

# Pentecostalism and the Peasantry: Domestic and Spiritual Economies in Rural Nicaragua

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## Abstract

*With Pentecostalism frequently analysed as gaining traction in contexts of globalised individualisation and neoliberally-induced insecurity, scholars have paid less attention to the social purchase of the religion among the peasantry. This article draws on fieldwork in rural Nicaragua to argue that the distinctive relational form of campesinos – namely the rural household – should be central to the analysis of Pentecostal appeal. I argue that the Pentecostal demand to eliminate vicio (vice) – bound up with a dualistic conception of a world driven by either divine or malevolent power – speaks closely to an everyday project of domesticity which deals with the erratic forces associated with male and female bodies, and which revolves around problems of incorporation. Identifying male unreliability as vicio allows Pentecostal ritual, and the spiritual power afforded by faith, to address a domestic imperative focused upon containing inherently excessive vital force.*

## Keywords

Nicaragua; Pentecostalism; peasants; household, ethics.

‘It says in the bible that man’s brain is like a memory card’, Miguel told me. We stood and spoke on his veranda in the village of Gualiqueme in Nicaragua’s northern mountains, while his wife busied herself in the kitchen. And just like a memory card, he explained, a brain can be wiped. Satan can delete everything that was there, fill it with evil thoughts, and then that person’s mind is no longer their own. Miguel himself had once lived a life of *vicio* (vice), he recalled. He used to get drunk, and when drunk would get into fights. He used to throw stones onto the tin roofs of neighbours’ houses, late at night. But he had left that life behind. Soon enough the world would be destroyed by fire. Only those who have cut themselves off completely from *vicio* and evil, he explained—those who are not foul-mouthed (*mal hablado*), who do not go looking to swap their wife for another woman, who do not spend their money on liquor—will be able to enter heaven.

Compare this with another Gualiqueme account of the problem of *vicio*. Marcos, a fifteen-year-old youth, had recently moved into the household of his grandparents, away from his mother’s village. One morning Marcos was out gathering firewood, and Esperanza, his grandmother, noted his activity with pleasure, stating that back home he would have just lain in bed all day. The observation led her into a long tale of the struggle with *vicios* that had brought Marcos into her household; from hanging out with slackers (*vagos*), to taking drugs, and then stealing from his mother’s shop. He sold the family’s motorbike and wasted the money on *vicios*. They had to force him to come here, Esperanza said, because even if her own son knew about *vicios* too, he also knew how to work. And Marcos had to learn how to work.

Miguel’s depiction of *vicio* as an index of the Devil’s hold over an individual mind, and his putatively-achieved effort to separate himself entirely from sin in pursuit of salvation, casts *vicio*

primarily as a personal problem. Bound up with the narrative of his own redemptive transformation, his tale of *vicio* overcome weaves his *past* struggle into a millenarian drama of salvation and damnation. Esperanza's account of her grandson's difficulties, in contrast, situates the problem of *vicio* in relation to the *ongoing* workings of the *campesino* household, and the appropriate performance of male labour within it. She focuses on the ways interdependencies with male kin are threatened by *vicio*, and how this may undermine the ability of a household to retain and contain value. In this article, I address the question of how Pentecostal concerns with *vicio* in rural Nicaragua can be socially contextualised. I suggest that scholarly efforts to socially situate Pentecostalism's cosmological claims and ethical injunctions have predominantly focused on themes raised by Juan's perspective—in particular, on the ways an ethic of individual salvation and separation from sin might intersect with a neoliberal political economy—and have neglected to comparably develop the analytical implications of Esperanza's contrasting framing.

In what follows, after mapping the ideas and practices that surround the notion of *vicio* for rural Nicaraguans, I examine how the domestic has been neglected in scholarly efforts to contextualise Pentecostal ethics and cosmology in favour of strategies which aim to relate the religion to a neoliberal epoch. I then take a closer look at the way domesticity has featured in existing accounts of Pentecostals which do accord the household an analytical role, which has primarily been in studies concerned with gender. I suggest that a tendency in those analyses to focus on functional outcomes means that Pentecostal ideas about spiritual power become almost incidental to the religion's domestic implications. Subsequent ethnographic sections aim, through an extended case study, to generate an analytical vocabulary capable of surmounting that impasse. My argument will be that Pentecostalism's intense effort to forge a direct and immersive involvement with spiritual power gains a specific inflection among Nicaraguan *campesinos* due to the way it speaks to a set of assumptions regarding the imperatives of domestic sociality; and that moral concerns surrounding *vicio* need to be set in that context. Specifically, I will show how viable domesticity is viewed as contingent upon the containment and incorporation of erratic forces associated with male and female bodies. By allowing the volatility integral to this everyday management of forces to be framed as a product of *vicio*, and by providing a concrete set of ritual techniques for subordinating unruly human vitality to the divine potency of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism promises to resolve an abiding problem of everyday incorporation integral to *campesino* domesticity.

## Vicio

The concern to entirely eliminate *vicio* is pervasive in Evangelical<sup>1</sup> practice and discourse in Gualiqueme<sup>2</sup>, and the characteristic demand among classical Pentecostals for complete personal transformation is largely focused on this injunction. Translating approximately as 'vice' (but more on that below), the term refers to putatively sinful behaviours and outward signs of a non-Christian life; drinking alcohol, taking drugs, committing adultery, living in conjugal or sexual union without having married, swearing, wearing immodest or inappropriate clothing or make-up, dancing and participating in parties, or fighting and being violent (cf. Garrard-Burnett and Stoll 1993). I was initially surprised by the weight given to swearing (*malas palabras*) in this line-up of wrongdoing, which among men tended to be listed – along with giving up drink, drugs and womanising – as a defining aspect of the transformation effected by conversion upon their lives. These ideas about *vicio* were foundational to the way Evangelicals defined themselves, running through accounts of personal conversion, and suffusing daily gossip and conversation.

In addition to emphasising personal discipline and control, such behaviours and practices have strong spatial associations articulated in cosmological terms; they are activities that form, and define involvement with, 'the world' (*el mundo*) (Huff 2014; Meyer 2010:117-119; Smilde 1997). *El mundo* is partly constructed in opposition to the celestial destination Pentecostals aim to enter in the afterlife; an afterlife which millennial expectations construe as potentially coming, for everybody, at any moment (cf. Smith 2008 for a detailed account of premillennial eschatology among classical Pentecostals in Nicaragua). But it also takes on concrete spatial connotations in relation to village life in a manner that partially corresponds to the gendered house-street dichotomisation of space prevalent in rural Latin America (cf., e.g., Da Matta 1985; Greenberg 1989:207-208; Montoya 2003). *El mundo* represents the activity of the street or the sports field – where groups of men hang around in the evening hours after work or on Sundays, smoking or drinking if money allows, frequently descending into drunken brawls – as opposed to the life of the *templo*. It is the bars and brothels of the town, the men drinking bottles of *aguardiente* while riding the roof of the bus back to the village, the unrestrained drunkenness of Easter celebrations, the girls wearing tight jeans and make-up, the patron saint celebrations in the nearby town of Condega, thronging, Evangelicals told me, with thieves and homosexuals. Speaking of *el mundo* during services, a pastor's reference would often simply be to the world *out there*, beyond the physical building occupied by the congregation. Dividing local geographies into distinct sectors of the godly and the diabolic, these spatial binaries indexed ethically-marked practices, and informed decisions regarding everyday comportment and participation. On one occasion, for instance, an NGO organized an event in a local hotel, in which youths performed traditional Nicaraguan dances. I asked an Evangelical churchgoer whether he would be attending the event, and he laughed. Of course he wouldn't, he explained; there would be music and dancing, and those things are the world.

