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Cuban communities in the United States : migration waves, settlement patterns and socioeconomic diversity

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Cuba is one of the top migrant-sending countries to the United States. In 1996, the island represented the seventh source of all immigrants to that country (26 466 persons). Moreover, Cuba was the fourth country of origin of the foreign-born population of the United States in 1990. In that year, the U.S. Census Bureau found 1 053 197 persons of Cuban ancestry, the second largest group of Hispanics after Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. In 1997, the Current Population Survey estimated that 1 258 000 Cubans were living in the United States¹. The latter number represents about 11 percent of the island's population. This massive, recent, and continuing flow of people has drawn much attention from the mass media, scholarly researchers, and policy-makers, particularly in the context of Cold War tensions between Cuba and the United States.

The Cuban exodus since 1959 can be divided into four main stages : the Golden Exile (1959-1962), the Freedom Flights (1965-

1. U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, electronic document, <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/stats/299.html>, 1997 ; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, *Census of the Population of the United States*, electronic document, <http://www.venus.census.gov.cdrom/lookup>, 1998 ; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997, *Current Population Survey*, electronic document, <http://www.census.gov.population/www/socdemo/hispanic/cps97>, 1998.

1973), the Mariel boat lift (1980), and the *balseiro* crisis (1994) (see Figure 1). In addition, one may trace the beginnings of large-scale Cuban emigration in the last third of the nineteenth century (1868-1900) and its continuation during the first half of the twentieth (1900-1958). This periodization highlights the shifting socioeconomic composition of the migrants, the impact of various junctures in the relations between the United States and Cuba, and the development of the Cuban Revolution itself. The Cuban-American population is extremely diverse in both class background and current status, partly as a result of the various phases of the Cuban diaspora. For instance, upper- and middle-class refugees predominated in the first two waves of the post-revolutionary exodus (1959-1962 and 1965-1973), while lower-class immigrants predominated in the latter two waves (1980 and 1994). Lisandro Pérez has aptly compared the Cuban diaspora to the peeling of an onion, in which successive layers of migrants draw increasingly on the core of the Cuban population².

2. See Pérez Lisandro, « Cubans in the United States », *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487, 1986, pp. 126-137.

Figure 1
Stages in Cuban migration to the United States since the Cuban Revolution

Phase	Dates	Landmark events	Estimated number of immigrants
Golden Exile	January 1959- October 1962	From the triumph of the Revolution to the Missile Crisis	250 000 (22,9 % of the total)
Suspension of regular migration	November 1962- November 1965	From the end of the Missile Crisis to the opening of Camarioca port	74 000 (6,8%)
Freedom Flights	December 1965- April 1973	From the closing of Camarioca to the end of the airbridge	300 000 (27,6%)
Arrivals through other countries	May 1973- March 1980	From the end of the airbridge to the opening of Mariel harbor	38 000 (3,5%)
Mariel exodus	April-September 1980	From the opening to the closing of Mariel	125 000 (11,5%)
Renewal of regular migration	October 1980- December 1991	From the end of Mariel to the reduction of visas	154 000 (14,2%)
Increase in undocumented migration	January 1992- July 1994	From the reduction of visas to the <i>balseo</i> crisis	51 000 (4,7%)
<i>Balseo</i> crisis	August- September 1994	From the lifting of Cuban restrictions to migrate to the U.S.-Cuban agreements	36 000 (3,3%)
Renewal of regular migration	October 1994- December 1996	From the U.S.-Cuban agreements to the present	60 000 (5,5%)

Another source of diversity within Cuban-American communities is geographic location. Before 1959, Cuban immigrants clustered in cigar-making centers like Ybor City and Key West in south Florida, and in New York City. Since 1959, Cubans in the United States have concentrated in four major types of settlements : (1) the Cuban ethnic enclave of Miami ; (2) the Cuban-American community of West New York-Union City, New Jersey ; (3) the middleman minority group in San Juan, Puerto Rico ; and (4) other communities scattered in New York, California, Illinois, and elsewhere. In addition, sizeable Cuban populations exist in Mexico, Venezuela, and Spain³. Each community has its own character, history, and relation with the host society.

