tallied the number of listings within each category and divided them by location. The locations were broken down as follows: New York City (located in any of the 5 boroughs), Greater New York (anything outside of the city, but within New York State), Miami, and Greater Florida. Out of a total of 1798 listings, there were 279 listings for New York (including New York City) and 745 listings for Florida (including Miami). New York City alone accounted for only approximately 9.7% of the total listings while Miami accounted for approximately 10.7%. Most interesting is that Florida state as a whole (excluding Miami) accounted for approximately 31% of the listings. This shows that although Little Haiti bears the most apropos name, the other Haitian communities in Florida are also highly functioning and profitable enclaves on the rise.

All of this information is not to definitively say that Florida has more Haitian-owned businesses than New York, although the evidence does suggest that. More
important is that Florida is definitely more active in terms of reaching out to their community. Granted, the postings are free and not verified by the website, so it could be that some of these businesses/services are not necessarily Haitian-owned. However, even if this were so, it would still show that the Haitians in Miami are a very visible and powerful market for businesses to want to appeal to them. Overall, Florida trumps New York in terms of its participation in this culturally strengthening endeavor.

Parades are another tool with which to develop cultural solidarity. It is a way for people to exhibit cultural pride. Many Haitian communities across the country celebrate Haitian Flag Day on the 18th of May, some with a parade. Annual parades are held in New York City (Brooklyn) and Miami on or near that date. However, the atmosphere is much different in the two cities. In an article for HeritageKonpa Magazine, Rene Davis described the parade in Brooklyn as “…less than spectacular…The crowd in attendance was estimated at 130 to 150 people” (HeritageKonpa.com, 2004). In contrast, when speaking about the festivities in Miami, Davis said that tens of thousands of Haitians were expected to be in attendance, and over twenty thousand people attended the Haitian Compas Music Festival, which often coincides with the Flag Day celebration (HeritageKonpa.com, 2004).

Miami is clearly more culturally vibrant than New York City. The community is more active, more connected and more identifiable by a wide range of people as distinctively Haitian. Based on the criteria for what an ethnic enclave entails, New York City does not meet the requirements to be considered an economic or cultural Haitian enclave. Although members of the Haitian communities in New York City may say that their neighborhoods are enclaves, these claims cannot be substantiated.
Haitian Communities and the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church has always been an integral part in the lives of many Haitians. It is the official religion of Haiti and approximately 80% of Haitians there are Catholic (Zimmerman, 2010). In fact, the church was very involved in politics and society in Haiti, especially in the 1980s during their plight for democracy (Mooney, 2005). It is not surprising then that Haitian immigrants sought the support and guidance of the Catholic Church upon arriving in the United States.

In New York City, during the first wave of Haitian immigration, many immigrants would attend the English and Spanish masses, but had little to no understanding of what was being said. In 1966, a Haitian priest from Canada, Father Rodrigue Auguste, was asked to join the St. Teresa parish in Brooklyn to cater to the growing Haitian population (Laguerre, 1984). Soon thereafter, he created the Organisation Chrétienne de la Communauté Haïtienne (Christian Organization of the Haitian Community) (Laguerre, 1984). According to Guy Sansaricq, the head of the Haitian Apostolate office and one of the Bishops of the Brooklyn Diocese, by 1976 there were eight Haitian priests and two French priests working between Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens (Laguerre, 1984). These priests worked together to form bible study groups, classes for adult education in English and other services for the Haitian community, while the Catholic Church provided financial support for the Haitian Neighborhood Service Center in Brooklyn (Laguerre, 1984).

The Catholic Church has since expanded its Haitian services and now has 20 churches within the Brooklyn and Brooklyn/Queens Dioceses that provide masses in
Kreyol or French, 4 in other areas of New York City, 6 on Long Island and 1 in Spring Valley, NY (SNAA, 2010). The Haitian Neighborhood Service Center is no longer in existence, however there is the National Center of the Haitian Apostolate. This service coordinates religious leaders in the Catholic Church associated with the Haitian community nationwide (SNAA, 2010). However, they do not have any programs or services that they advertise for the betterment of the Haitian community within these areas. In fact, of all the local Haitian organizations listed on the website for the Consulate General of Haiti in New York, none of them are sponsored or funded by the Catholic Church.