In 'accepting' Pentecostalism, everything constituting 'the world' must be renounced, and Evangelical practice and ritual is intended to achieve a complete separation from the *vicios* that fill and define it. In accordance with the way the world carries spatial and behavioural associations, separation from it in part requires avoidance of sinful places, and in part requires close adherence to a set of prescriptions for proper living.<sup>3</sup> But—the point will be crucial for the analysis which follows—critical in this striving for separation is the ritual effort of the Pentecostal practitioner to invoke and 'fill' themselves with the *power* of the Holy Spirit. The imperative is closely related to a stark binarism in thinking about power, agency and causality; actions and occurrences are viewed by Pentecostals as caused by, or working in the interest of, either God or Satan. Dividing the world into two, everything that does not belong to God, belongs to Satan (cf. Robbins 2004). Indeed, this totalising division into domains of God and Satan is crucial for understanding the apparent parity of sinfulness between swearing and other *vicios*, as noted above. Swearing is viewed as just as much a manifestation of the diabolic as violence or drunkenness.

*Vicios*, then, are destructive or malign behaviours, as a secular definition of 'vice' would imply. But they are also practices or forms of consumption viewed as participating in and manifesting a pervasive diabolic agency, such that the only coherent way of overwhelming and eliminating that agency is through becoming 'filled' with the opposing, salvific power of the Holy Spirit. The diabolic nature of *vicios* are emphasised in conversations among men in which past alcohol-fuelled spending sprees come to later be described as incomprehensible; the money appeared to spend itself, or as one Gualiqueme man put it, for some reason cash just doesn't 'stay in your pocket'. In coming to define their past lives as having been characterized by *vicio*, then, converts work to construct themselves as having been freed from the domain of the Devil by a thoroughgoing, strenuously-achieved corporeal identification with, and participation in, the power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, that the Holy Spirit *is* power is quite explicit in Pentecostal thought and worship; 'the Power of God' is a

popular hymn (*el poder de dios*, referring to Corinthians 1:24), the phrase has been used to name countless Pentecostal churches across Nicaragua, and everyday conversation among converts makes constant reference to this 'power'. The potency of the power that is the Holy Spirit is understood to be reflected in miraculous faith healing, in the trance-like intensity of euphoric worship, and in the thoroughgoing transformation of personal life elicited by conversion. The question I want to address is how this intense moral project of eliminating *vicio* might be understood in relation to the social context in which it plays out. Following the view of *vicio* articulated by Esperanza above in affording the dynamics of the *campesino* household a role in such an analysis, however, requires us to first examine a strong tendency to contextualise Pentecostal ethics in relation to an individualism putatively congruent with a neoliberal epoch.

## Pentecostalism, individualism and the peasant household

The relative lack of attention to domesticity as a point of reference for thinking about Pentecostal concerns is partly a consequence of the ways the religion has been seen to resonate with major sociological models grounded upon the concept of the individual. In their efforts to account for the staggering global expansion of Pentecostalism witnessed in recent decades, scholars have frequently emphasised correlations between the religion's dramatic growth and the tumultuous intrusions of neoliberal capitalism (Catto et al. 2013; Comaroff 2012; Hasu 2012), and scholars have consequently focused in particular upon prosperity gospel forms rendered especially characteristic of a neoliberal present to the extent that they mirror or reflect those socio-economic shifts. Bringing neoliberal capitalism and Pentecostalism into analytical conversation has generated problems of cause and effect, and the figure of Max Weber has loomed large in efforts to discern whether Pentecostalism constitutes a new 'Protestant ethic' for a neoliberal age (Berger 2010; Bialecki, Haynes and Robbins 2008; Freeman 2012; Martin 1995; Martin 1990:205-232; Meyer 2007; 2010:114-116); whether the religion might provide techniques for coping with the novel socio-economic disruptions globalising capitalism creates (Gifford 2004, 2005; Maxwell 2005; Pfeiffer, Gimbel-Sherr and Augusto 2007); or even whether it produces forms of economic subjectivity that directly facilitate the expansion of market society (Barker 2007; Brison 2016; García-Ruiz and Michel 2010; Maxwell 1998; Moreton 2007). If a single major theme was to be identified within this broad range of studies, it would be the idea that the growth of Pentecostal religiosity has to do with disruptive forms of individualism and individualisation; whether figured as disorienting shifts from communitarian tradition to individualised modernity (Annis 1987; Hefner 2013:6-7; Martin 2001; Robbins 2010:168-173), as the imperatives of a market economy weakening older social bonds, or as an individualised ethic of personal salvation displacing attention from structural causes of insecurity (Freston 2008).

Running alongside this common analytical framing, however, has been the observation that Pentecostalism can serve to reconfigure established forms of *relational* life, and can gain traction among adherents in diverse contexts by providing novel ways of grappling with longstanding social imperatives.<sup>4</sup> In one such line of argument, scholars have noted the significant implications Pentecostal conversion can have for domestic relations (Brusco 1995; Cucchiari 1990; Maggio 2016; Marshall 1993; Martin 2001), and have made the case that despite the apparently regressive gender ideology of the religion, women have been able to use 'Pentecostal religious discourse to rewrite the moral mandate on which sexual relations and family life rest' (Martin 2001:54). Arguing that the economic and ethical implications of Pentecostal conversion advance women's domestically-oriented interests – something of a 'paradox' (Martin 2001) given the strict and submissive gender

roles Pentecostalism assigns to women – Elizabeth Brusco (1995:3) has influentially suggested that ‘Colombian Pentecostalism can be seen as a form of female collective action’ insofar as it ‘elevates domesticity’ from its previously ‘devalued position’. Bernice Martin (2001:54), building on this analysis, suggests that ‘in an entirely literal sense, Pentecostal men have been “domesticated”, returned to the home’. Both scholars emphasise the extent to which male Pentecostal converts are enjoined to renounce activities which are thoroughly contrary to women’s domestically-oriented interests; domestic violence, drinking, and the dangerous life of the street (see also Flora 1975; Smilde 1997).