In this article, I will sketch the principal migration waves from Cuba to the United States during the twentieth century, especially since 1959, and trace their historical background in the nineteenth century⁴. My focus will be on the changing socioeconomic characteristics of the migrants over time as well as their spatial distribution in the United States. I will show that, throughout the past four decades, the émigrés have become more and more representative of Cuban society with regard to income, occupation and education (but not so much with regard to race or color and region of origin-they are still predominantly white and urban). In the second part of the article, I will analyze the differences and similarities in the settlement patterns of Cubans in

3. The Cuban exile population outside the United States was estimated to be 168 000 persons in 1994. See Milán Acosta Guillermo C., « Estimado de la población cubana residente en el exterior », in Universidad de La Habana, Centro de Estudios de Alternativas Políticas, *Anuario CEAP 1995 : emigración cubana*, Havana, CEAP, 1996, pp. 11-17.

4. This article incorporates and updates much of the material presented in my earlier texts on the topic. See Cobas José A. and Duany Jorge, *Cubans in Puerto Rico : Ethnic Economy and Cultural Identity*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1997 ; Duany Jorge, « The Recent Cuban Exodus in Comparative Caribbean Perspective », in Tulchin Joseph S., Serbín Andrés, and Hernández Rafael (eds), *Cuba and the Caribbean : Regional Issues and Trends in the Post-Cold War Era*, Wilmington, Del., Scholarly Resources, 1997, pp. 141-162 ; and Duany Jorge, « The Fear of Illegal Aliens : Caribbean Migration as a National and Regional Security Threat », in Tulchin John S. (ed), *Cooperative Security in the Caribbean*, Wilmington, Del., Scholarly Resources, forthcoming.

Miami, West New York-Union City, San Juan, and other cities. In particular, I will argue that it is a mistake to take the ethnic enclave in Miami as the prototype for the experiences of all Cubans in exile. Actually, Cuban Miami represents a singular and probably unique case of immigrant settlement and adaptation.

The third section of the essay will briefly examine the socioeconomic profile of the Cuban population in the United States and conclude that stereotyped images of its material success have little basis on academic research. Instead, Cuban-Americans face many of the same challenges as other recent immigrants in the United States and elsewhere. Among these challenges is the question of developing a hybrid cultural identity that maintains transnational linkages to the homeland as well as to the adopted country. My main thesis, which will be further developed in the final section of this article, is that the tendency among scholars and journalists to represent Cuban exiles as a prosperous and privileged group has led them to neglect key aspects of that community, such as the high degree of internal differentiation with regard to social class, political ideology, residential location, and other variables. As a result, more nuanced and finely grained portraits of the Cuban diaspora should take into account its socioeconomic diversity, historical complexity, and physical dispersion.

HISTORICAL PHASES OF THE CUBAN DIASPORA

The Pre-Revolutionary Cuban Exodus

Prior to the Cuban Revolution of 1959, a steady stream of Cubans had moved to the United States. Large-scale emigration began in earnest with the Ten Years' War in Cuba (1868-1878), accelerated during the Spanish-Cuban-American War (1895-1898), and proceeded during the twentieth century. Between 1869 and 1900, nearly 33 000 Cuban immigrants were admitted in the United States (see Table 1). In the mid-1870s, some 12 000 Cubans resided there. Most of them were either political refugees or working-class migrants such as artisans and laborers in the tobacco industry. By the early 1900s, Cubans had

established immigrant colonies in Key West, Tampa, New York City, and New Orleans, mostly as a result of political and economic turmoil on the island⁵.

Table 1
Cuban immigrants admitted to the united states,
1869-1996, by decades

Years	Number
1869 -1870	3 090
1871-1880	8 221
1881-1890	21 528
1891-1900	25 553
1901-1910	44 211
1911-1920	25 158
1921-1930	15 901
1931-1940	9 571
1941-1950	26 313

5. On nineteenth-century migration from Cuba to the United States, see Pérez Louis A. Jr., « Cubans in Tampa : From Exiles to Immigrants, 1892-1901 », *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57, 1978, pp. 129-140 ; Poyo Gerald E., « With All, and for the Good of All : The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848-1898 », Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1989 ; Poyo Gerald E., « The Cuban Experience in the United States, 1865-1940 », *Cuban Studies* 21, 1991, pp. 19-36 ; Pérez Lisandro, « Cuban Catholics in the United States », in Dolan Jay P. and Vidal Jaime R. (eds), *Puerto Rican and Cuban Catholics in the U.S., 1900-1965*, Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, pp. 147-247 ; and Nancy Raquel Mirabal, « “Con sus manos y sus ardientes corazones :” Race and Gender in the Cuban Migration and Settlement of Women in the U.S. During the Late Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Centuries », paper presented at the Second Annual South Florida Symposium on Cuba, Cuban Studies Association, Miami, September 13-14, 1997.