In Miami, on the other hand, the Catholic Church was very involved in the Haitian immigrants’ adaptation to the new community from start to finish. Before the Haitians arrived, the Catholic Church had a strong presence in the Miami area due to the fact that it was largely comprised of immigrants from Latin America, which is overwhelmingly Catholic. This put the Church in a better position to aid the Haitian refugees. Whereas the first wave of Haitian immigrants in New York City arrived without much fanfare, the boat people in Miami received a maelstrom of media attention and a negative reception from the U.S. government and the people of Miami. This created a humanitarian crisis which almost forced the Catholic Church to act on the Haitians’ behalf, and although they were not the only group advocating for Haitians’ rights, they were unique in that they “…had a grassroots presence in the community and because its leaders had established a role as political advocates in Miami and Washington” (Mooney, 2005, p. 11). The local church leaders created new programs and
parishes to ensure that Haitians would remain a part of the Catholic Church in Miami (Mooney, 2005). The biggest and most important contribution that the Catholic Church made to the Haitian community in Miami is the creation of the Notre Dame d’Haiti Catholic Mission and the subsequent Pierre Toussaint Center.

Notre Dame d’Haiti Church was established in August 1981 by then Archbishop of Miami Rev. Edward McCarthy in the middle of what is now called Little Haiti (notredamedhaiti.org, 2010). According to the church’s website, it was originally a small mission that grew out of St. Mary’s Cathedral, but was moved into the former Notre-Dame Academy for Girls when the large numbers of Haitian immigrants arriving in Miami necessitated expansion. In that same year, the Pierre Toussaint Haitian Catholic Center was created on the same grounds as the Notre Dame d’Haiti Church to help Haitians with their immigration papers, teaching English and Kreyol literacy, administering emergency financial provision from church funds, daycare and religious education for children, and a host of other social services (miamiarchdiocese.org, 2010; Mooney, 2005). The program was originally run by Kreyol-speaking priests and a handful of volunteers, but has since grown to have a large staff of its own (miamiarchdiocese.org, 2010; Mooney, 2005). For example, the Legal Services Project started with three volunteers in 1993 and now has a 35 member staff, and the Job Placement Service, which originally was housed in one room of the center now has its own building and a staff of 15 (Mooney, 2005). The center has since expanded beyond dependency on Catholic Church funds and includes money from the federal and state governments as well as the other non-profit organizations, some of which are not Catholic Church affiliated (Mooney, 2005). Still, the center is administered by the
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami and receives considerable support from the Church, including over a half a million dollar investment to renovate the daycare building (Mooney, 2005).

Haitians in Miami were given invaluable assistance in developing their community. In providing them with an organization that is devoted to the needs of Haitians in the Miami area, they have created a central institution that a community can build an enclave around. As noted by Mooney, the Pierre Toussaint Center has been used not only as a social services center, but as a place that Haitian leaders can meet and organize (2005). New York City Haitians were not so lucky. Although there were individual church programs set up to try and help the Haitian community, there was no centralizing Catholic-funded organization to draw from, and there still is not. Now there are no Haitian-centric Catholic charities to speak of despite the obviously large Haitian Catholic population throughout the various New York dioceses. I believe that this is due in large part to the more varied Catholic population in New York City. The different culture subscribing to the Catholic Church, not to mention the larger numbers of parishioners in general, undoubtedly limits the amount of help that the Catholic Church can give to any one group. Fr. Jean-Miguel Auguste, Pator of St. Jerome’s Church in Brooklyn, which is the only parish in the Brooklyn Diocese that holds a Haitian mass every day, admits that the churches in Miami have more financial resources because they still get subsidized money from the Archdiocese of Miami and the state (2010). “They consider the churches there where Haitians are as mission churches. Here, we are an established church so we can’t get subsidized money—we are independent. So our congregations have to make more of an effort and contribute more” (Auguste, 2010). In
New York City, the Haitian Catholic community had to be self-sufficient and operate groups and social services within their own parishes as opposed to one centralized institution.

Without the tremendous assistance from the Catholic Church, it is unlikely that the Haitian community in Miami would have progressed into a strong enclave. The Church provided them with money, services, and a centralized institution, which are all conducive to the formation of an enclave. The Haitian community in New York City did not have this support, which was a detriment to its development.

Ties to Haiti

Naturally, over time, the Haitian culture and traditions begin to wane and one does not uphold the culture as steadfastly. Without a constant connection to Haiti, it is difficult to create an enclave that is supposed to mirror those customs. Haitians in New York City have weaker ties to Haiti than those in Miami, which helps to account for the lack of cultural exuberance here.