In the sections below, I take up the argument that attending to domesticity can provide critical insights into the implications of Pentecostal thought in rural Nicaragua, where classical forms of Pentecostalism have a strong presence. For such an approach to be ethnographically viable, however, the way Pentecostals themselves understand the point and purpose of their activities must remain analytically central. Anthropologists have repeatedly taken issue with a scholarly tendency to view Pentecostalism as best accounted for by underlying, hidden, or functional factors, failing in consequence to adequately engage with the ideas and explanations offered by Pentecostals themselves (cf. Robbins 2004). Ruth Marshall (2009:18), for example, warns that scholars have displayed a problematic tendency to position Pentecostal self-understandings as effectively epiphenomenal: ‘Whether religion is understood in terms of a troublesome identity politics or in terms of local attempts to interpret global forces, it is considered as a medium for a message that is about something else, something nonreligious’. This leads to a tendency to make the analytical assumption that ‘religious or supernatural signs signify a truth hidden from those who express and elaborate them’ (p.30). Marshall’s critique is directed towards efforts to analyse Pentecostalism as constituting an effort to grapple with the putative disorientations of globalisation, but precisely these difficulties trouble the texts cited above regarding domestic relations. Viewing Pentecostalism as a “women’s movement” [...] of the developing world’ (Martin 2001:56) risks positioning functional outcomes – such as the level of financial contribution men end up making to the household, or the prevalence of domestic abuse – as the key to the movement’s meaning for converts. In such a framing, Pentecostal commitment is viewed as *strategically* oriented towards domestic relations – or as Brusco (1995:136) puts it ‘an intensely pragmatic movement aimed at reforming those aspects of society that most affect [women’s] lives’ – but in such a way that adherents’ explicit concerns with spiritual power and salvation appear only tangentially related to these putatively underlying motivations. Men, aiming to save their own souls, happen to be made into better husbands.

Overcoming this difficulty, I suggest, requires an analysis of domesticity in terms that are congruent with the Pentecostal concerns that surround *vicio* as outlined above; namely (in the case of the classical Pentecostalism prevalent in Gualiqueme) with a religious ethic revolving around a dualistic conception of worldly causality, commitment to the salvific power of the Holy Spirit, and the embrace of intense efforts to attain radical transformation through complete separation from ‘the world’. Indeed, in a well-known review of anthropological discussions of Pentecostalism, Joel Robbins (2004:131-133) offers a concise analysis which makes an initial move in just this direction, when he argues that the ‘paradox’ observed in studies of Pentecostalism and domesticity, such as that of Brusco, is accounted for by Pentecostal ‘dualism’. The activities Pentecostals deem diabolic and are required to renounce in order to achieve salvation, Robbins observes, tend to be associated with arenas of social prestige designated as male prior to conversion; while the domestic domain, deemed female prior to conversion, comes to be promoted to a position of central importance for both male and female Pentecostals. That the striking dualism integral to Pentecostal cosmology might intersect with the binaries produced by prevailing gender ideologies is a useful point,

especially given the extent to which gendered ethics in rural Latin America tend to be mapped onto the spatially-dichotomised opposition between 'house' and 'street', as already indicated. But simply describing household priorities as broadly coded feminine in a pre-conversion social order remains a rather undeveloped account of domesticity as a lived social field.

To advance an ethnographic analysis of Pentecostalism and domesticity in a manner that avoids the impasse indicated by Marshall, we need to ask what kinds of problems the everyday project of the household produces to which a Pentecostal ethic might speak. What are the quotidian imperatives of the domestic in rural Nicaraguan social life? What everyday demands upon the bodies and practices of men and women does the household as a social and economic form carry with it? How do the exigencies of kinship and hospitality intersect in lived efforts to realise a viable household? And how does a Pentecostal ethic appear when seen in the light of those problems? Various overlapping traditions of scholarship have focused on the household as a distinctive economic and relational form. The domestic unit and its dynamics have been central points of contention in heated debates surrounding the role of the peasantry in processes of capitalist development, with Chayanov (1966) and Lenin's (1974) perspectives standing as critical poles in the discussion. Feminist scholars subsequently honed in on the household as a central component of patriarchal social reproduction in contexts of capitalist transition (Deere 1990; Dore 2000; Mallon 1986; Vaughan 2000; Yanagisako 1979), have examined the ways in which domestic ethics revolve around the conflictive hierarchies emerging from stark gender norms and the ideology of machismo (Brusco 1995; Lancaster 1992), and have critically examined the way women tend to be constructed as either idealised domestic figures associated with the 'house', or conversely as sexually loose women of the 'street' (Montoya 2003).

A distinct tradition aims to grapple with the household as a distinctive material and economic form closely bound up with particular ways of conceptualising the nature of economy (Gudeman 2012, 2016; Gudeman and Hann 2015; Gudeman and Rivera 1990; Mayer 2002; Wilk 1989, 1991), or as Hetherington (2011:103) puts it, '*campesino* economics'. Gudeman and Rivera's (2012) close interrogation of the way Colombian and Panamanian *campesinos* think about the household in relation to notions of 'force' and 'strength' is especially useful here. They explore how domestic sociality focuses upon controlling a 'current' of 'vital energy'; a flow of force ultimately deriving from God, but channelled through 'all the material acts of the economy—planting, tending animals, harvesting, cooking, consuming, and caring' (p.60). My suggestion is that following Gudeman and Rivera in attending to the integral role notions of force and vitality play in the household, when combined with the insights of studies focusing on gender, gives rise to a view of domesticity which is both ethnographically satisfactory in the Nicaraguan case, and capable of achieving the analytical task at hand. Domesticity in rural Nicaragua can be thought of as a project of containing erratic vital forces within a controlled domain, as we shall see below. As such, it is centrally concerned with the management of the porous boundary differentiating inside from outside, and with tempering and monitoring the gendered vitality which composes the household's constituent members and contributing parties. In what follows, I seek to draw upon and develop these insights in order to understand the way domesticity generates a lived social field in which questions of 'force', 'vital energy' and the management of the everyday powers that constitute the household are central. Doing so allows us to grasp how the Pentecostal promise to radically saturate life with the power of the Holy Spirit shows up as significant from a *campesino* perspective.<sup>5</sup>

## Evangelicals in Gualiqueme

The Pentecostal presence in Nicaragua dates back just over a century to the arrival of the first missionaries from the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Expansion since then has been consistent, with the mid-1960s through to 1990 seeing a ‘boom’ in numbers of Pentecostals in the country (Gooren 2003). Scholars describe a persistently increasing proportion of the Protestant population as belonging to Pentecostal denominations; certainly for my own informants the most notable religious classification was a distinction between Catholics and ‘Evangelicals’, and to be Evangelical always meant to be Pentecostal. Recent polling reports that on a national level 32.2% of Nicaraguans now describe themselves as Evangelical (SISMO 2016), and while this figure drops to around 22% in the Northern and Central regions of the country, this represents a sharp expansion of the Protestant population in recent decades, consistent with trends across Latin America and the global South.<sup>6</sup>