Years (continued)	Number (continued)
1951-1960	78 948
1961-1970	208 536
1971-1980	264 863
1981-1990	144 578
1991-1996	94 936
Total	971 407

Sources : U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* ; Pérez, « Cuban Catholics in the United States ».

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, several crises in the international market for sugar and tobacco, as well as violent upheavals in the fragile Cuban republic, caused large movements of people to the United States. Emigration was substantially reduced during Gerardo Machado's dictatorship (1924-1933) and the Great Depression. In the 1930s, the number of Cubans admitted to the United States declined to less than 10 000 persons. However, the Cuban tradition of sending political exiles to the north continued unabated. During the 1940s and 1950s, tens of thousands of Cubans sought better economic opportunities and political refuge in the United States. This is the period recreated in the semi-biographic accounts of Miguel Barnet, *La vida real* (1984), and Oscar Hijuelos, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989). The migration of Cuban musicians, artists, and athletes was especially noteworthy. By 1958, about 40 000 Cubans lived in the United States, mostly in New York City⁶. Out of nearly one million Cuban immigrants registered between

6. Barnet Miguel, *La vida real*, Madrid, Alianza, 1984 ; Hijuelos Oscar, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, New York, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1989 ; Pérez, « Cuban Catholics in the United States », *op. cit.* ; Boswell Thomas D. and Curtis James R., *The Cuban-American Experience : Culture, Images, and Perspectives*, Totowa, N.J., Rowman & Allanheld, 1984, p. 41.

1869 and 1996, 258 494 or almost 27 percent arrived before 1960. Thus, the exodus had a history of almost one hundred years on the eve of the Cuban Revolution.

The Golden Exile, 1959-1962

The massive flow of Cuban refugees began with the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship (1952-1958). Starting in January, 1959, the first to leave the country were the military officers, political leaders, government workers, large landowners, and entrepreneurs closely identified with Batista. As the Revolution became progressively more radical, disillusioned members of the middle class such as professionals, technicians, managers, and administrators joined the diaspora. Many of these groups were negatively affected by revolutionary policies geared toward the redistribution of wealth, such as agrarian reform, urban housing reform, and nationalization of foreign assets⁷. The period from 1959 to 1962 has been dubbed the « Golden Exile » because most of the refugees came from the upper and middle strata of Cuban society. The majority were urban, middle-aged, well-educated, light-skinned, and white-collar workers. At this stage, political, social, and religious reasons were the primary motivations to leave the country. Nearly 23 percent of all Cuban exiles (or 250 000 persons) fled to the United States during the first wave of post-revolutionary migration⁸.

7. For historical overviews of the Cuban Revolution, see Thomas Hugh, *The Cuban Revolution*, New York, Harper, 1977 ; Azicri Max, *Cuba : Politics, Economics, and Society*, London, Pinter, 1988 ; Pérez-Stable Marifeli, *The Cuban Revolution : Origins, Course, and Legacy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993 ; and Mesa-Lago Carmelo, *Breve historia económica de Cuba socialista*, Madrid, Alianza, 1994.

8. For studies of this period, see Fagen Richard, Brody Richard A. and O'Leary Thomas, *Cubans in Exile : Disaffection and the Revolution*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1967 ; Portes Alejandro, « Dilemmas of a Golden Exile : Integration of Cuban Refugee Families in Milwaukee », *American Sociological Review* 49, n° 3, 1969, pp. 383-397 ; Amaro Nelson and Portes Alejandro, « Notas para una sociología del exilio : situación y perspectivas de los grupos cubanos en EEUU », *Aportes* 23, 1972, pp. 7-24 ; Clark Juan M., *The Exodus from Revolutionary Cuba (1959-1974) : A*

Until January, 1961, when the U.S. government broke diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba, exiles could fly directly from Havana to Miami on commercial flights. Between 1 600 and 1 700 Cubans arrived in the United States per week during this period⁹. The refugees consisted primarily of nuclear families admitted to the United States on a temporary basis (through visa waivers) because they thought they would soon return home. They tended to remain in Miami because of its geographical proximity to Cuba, because of the exiles' prior familiarity with Florida, and because that city became the center of anti-Castro activity. In April, 1961, the military fiasco of the Bay of Pigs invasion initiated a new era in Cuban exile politics: the Revolution was here to stay; exile was no longer a transitory status.