Florida and New York are first and second, respectively in percent foreign born from Haiti. However, Florida is first by a relatively large margin of 13.6% (US Census Bureau, 2000). The influx of foreign born residents infuses culture from the homeland into the community in the U.S. These foreign born residents are not as far removed from Haitian traditions and therefore give sustainability to the cultural nature of the enclave. Since Florida has a statistically significant difference in the number of Haitian-born residents, it stands to reason that its ties to Haiti are stronger, and its cultural vitality is therefore stronger.
Assimilation, therefore, plays a role in New York City’s weakened ties to Haiti. Many Haitians have lived in predominantly African American neighborhoods or among a mix of Caribbean ethnicities, and when one is living in close proximity to another culture, it is almost inevitable that new habits and traditions will be picked up. One of the New York City respondents captured this perfectly when asked if maintaining a Haitian identity was important to him: “Oh. I won’t say I have a Haitian identity. Really I’ve been here for more than 45 years so then, I won’t say I have a Haitian identity. I have Haitian heritage. But I don’t have a Haitian identity because I’ve been living here for too long now. It takes time to – I won’t say erase a culture, but to get rid of a culture you were born in. That’s it. That’s the way it is.”

The most prevalent trend among my New York City interviewees was that there was hardly any physical connection to Haiti. Only two of the seven participants had a significant number of family members still living there, and for most the little family that was there was extended. Only one of them frequently visited Haiti. As for the rest, if they did visit Haiti at all, it was once or twice, most of them at a very young age. The older respondent visited only once since leaving forty-seven years ago, and two of the other three interviewees who were born in Haiti have not been back since they left, although they both expressed that they had a desire to do so.

To investigate the extent of Miami’s stronger ties to Haiti, I wanted to see the number of people flying to Haiti from New York City versus the number flying from Miami. If not that many people are flying to Haiti from New York City, their burgeoning enclave cannot sustain a cultural connectedness with their homeland. The Bureau of
Transportation Services (BTS), through the Research and Innovative Technology Administration provided the figures of passengers flying to and from Haiti with starting points in Miami and New York City. John F. Kennedy (JFK) airport is the only airport in New York that flies directly to Haiti, so that was the only starting point used for New York. BTS only provided information for the Port au Prince (PAP) airport in Haiti, probably for the same reason. Miami International Airport was selected because it is in the city that is the focus of this paper. The information for 2008 is used, because the data for 2009 does not yet include the whole calendar year.

The crosstab created used “…international market data by both U.S. and foreign air carriers, including carrier, origin and destination for all enplaned passengers…” (BTS.gov, 2010). According to the data, there were 82,265 passengers who flew from JFK to PAP compared to the 211,631 passengers who flew from MIA to PAP in 2008 (BTS.gov, 2010). The database used to calculate these figures counts the passengers only once as long as they stay on the same flight number/path, so they are not counted a second time if they have a stopover in any one city. So although it is not uncommon for New York City passengers to have stopover at MIA before continuing on to PAP, the numbers above for MIA only include those beginning their trip in Miami. Unless a lot of passengers arrive in Miami by some other mode of transportation, or stay there for a few days before flying to Haiti, these numbers are a representation of Miami/Florida residents travelling to Haiti. Therefore, nearly three times as many passengers flew to Haiti from Miami than from New York City. The proportions are almost identical for the number of passengers flying to JFK and MIA from PAP, despite
larger numbers coming into the U.S. than going out. According to the table, 86,624 passengers flew to JFK from PAP, while 223,363 passengers flew to MIA from PAP.

Unfortunately, the statistics do not include the ethnicities of the passengers, so there is no guarantee that those who are flying to and from Haiti are of Haitian descent. However, Haiti’s tourism has seen a steady decline in the past few decades and in fact, in 2008, it saw a steeper decline due to the food riots that occurred in that year (USA Today, 2008.) Most Haitians would likely be accustomed to these smaller incidences of civil unrest and this would not stop them from visiting family. Furthermore, with the decline in favorable press for Haiti’s destinations in general, the people who would most likely still want to go to the country are Haitians. Even if a good percentage of the passengers to Haiti were tourists not of Haitian descent or humanitarian workers, the remaining pool of passengers in Miami was larger than in New York City (assuming that the percentage of passengers of non-Haitian descent remained constant). Thus I would assume that there are more Haitians from Miami going to Haiti than from New York City.