*Figure 1 • A congregant takes the microphone during an evening service in the Church of God of Prophecy templo. Singing on stage is a hard-earned ‘privilege’, as is praying prostrate at the front of the congregation (seen bottom left and right).*

These national figures accord with a sense among older residents of Gualiqueme that the possibility of being Evangelical has only really emerged during their lifetimes, largely in the years since Nicaragua’s Sandinista revolution. My older informants trace their own knowledge of Evangelical Christianity back to the arrival in the area of a pastor who established a group known as the Iglesia Fuente de Vida, a Pentecostal congregation that remains active in the neighbouring community of El Jocote. A few residents of Gualiqueme became involved with this group during the 1980s, in the years immediately following the creation of the village as a collectivized agricultural cooperative (see Cooper 2015 for a detailed history of the community). Pentecostal activity within the village itself began in earnest when a pastor affiliated with the Panamerican Christian Association of Nicaragua (*Asociación Cristiana Panamericana de Nicaragua*) began to travel to the village to preach, accompanied by a young fellow congregant named Rodolfo. Still resident in Gualiqueme, Rodolfo recalled that these early evangelising efforts initially met stiff resistance from cooperative leaders. Evangelical activity was simply forbidden, viewed through the intensely politicized lens of the time as counter-revolutionary (see Smith 2008, for an account of comparable dynamics at a national level during the 1980s).



With the easing of political tensions after the Contra war came to an end, however—and with the weakening and fragmentation of the cooperative and the return of Gualiqueme residents to household-based production as a neoliberal government took power (see Close 1999)—the pastor secured permission from the cooperative president to preach. When the pastor's duties took him elsewhere, Rodolfo took on responsibility to attend to the increasing number of Evangelical adherents in Gualiqueme. Soon enough he moved to the village and established his congregation, naming it the *Monte Sinai Iglesia de Dios*, and maintaining his affiliation with the *Asociación*. In the years since, various other groups have established themselves in Gualiqueme; in one case when members splintered off from Rodolfo's group and re-affiliated with an alternative Pentecostal denomination (the *Iglesia de Dios de la Profecía*), and in other cases due to evangelising efforts of incoming pastors who have succeeded in establishing modest followings among residents. The association of Evangelicals with anti-Sandinista politics is locally considered to be a thing of the past; and while Gualiqueme Evangelicals will programmatically state that their faith prevents participation in politics—by which they mean active involvement in FSLN rallies or party organisations—they also profess an underlying Sandinista political identity. This thoroughgoing and multi-stranded expansion and normalisation means that Evangelical activity now comprises a major aspect of everyday life in Gualiqueme, and every day as people return from the fields, the village fills with the sound of electronic piano and loudly amplified singing from services (*cultos*) held either in one of the small 'temples' (*templos*) (fig. 1), or in someone's private residence (fig. 2).



Figure 2. A service held in the residence of an Evangelical church member.

There were at the time of research two groups with established *templos* in Gualiqueme, and between which there was moderate competition for converts. Both groups can be classified as 'classical' Pentecostals (but see note 4), and they share the central emphasis upon *vicio*, while disagreeing theologically about the role of prophets, and of speaking in tongues. Each has an active congregation of approximately twenty-five people, many of whom attend *cultos* every evening of the week and Saturday, and all day on Sunday. Committed in theory to the giving the biblical tithe (*diezmo*) of ten percent of one's income to the church, most of the active groups aspire to sustain the pastor's position economically through contributions from congregants. This ideal was hard to live up to in an economically precarious rural community, however, and most of the pastors I knew needed to supplement their income either through subsistence farming, occasional day labour, or itinerant trade. In addition to the two larger and more established groups, a number of smaller congregations were active in the village, holding *cultos* in private residences under the leadership of

pastors who generally travel from the nearby town Condega. There were two such groups during the main period of my research, in one case with a membership comprising just a few members of one family, with the other group attracting a slightly larger congregation<sup>7</sup>. A very few Evangelical residents of the village—for reasons of personal preference or family affinity—also travel occasionally to attend other *cultos* held by different groups in neighbouring villages, rather than being a member of the nearer groups.

Services in the *templos* consist of a mixture of preaching and song, with members taking it in turn to exercise the ‘privilege’<sup>8</sup> of singing into the microphone, accompanied by live keyboard, often with the keyboard’s built-in drum machine keeping a beat, and with the congregation joining in with intensely enthusiastic clapping and singing. When the power supply is down—as it very frequently is—the loudly amplified music is replaced by acoustic guitar. Preaching is conducted primarily by the pastor, though leading members of the group who have earned the privilege take their turns to contribute to services, and occasionally lead events if the pastor is unable to attend. While Catholic services in the village are dominated by women, Evangelical congregations are fairly balanced in terms of gender—with male and female adherents seating themselves on opposite sides of the building<sup>9</sup>—and congregants almost always shared their faith with spouses. Within Gualiqueme households it was much more common for there to be differences in faith between generations, as we shall see further below, though younger children tended to follow their parents’ commitments. But it was also the case that involvement wasn’t always clear-cut. During services many young men hover around the entrance of the churches, listening to the music, enjoying the activity—there are very few other focal points of social activity in the village in the evenings—but having no desire to commit themselves to the disciplined restrictions of full participation and membership. And intense theological discussion, with close reference to Evangelical themes, was a common topic of everyday conversation among neighbours of different denominations, and with different degrees of religious commitment.

Indeed, concerns about *vicio* were hardly confined to Evangelicals, and spilled into the religious agendas of other groups. The Catholic church holds weekly bible-reading groups in Gualiqueme, guided by printed hand-outs distributed by the regional hierarchy. Conversations in these meetings frequently focused on ideas of sin, salvation, and *vicio*. Even local *Eclesiales de Base* meetings—putatively operating in the tradition of liberation theology—were frequently filled with reference to the prospect of damnation, along with associated concerns about *vicio*. But in order to understand the specifically Evangelical concern to redress problems of *vicio* by ‘filling’ the body with—and directly harnessing the power of—the Holy Spirit, as discussed above, I will proceed to explore the case of a single household in detail. I focus on the perspective of Esperanza, who we met at the beginning of this article. She is the senior female of her household, and an adherent of one of Gualiqueme’s itinerant pastors. I undertake an intensive case study of a single household in order to be able to adequately investigate the range of ways in which domestic imperatives took shape in everyday life; and because gaining insight into this intimate aspect of domestic relations depended upon close ethnographic familiarity with the household in question. Living as part of the household for much of the research period allowed me to combine attention to the everyday dynamics of hospitality with detailed familiarity with relations among kin. By exploring Esperanza’s account of her own conversion, along with the ways in which notions of *vicio* spoke to her efforts to recruit the capacities of various men to her domestic projects, we shall see how Pentecostal promise can take shape in the context of efforts to manage—among kin and neighbours—the volatile vitalities integral to domestic viability. Implicit here is the contention that a close exploration of Esperanza’s case—rather than providing a representative or typical example of a putatively generic rural household—can be conceptually productive. The exercise serves to generate an analytical vocabulary by which

domesticity and Pentecostalism can be treated as projects operating on an equivalent plane of concern, in accordance with the analytical agenda outlined in preceding sections.<sup>10</sup>

## Esperanza and Wilber

Esperanza considered herself to be a devoted Evangelical. For a time while I was part of her household, Rodolfo, the pastor of the Iglesia de Dios Monte Sinai group, was paying frequent visits. But if he hoped he might win her over to his congregation, he was eventually disappointed. As Esperanza saw it, her unrelenting domestic duties didn't really permit her to participate in the demanding schedules of the larger local groups. However, she keenly cultivated a relationship with a pastor who regularly travelled from town and was willing to hold services in her house. The pastor combined his religious vocation with a career as a door-to-door medicine salesman, and trips to the village allowed him to engage in both activities. But he set himself apart from the leaders of the village groups by being explicitly relaxed about tithing; he criticized other groups for their putatively rigorous demands of 10 per cent, and insisted that he was content with whatever his congregants could afford; nothing, if nothing was available. Esperanza appreciated this; he was *tranquilo*, she said; a relaxed guy. Every week or so, the pastor would hold a service in Esperanza's house, on a Sunday, usually with just a few other members of her family in attendance. And very occasionally she would manage to arrange matters at home in order to be able to attend services held by the pastor in a neighbouring village.

Though far from a model convert in the eyes of some of the village's more disciplined Evangelicals – her speech, for example, was occasionally laced with expletives – Esperanza was evidently deeply committed to the ideals embodied by explicit Evangelical prescriptions. She listened only to Evangelical radio stations, finding beauty in the sermons and commenting frequently about how lovely (*bonito*) they were. She frequently lamented her own failures to arrange to attend services more often; tried to be never without a bottle of *aceite ungido*, blessed oil consecrated and sold by her pastor; frequently undertook fasts for a range of purposes; and made continual reference to key Evangelical themes in daily conversation, most often that of *vicio*.

Indeed, she described her initial conversion as having been centrally prompted by problems caused by *vicio*. Back when she'd been a Catholic, her eldest son Jose Luis had been a real drinker, she recalled. One day, he got himself into a drunken fight with another guy. Jose Luis had been furious – he went and got a machete, and cut the man, badly. He woke Esperanza up as he was fleeing in the night, asking her to lend him 500 *córdobas* because he needed to run from the police. Getting out of prison would be far too expensive, he said, and so Esperanza dipped into the reserves of the small shop (*pulerpía*) she was running at the time. Jose Luis took the money, and vanished. That was not the end of the financial loss; Esperanza took another 500 *córdobas* from her shop in order to pay the *curada* – the medical expenses – of the injured man, and to hire a lawyer to defend her son if necessary. Soon enough, her business collapsed, she recalled. All Esperanza wanted in the weeks that followed, though, was to know where Jose Luis was, and her first port of call was to ask some fellow Catholics to do a prayer for her, to try and get him back. She hosted a prayer session in her home, buying sweet breads and preparing coffee to give to her visitors. The group came and performed the ceremony, but they left in a rush, without having accepted her bread or coffee. The prayer was never going to work like that, Esperanza knew.

It was then that somebody recommended to her that she try her luck with the Evangelicals. She went along to a *culto* held by Rodolfo, initially just to listen. But soon she accepted.<sup>11</sup> She told me this story twice; on one recounting, she recalled the pastor recommending that she undertake a

fast. She fasted and fasted, she said, and soon enough, her son came home. In the other retelling, she described how the pastor arranged a series of prayer sessions in her house, which prompted Jose Luis' return. Either way, it worked; in the middle of the night, Jose Luis snuck back in, and after living there in hiding for a few weeks, the pastor eventually persuaded him to return to open village life as an Evangelical. They had to trust in God that Jose Luis would be spared prison, the pastor said. Jose Luis revealed himself, and – Esperanza recalled – everything was ok. He's even good friends with the man he injured these days, Esperanza noted. 'That's why I say that we celebrate a God of power' – she told me – 'a living God, not a dead God' (*un dios de poder, un dios vivo no un dios muerto*).

Esperanza's account of conversion, then, is centred upon the efficacy of Evangelical prayer and faith as compared to the Catholic alternative, and upon the conviction that the power of God worked to resolve key problems caused by *vicio*. Evangelical faith and the power of the Holy Spirit it recruits is presented as capable of eliciting concrete effects; specific, beneficial changes. In emphasising this pragmatic benefit of conversion, Esperanza's narrative mirrors themes of the more frequent story of having been persuaded to convert on the basis of being healed from a serious illness, or experiencing the recovery of a relative (cf. Brusco 1995:117). But this positioning of Evangelical faith and practice as a potential antidote to *vicio's* damage reflected a concern that was persistently central in her conversation. And it was in relation to her unmarried younger son, Wilber, that these concerns found most frequent expression.

Wilber was still part of his parents' household at the time of research; at the age of 27 when I first met him. Wilber's father Erwin was approaching seventy years of age, and although men never expect to retire in rural Nicaragua, his ability to work the fields was starting to reflect his age. Wilber's labour contributions, complementing the efforts of his father, *should* – Esperanza noted – have been sufficient to provide the family with maize and beans for subsistence, along with a modest yearly harvest of coffee. But Esperanza was always anxious about the danger of Wilber, who was not an Evangelical at the time, falling prey to the temptations of *vicio*, and by no means considered his contributions reliable, or even likely.

To take one example of the way she illustrated her concerns about *vicio*, Esperanza spoke about an occasion several years past, when Wilber had taken out a loan from a microcredit bank, Banco Procredit, in order to try his luck at growing onions. He had been working with a friend, they had rented a field and had planted substantial quantities of the crop, investing considerably in expensive fertilizer and insecticides, all bought on credit. Initially it had appeared as if the venture was going to pay off, with the price of onions remaining tantalisingly high as the crop was coming to maturity. But then, the price began to plummet. Esperanza described how day after day, the price had gone down, and down. At last, after selling his harvest, Wilber was left with a considerable debt of around 10,000 *córdobas*.<sup>12</sup> Esperanza recalled how he said he planned to go to Costa Rica to work in order to earn enough to pay off the debt. He arranged with the bank for a two-year extension of his credit and undertook the trip to Costa Rica – making his way across the border without documents (*mojado*), and soon finding work on a salad farm. As Esperanza recounted the events, he returned in time and with enough money to pay off his renegotiated loan, which by that time had doubled, with accumulated interest, to 20,000 *córdobas*. One day he said he was heading to town to pay the loan, but the next they heard of it, Banco Procredit agents were coming round asking for Erwin, saying that Wilber still owed the money, and that as his father Erwin was legally liable. 'Look!', Esperanza exclaimed, 'he just went to town and drunk all the money away in one day in the bars, him and that load of slackers (*montón de vagos*) he hangs around with'.