Considering that the Haitian population is larger in New York City than it is in Miami, it is astounding how little the number of people flying to and from Haiti is as compared to Miami (nyc.gov, 2010). Of course there are probably good reasons for people in Florida flying more often (i.e. less travel time due to proximity to Haiti, cheaper airfare), however that is not what is of importance here. The people of Miami have much more contact with Haiti than people in New York City, which allows them to remain culturally current. There is a stronger want or need to be around people of your ethnic background, because you are so connected to Haiti and its way of life. This will compel people to come together for the betterment of the local Haitian community, because they
are so invested in it. Whereas in New York City, there is not such a strong urge to connect with other Haitians, because the Haitian culture is not as prevalent.

**Competition for Space**

New York City is a heavily populated city. There are over eight million residents over the span of 303 square miles (US Census Bureau, 2006). Some areas are denser than others (i.e. Brooklyn is much more populated than Staten Island), but comparatively speaking, the city is more crowded than most other U.S. cities and has a much larger urban area. Miami, although technically a city, is much smaller in scale and scope. It has a population of 2,500,625 people over the span of 1,946 square miles (US Census Bureau, 2009).

Examining a city’s transit system is one way to determine how urban it is or is not. Cities that are more urban require a more extensive transportation system than those that lean more towards the suburban. According to the Miami-Dade County Transit (MDT), there are three major modes of public transportation in that city: Metrorail, Metrobus, and Metromover (miamidade.gov/transit, 2010). The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in New York City has a multitude of transit systems, but for the easiest comparison, I will use MDT’s Metrobus and Metrorail and MTA’s Subway and Bus systems.

According to the MDT, the Metrobus system has a fleet of 893 buses, over 90 routes, and an annual ridership (2007) of 83,458,376 (miamidade.gov/transit, 2010). The MTA on the other hand reports a fleet of 1,325 buses, 80 routes, and an average weekday
ridership of 398,272 (mta.info, 2010). Although there are more bus routes in Miami, the MTA buses have approximately 21% of Miami’s annual ridership in a single weekday.

MDT’s Metrorail has 22.6 miles of track, 22 stations and approximately 61,700 riders daily (miamidade.gov/transit, 2010). The MTA subway system has 229 miles of track, 468 stations and over 7.4 million riders daily (APTA, 2009). The MTA subway system has approximately 120 times the ridership of the Metrorail system.

Undoubtedly, Miami is a city. However, it is a much more suburban city that New York. The exponentially larger transportation system of New York City is a clear indicator of the differences in the type of cities these two are.

High prices are the best indicator of high demand for property (Hoover and Giarratani, 1999). Using this concept as a framework, properties in New York City are in very high demand, which means an increased competition for space. According to Trulia.com, the average market view listing price for New York City is $1,907,793 with an average price per square foot of $1,113 (2010). In Miami, the average market view listing price is $431,131 with a price per square foot of $281 (2010). Raymond Bonitto, an employee with the US Modification Corp., estimates that 10 acres of land in Northern Miami would cost about $5 million (2010). He says that 10 acres in Brooklyn or Queens (chosen because those are the two areas of New York City with the highest concentration of Haitians) would cost at least $15 million, “…but 10 acres in either of those areas is out of the question. Good luck finding that. That's almost like asking ‘How much is it to buy the city?’” (2010).

Competition for space is a key component in the influence of the Catholic Church. The Church was so influential in the development of the Haitian enclave in Miami
because it was able to donate 10 acres of land to establish the Notre Dame d’Haiti and the Pierre Toussaint Center. A large part of why they were able to do that and the Church in New York City could not, has to do with the suburban nature of Miami. Even if that kind of space was available in New York City, the church would have to have an inordinate amount of spending money in order to donate space of that magnitude to the Haitian community, and this is only compounded by the fact that they are overextended.