With the bank pursuing them for Wilber's unpaid loan, she and Erwin – helped by a contribution from their eldest daughter, who has lived and worked in Costa Rica for many years – managed to get 1000 *córdobas* together in order to pay a first instalment on the loan. They gave Wilber the money to pay into the bank, and – Esperanza recounted – what do you think he did? He vanished to Costa Rica again, leaving us with the debt! Before long, debt collectors working for the microcredit agency turned up, and after they had been delayed a few times they began to threaten to summon the police. With no option but to pay the loan however they could, Esperanza and Erwin were forced to sell an area of land, part of Esperanza's entitlement within Gualiqueme's cooperative. And Wilber, as she told it, stayed off in Costa Rica working on the salad farm for the next few years. More or less everything he earned while he was there he wasted on *vicios*, she lamented; the family saw not one *córdoba* of it.

The ultimate cause of the whole affair was clear to Esperanza: Wilber's weakness in the face of the temptations of *vicios*, the overwhelming, uncontrollable desire to drink money away rather than direct it sensibly to productive ends. Though she didn't hesitate to blame her son's character and attitude for his behaviour, she also framed his personal faults as an unambiguous manifestation of diabolic agency, and—with subtly different emphasis—presented his failings as a consequence of failure to resist the temptations placed in his path by the devil. Whichever of these ways of attributing responsibility was emphasised, though, in lamenting the dangers of *vicio* Esperanza produced a keen sense of the productive capacity of her son as radically unstable, persistently liable to disorientation. Focussing upon the tragedy of money lost, money that should have been directed towards the household, Esperanza's concerns about *vicio* point clearly towards the fact that her son's incorporation in the household project couldn't be taken for granted. Indeed, this state of thoroughly tenuous incorporation could perhaps be viewed as the defining quality of domesticity for Esperanza. For her son was by no means the only source looked to by Esperanza for contributions towards the projects of the household. And the profound lack of reliability produced by the threat of *vicio* among her sons was only the most dramatic form of uncertainty her domestic endeavours faced.

## Flows and Boundaries: The Tenuous Incorporation of Household Contributions

In order to further develop this point, it is necessary to further interrogate this quality of tentative incorporation, which, I would argue, should be seen as integral to the rural Nicaraguan household. The criteria raised by Esperanza's account of Wilber's *vicios* – distinctions between inside and outside the domain of the household, between productive contributions and destructive drains upon household prosperity – stand as vital coordinates guiding an everyday effort to sustain the vitality of the household; by working upon its boundaries, and by working upon the flows in relation to which those boundaries are defined. Far from a standing as a fixed institution constituted by stable obligations and clearly-defined relations, much of the life of the household emerged out of a continual flow of informal visitors, several of whom stood, for Esperanza, as key sources of potential domestic contribution. Through the judicious deployment of gifts and the sharing of food, Esperanza made efforts to recruit the capacities of neighbours and visitors, and to bind them into her domestic endeavours. But the openness of the household to guests was by no means viewed as an unambiguous benefit. The same people whose contributions were courted were also a focus of anxiety, and the reciprocities which bound visitors into the household's concerns were looked on as much as a drain upon domestic resources as a boon.

Esperanza's reliance upon her capacity to bind others into her household projects was particularly evident in the construction of the buildings and physical space which underpinned domestic life. She was continually making efforts to undertake building alterations to her property; to construct new adobe walls and buildings, or to alter or improve the existing structures, to mend roofs which had begun to leak, to dig trenches to try and control the flow of water during the rains, to put up, repair and improve fences against the incursions of wandering animals, to keep the overgrowth under control in the yards surrounding the house.<sup>13</sup> The crucial factor in being able to realize these ambitions was the ability to secure male contributions of labour and assistance. Wilber was generally unwilling to help with these minor tasks, and though Esperanza's husband may have been more willing, he was old, not to mention impeded in his efforts by an injury sustained during the war. Critical, then, was the effort to recruit neighbours with whom she had established ties of friendship and interdependence. Money was a crucial factor in such transactions, but money alone was hardly sufficient, given that Esperanza was only able to offer payments that were low even by local standards. Transactions were frequently undertaken using beans, maize or coffee, or by giving chickens as payment, and often previously-purchased material goods such as plastic bowls would be traded in at the value of the price originally paid for them. Traces of these material transactions were continually present in Esperanza's description of the physical surroundings of the house; she recalled the transmuted form of this 'harvest' (*cosecha*) of chickens or that now-sold cooking pot in the blocks of adobe, sheets of zinc or bags of concrete she had exchanged for them.

Allowing and encouraging the flows of visitors and the acts of hospitality which enabled this continual effort of recruitment was not uncontroversial within Esperanza's household. On one occasion a visitor was told, amid a stream of apologies, that there was coffee available, but no sugar. When the guest left, Esperanza explained to me that even though she did in fact have a little sugar kept aside, she didn't offer it because Wilber would frequently tell her off for her generosity. And Wilber would also occasionally scold his mother for what he viewed as excessive openness by criticising a lack of sufficiently formal etiquette when receiving visitors. Guests should not be received in the kitchen, he argued, they should be met in the sitting room. The kitchen, it should be noted, is where food is eaten, and any visitor who sees that food is available cannot honourably be denied a portion (cf. Lancaster 1992:Chapter 4). Wilber also argued that the front door of the house should be kept closed. All the houses near to theirs in the village keep the doors closed, he stated, and they should too. Esperanza scoffed at the idea, however: she made no mention of the impracticality of having to put kitchen work aside every time a visitor arrived, but instead insisted that if people do keep their doors closed its because they are Indians (*indios*) – and she did not mean this kindly. She would be ashamed to do such a thing, she said.

As the above makes clear, Wilber wanted the resources of the household to remain firmly within the household's bounds. But Esperanza was clearly attuned to a necessity that the boundary of the household remain porous; without allowing resources to slip out in the form of hospitable gifts, the necessary capacities and powers of labour required to sustain domesticity in the first place would not be sufficiently brought within the household domain. It is by focusing on this work of managing household boundaries and the forces that fall within them, I suggest, that an adequate description of domesticity for our purposes here can be developed. We have seen how, for Esperanza, realising the work of the household involves managing the capacities of men. It involves the continual work of regulating and recruiting the potency and force found within male bodies; bringing these within the concerns and priorities of the domestic project; attempting to temper their excesses, and contain them within a productive, bounded domain. If Gudeman (2012; 2016:24-51) documents the way *campesinos* in Colombia and Panama view 'force' (*fuera*) as originating with God, and requiring the struggle of agricultural work to properly flow, Esperanza's project highlights

the way the household in turn depends upon a struggle to keep those vital forces contained within the domestic sphere.

Through the ceaseless work of binding a range of associates and assistants into domestic projects through offerings of coffee and food, then, it becomes clear that domesticity depends upon the appropriate management of a porous boundary. Contributions upon which the household depends require a degree of openness, and yet openness brings vulnerability, and the risk of dissipation. Wilber's desire to simply shut the doors and prevent the entry of guests was based on coherent considerations; the coffee, sugar and food which sustain relations of hospitality are valuable resources. But the relations they enable were integral to Esperanza's work of incorporation and containment, her effort to concentrate within the domestic sphere the powers required for advance. As well as requiring that the labour of household members remain oriented to household priorities, then, the project of domesticity is also a project of fostering sufficient incorporation of outside elements in order for the household to prosper, without allowing the strength concentrated within the household to dissipate and disperse.<sup>14</sup>

This description – of domesticity as a project of containing forces within a controlled domain – allows us to grapple with the implications of coming to frame male misbehaviour with the Pentecostal discourse of *vicio*. In her narratives of the lamentable *vicio* of her sons, Esperanza emphasised a sense of vital male capacities as violently volatile forces, whose orientation within the domestic sphere are always liable to destructive disorientation. The generative potential specific to the bodies of men, in these stories, is depicted as critical to the viability of domesticity, but at the same time as a volatile potency inherently given to dangerous excess. Indeed, this sense of male bodies as inherently excessive can be seen as a gendered complement of a view of female sexuality widespread in rural Nicaragua and examined thoroughly in Montoya's work (2002, 2003, 2012); a view which revolves around a stark opposition between the controlled, life-giving nurturance of the 'good', house-bound wife, and the wildly uncontrolled sexuality of the 'woman of the street' (2003:68). If rigid moral management of women's sexuality can be viewed as one means of attempting to rein in the volatile bodily force integral to domesticity, the language of *vicio* provides an equivalent handle upon male misbehaviour. And in casting male unreliability as *vicio*, and designating the inherent volatility of male *fuera* as pertaining to Satan, the whole set of Pentecostal techniques for combatting the diabolic is opened up for the project of containment integral to domesticity. The project of household incorporation gains recourse to the everyday techniques of Pentecostal ritual and rigorous disciplines demanded of adherents described above, and the prospect of men being filled with the Holy Spirit – a power more potent than the volatile excess of *vicio* – promises to render feasible the everyday work of recruitment domesticity demands.

It is partly in the light, then, of this pragmatics of domesticity – in view of the mechanics involved in the delicate management of forces bound up with the household – that the Pentecostal project of eliminating *vicio* gains traction. The Pentecostal convert, from this perspective, shows up as having been contained within the concerns of the household domain in a manner guaranteed by the strength of the Holy Spirit. Through the everyday techniques of prayer, biblical reference, discipline, dress, hygiene, and commitment by which Pentecostals mark themselves out as among the saved, converts work to 'fill' themselves with a spiritual power which far outweighs the body's erratic *fuera*. If the forms of mutuality integral to domestic viability were for Esperanza a tentative and dyadic reciprocity between independent parties that required constant work, the prospect of subsuming errant bodies within the power of the Holy Spirit introduces an encompassing element capable of underwriting the exchange. The promise that conversion might foster a thoroughgoing stabilisation of the gendered capacities constitutive of domesticity, then, operates in harmony with a

household ideal precisely because the domestic in rural Nicaragua is a domain of intense, powerful forces that humans will always struggle to control. And it is for this reason that Esperanza longed for her son Wilber to accept the Evangelical faith. He finally had, in fact, by the time I re-visited Gualiqueme at the end of 2014.

## Conclusion

In their efforts to account for Pentecostal appeal, scholars have persistently drawn parallels and comparisons between features of Pentecostalism and features of the political-economic contexts within which religious developments have played out. Given the predominance of neoliberal forms of governance in recent decades in the global regions where Pentecostalism is most dramatically expanding, the category of the 'individual', or 'individualism' has provided a frequent point of analytical contact, prosperity forms of Pentecostalism have been a particular focus of debate, and likewise, scholars have honed in on forms of social disorientation and uncertainty taken to characterise a neoliberal order (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). *Campesino* modes of sociality—sometimes depicted as bound up with 'traditional' social forms whose erosion leads to precisely the kind of individualising uncertainty taken to be bound up with globalising capitalism—have for this reason been less prominent in efforts to socially situate Pentecostal cosmology and ethics. In this article, rather than situating Pentecostal thought and practice with reference to my own characterisation of an encompassing political-economic period, I have explored the ways in which ideas about spiritual 'power' prevalent among Nicaraguan Evangelicals resonate with notions of 'force' and ideas about the nature of male and female bodies integral to the social life of the rural household, and forms of social uncertainty that emerge immanently within the household. Ideas about the flow of generative force, the intensity and volatility of vitality, and about the capacity of bodies to contain and transmit power are integral to either field of practice. By drawing on an analytical vocabulary which allows the two fields to be considered as comparable in this way—a language of potentially-excessive force and its channelling and containment—I have argued that it becomes possible to appreciate how Evangelical practice allows the incorporeal power of the Holy Spirit to be bound into the persistent, ever-tentative project of incorporation integral to domesticity. It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess the extent to which domestic sociality in particular may be comparably pertinent in the innumerable and varied contexts in which scholars have analysed different forms of Pentecostalism as entangled with neoliberal economies. But the questions guiding the approach to social contextualisation undertaken above could certainly be tested in such contexts: How do Pentecostalism's explicit claims about spiritual power intersect with local understandings of the forces which structure social and economic life? What kind of analytical vocabulary can allow connections between Pentecostal cosmology and economic life to be drawn without reducing one domain to the other?

Finally, it would also be profitable to further develop such an analysis through a comparison with Catholicism's contrasting set of claims regarding the relations between bodies, spiritual power and sin; and an emerging anthropological exploration of Catholicism and the body is certainly suggestive of key points of contrast (Mayblin 2017; Mitchell 2017). If Catholicism, as Mayblin suggests, views sin and grace as 'material properties that literally enter and embed themselves in human bodies' (2017:147), in rural Nicaragua these premises play out within a dispersed spiritual geography which foregrounds problems of mediation and contact with a distant divine. Catholic pilgrimage—enacted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of each month in Gualiqueme when the local bus company takes one of its two vehicles out of service to provide a special trip to the Virgin of Cacaúlí—rests upon the contention that the possibility of accessing grace is concentrated in and restricted to special locations where divine actors have made prior contact with the human world. 'Images' of saints, kept locked in local churches and periodically removed for processions, also produce a sense that



spiritual power rests fixed within sacred objects or locations which exhibit some kind of continuity or contact with divinity. Might this distributed topography of sacred concentrations of spiritual power offer its own prospects of intervention in the household's imperatives of containment as described above? Perhaps; but on first glance it would seem that folk Catholicism's dispersed geography of spiritual power, and its focus upon questions of how to mediate access to distant divinities, fails to speak nearly as directly to the specific bodily problematics produced by the *campesino* household. Pentecostalism's project of ridding the world of vice by 'filling' bodies, immanently and directly, with the power of the Holy Spirit, by contrast, resonates powerfully with the domestic demand to control, direct and contain inherently excessive bodily force.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I follow local usage by using the term 'Evangelical' to refer to Pentecostal adherents. See Brusco (1995:19-22) for a useful discussion of the terminological features of Evangelical Christianity in Latin America.