Ethnic groups that live in more suburban areas have a tendency to centralize their organizations, because they are in essence forced to find one place where everyone can easily get to in spite of usually inadequate public transportation systems. A centralized meeting place can also facilitate carpools, which is one way residents of the suburbs temper the lack of public transit. Fong, Chen, and Luk (2007) argued that the distribution of ethnic businesses is positively correlated to the number of people of the same ethnic group who have recently arrived with few economic resources, and that this relationship is stronger in the suburbs. They explained that the recently arrived immigrants are drawn together in the suburbs for fear that the low density housing may cause social and spatial isolation (Fong, Chen and Luk, 2007). Simultaneously, “…the dispersion of social and economic activities in suburban areas leads to relatively localized demand for services that encourage the clustering of ethnic businesses in these neighborhoods” (Fong, Chen, and Luk, 2007:121). For New York City Haitians, there may be a demand for Haitian businesses clustered in one area, but the competition for space does not permit it, whereas in Miami, this was not as big of a problem, because prices are much cheaper. Clustering their businesses has allowed the Haitian community in Miami to build an enclave.
Residents who live in neighborhoods that are more suburban care more about their surrounding community. The lower population density helps people to believe that they might actually be able to change or fix something in their community. People in the suburbs are likely to know who many of their neighbors are so they know more about what’s going on in the community and they are more invested in it. Miami has this advantage of smaller communities which makes the Haitian community more likely to be spurred to action and come together. In New York City, it is not likely for you to know everyone who lives in your building, let alone an entire block. There is not a strong sense of community and therefore people are less likely to take an active interest in their neighborhoods. Also, with the larger population density, it is much more difficult to get all of the people in the community organized under one cause.

Conclusion

The Haitian community in Miami is the most complete example of a Haitian enclave in the United States today. They are an economic enclave as defined by Portes, and they have the cultural cohesiveness necessary to sustain and advance their strength as an enclave. New York City does not have a Haitian enclave. Although there are concentrated pockets of Haitians in certain neighborhoods, this does not qualify them as an enclave. Despite their large population, they do not have the cultural ties and united community to build a distinct, thriving ethnic enclave as Miami has.

The assistance of the Catholic Church, the strong ties to the homeland, and the suburban-like landscape of Miami have all worked in the favor of the Haitian community
in Miami. The Haitian community in New York City, has been impeded by its weak ties to Haiti, the competitive urban geography, and the lack of substantial start-up funds from the Catholic Church.

**Further Questions and Discussion**

Haitians have recently been thrust into the national spotlight due to the devastating January 12, 2010 earthquake. As news of the quake quickly spread through Haitian communities in the United States, New York City and Miami were two locations that were constantly broadcast, because they are the two most prevalent and populous Haitian communities in the United States.

America has a longstanding history with Haiti, and will likely play a key role in its post-earthquake revival. Given the top spots bestowed upon Miami and New York City within the discussion of Haitian American communities, it would be important to understand how these two places operate and how they differ. If either of these communities winds up being a major factor in decision making for the future of Haiti, their differences might dictate what steps will be taken. For example, the two areas usually have polarizing views on politics within Haiti. Haitian enclave study could also have important implications for the immigration patterns of Haitians in the near future. Understanding the links between Haiti and these respective communities can point to where we might see an influx of Haitian immigrants.

If further research were to be done, one of the biggest contributions would be to have a much larger sample of interviewees, which would include Haitian residents in
Miami. I had limited resources and unexpected circumstances that prevented me from expanding the interview base the way I had intended. The research could also benefit from a randomized sample as opposed to a snowball effect method, because it could be that the information is biased due to the participants’ potential connections. It would be interesting to examine to what extent the class prejudices of the Haitians in New York City prevent them from joining a cultural union. The earlier wave to New York City brought in Haitians from the upper and upper-middle classes, while the later waves brought in people from lower classes and socioeconomic backgrounds. I believe these differences in class from Haiti have been carried over to New York City and still halt the movement for unity among Haitians there. Another avenue that should be explored is the first generation Haitian immigrants’ intended duration of stay upon arrival in the United States. Some of my research seemed to suggest that the immigrants who came to New York City in the first wave did not plan to stay in America long, so they did not feel it necessary to build an enclave here. On the contrary, when many of the Haitians came to Miami in the 1980’s, they did not want to return to Haiti, so they began to build a community here. If more interviews were to be done, this hypothesis could be substantiated.

A few questions can be raised as a result of this research. What does the future hold for the Haitian communities in New York City and Miami as a result of the earthquake in Haiti? Will New York City finally find the cultural ties they have been missing and progress towards a stronger Haitian enclave, or will they let the crescendo of
unity fall as time passes? It would be interesting to see if someone could track the progress of these two communities post-earthquake.


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