<sup>2</sup> This article is based upon ethnographic fieldwork primarily conducted in Gualiqueme and neighbouring villages between November 2011–July 2012, and January 2013–July 2013. A return visit was made in November–December 2015. Names of some places, people and organisations have been changed.

<sup>3</sup> This concern with separation resonates with a set of themes with a long pedigree in the anthropology of religion, in particular studies of asceticism and world-renunciation in a broad range of geographical contexts (key examples include Dumont 1999: Appendix B; Laidlaw 1995; Tambiah 1976). While analysing Pentecostal separation in relation to this literature would be valuable, I'm not able to undertake that exercise here.

<sup>4</sup> To a limited degree the distinction I observe here maps onto a difference between studies which focus on more recently-emerging strains of prosperity gospel Pentecostalism, and those examining contexts where 'classical' forms of Pentecostalism predominate. While an extended discussion of typology and classification is not possible within the space of this article (see Anderson 2010), it should be noted that classical Pentecostal groups, Charismatic churches and neo-Pentecostals have often been viewed as comprising three distinct historical phases within a broad Pentecostal-Charismatic movement over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

(McClymond 2014). Scholars have questioned the extent to which this periodisation (largely drawn from US experience) has global relevance (McClymond 2014:32), and have noted that given the fluidity of Pentecostal organisation and the mutual influence between groups, particular churches may be difficult to classify in reference to that kind of clear typology (Anderson 2010; Robeck Jr and Yong 2014:2). In the case of the groups discussed here, an intense focus on personal morality and other-worldly salvation are concerns typical of ‘classical’ Pentecostalism. Their emphasis of tithing, however, is a characteristic often discussed as typical of neo-Pentecostal groups. And while the influence of an explicit prosperity gospel was relatively weak, it was also the case that it was locally assumed that this-worldly material wellbeing (albeit of a relatively modest form) was a correlate of Evangelical adherence. One Catholic man I knew, for example, spoke about the prospect of temporarily converting to ensure he had money saved after the harvest, and it was common to interpret neighbours’ material good fortune to be a product of disciplined tithing.

<sup>5</sup> I do not intend to suggest that a focus on domesticity provides insights specific to rural sociality in Nicaragua, or to conversely imply that an analysis deploying the ‘individual’ or ‘individualism’ as a central category would be more appropriate for urban social life. Many urban Nicaraguans retain strong connections to the countryside, and movement between country and city is constant. Indeed, anthropologists of urban Nicaragua have found it appropriate to draw upon peasant studies scholarship in analysing inter-household relations, arguing that *campesino* economic culture remains relevant for poor Managuans (Lancaster 1992), and have documented intra-household fissures and tensions comparable in some ways to those explored here (Rodgers 2007).

<sup>6</sup> The national figures include substantial numbers of Moravians predominantly based in the Atlantic Coast. The poll in question does not provide data on particular denominations within the broad category of ‘Evangelical’. Based on figures reported in existing literature, however (e.g., in Gooren 2003), it can be expected that a majority of those describing themselves as Evangelical within Pacific Nicaragua belong to Pentecostal groups. The SISMO poll underlines the dramatic shift in the religious composition of the country witnessed in recent decades, finding that 47% of the population nationally now describe themselves as Catholic. This stands as a precipitous decline from 90% in 1991, while 4% of the population nationally were reported as being Evangelical in that year.

<sup>7</sup> The latter group had succeeded in purchasing a dedicated *templo* building by the time of a return visit in 2014, while other such congregations turn out to be transient.

<sup>8</sup> Members of each of the groups gradually acquire increasing levels of ‘privilege’ (*privilegio*) as they prove their disciplined commitment, gradually working their way up through a series of hierarchically-ordered statuses, with demotion down the ranks being a potential repercussion of slipping into *vicio*. Leading members of the group are responsible for policing this system and for enforcing penalties, and on various occasions over the course of this research individual members of different groups were punished for ethical infractions by having privileges removed. For example, a member known to have committed adultery or drunk alcohol might be stripped of their privileges and thus lose their right to sing or give readings in services for a specified number of weeks. Once the specified time had expired, and assuming no further infractions had been committed, privileges would be reinstated.

<sup>9</sup> Spontaneous segregation of seating by gender is also commonly observed by Gualiqueme residents when attending meetings held by NGOs, cooperatives and other local organisations, and is not an exclusively Evangelical practice.

<sup>10</sup> Despite the impossibility of treating an intensive case study as statistically representative, the literature suggests that many of the gendered and intergenerational dynamics revealed by the case are widespread among poor rural and urban households in Nicaragua. A basic concern among women with male unreliability is a persistent theme in ethnographic texts (Lancaster 1992:xii-xv; Montoya 2012:131), while economic analyses of migrants’ household remittances (Naufal 2008), along with appraisals of financial contributions to household coffers (Chant 2003:25), provide a quantitative appraisal of men’s comparative unreliability in relation to the domestic economy. In addition, a prevalence of female-headed households (Montoya and Teixeira 2017) renders Esperanza’s efforts to capture extra-household male labour a common imperative, reflected in the observation that female-headed households are considerably more likely to contain extended family members (Bradshaw 2002:16 cited in Chant 2003:20).

<sup>11</sup> The category of ‘listener’ (*oyente*) is a well-defined status within local Pentecostal groups, and refers to those who attend *cultos* without yet having ‘accepted’ God.

<sup>12</sup> Just over 450 US dollars at the time of research.

<sup>13</sup> ‘House’ and ‘household’ are of course distinct concepts, but anthropologists have long argued that analysing local engagements with the physical and material elements of the former is crucial to understand the dynamics and qualities of the latter (cf. Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995).

<sup>14</sup> The extent to which outside contributions need to be incorporated, of course, depends on the internal composition of a particular household; and Esperanza's household, with one elderly man and one adult son of marriageable age, could be considered to be at a stage in the generational cycle where this was particularly critical. The ways in which generational dynamics shift over the life-cycle of households, and how this affects the relative availability of labour within a given household unit, has been a key theme in economic analyses of peasantries since Chayanov's famous debate with Lenin regarding the nature of inequality between households in the Russian countryside. Where Lenin saw incipient class stratification, Chayanov saw differences in the 'dependency ratio' within a given household. A household with a greater proportion of dependent members as compared to productive workers would inevitably be less effective as an economic unit than a household with a low proportion of dependent members; and the balance of this dependency ratio, Chayanov argued, was something that shifted cyclically as young household members aged and established independent households of their own.

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