The Cuban Missile Crisis of October, 1962, interrupted the large-scale migration of Cubans to the United States. Illegal migration correspondingly increased, mostly by small craft and makeshift vessels; an estimated 6 700 boat people (*balseros*) arrived in Florida between 1962 and 1965¹⁰. In addition, nearly 56 000 Cubans migrated to the United States from other countries like Mexico and Spain, which maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba. In the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Missile Crisis, tensions between Cuba and the United States escalated even further. Commercial transportation between the two countries was suspended until September, 1965, when the Cuban government unilaterally opened the port of Camarioca, allowing some 5 000 persons to leave the country.

Sociological Analysis, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1975; Comité Estatal de Estadísticas (República de Cuba), *Estadísticas de migraciones externas y turismo*, Havana, Editorial Orbe, 1982; Pedraza-Bailey Silvia, «Cuba's Exiles: Portrait of a Refugee Migration», *International Migration Review* 19, n° 1 (1985), pp. 4-34; and Pedraza Silvia, «Cuba's Refugees: Manifold Migrations», in Pedraza Silvia and Rumbaut Rubén G. (eds), *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*, Belmont, Ca., Wadsworth, 1996, pp. 263-279.

9. U.S. Department of Justice, *Our Immigration: A Brief Account of Immigration into the United States*, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978, p. 18.

10. Ackerman Holly and Clark Juan M., *The Cuban Balseros: Voyage of Uncertainty*, Miami, Cuban American National Council, 1995.

The Freedom Flights, 1965-1973

Camarioca ushered in a new migration wave from Cuba to the United States. Diplomatic negotiations between Washington and Havana created an airlift between Varadero and Miami from December, 1965, to April, 1973 : the so-called Freedom Flights that took from 3 000 to 4 000 Cuban refugees per month to the United States. This stage totaled about 300 000 refugees, nearly 28 percent of the exodus between 1959 and 1996¹¹. Most Freedom Flights exiles had relatives already living in the United States, so that kinship networks played an important role in the process of migration and resettlement. So did the Cuban Refugee Program, established in 1961, which helped relocate many of the exiles outside Miami and eased their transition to a new life.

A change in the socioeconomic composition of the émigré population was well under way by 1973. Although the exiles still over-represented the upper social strata, they were more diverse with regard to income, occupation, education, and residence in Cuba. As the proportion of professionals and managers among the émigrés declined, the proportion of blue-collar and service workers increased¹². Shifts in the refugee flow reflected the growing impact of revolutionary programs on wider segments of the Cuban population, such as small-scale vendors and artisans¹³. During this stage, the middle and lower occupational sectors – such as clerical and sales employees – came to predominate among Cubans in the United States. Like their immediate predecessors, the migrants settled primarily in the Miami metropolitan area, recreating the heterogeneous social structure of their homeland almost entirely. By 1970, Miami had replaced New York as the capital of Cuban America.

11. U.S. Department of Justice, *Our Immigration*, *op. cit.*, p. 18 ; Clark, *op. cit.*

12. Portes Alejandro, Clark Juan M. and Bach Robert L., « The New Wave : A Statistical Profile of Recent Cuban Exiles to the United States », *Cuban Studies/ Estudios cubanos* 7, n° 1, 1977, pp. 1-32.

13. In March-April, 1968, for example, the so-called « Revolutionary Offensive » nationalized more than 58 000 small businesses, such as street food outlets, restaurants, and bars. See Pérez-Stable, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118 ; Azicri, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

In april, 1973, the Freedom Flights ended, reducing Cuban migration to a mere trickle. Only about 38 000 Cubans arrived in the United States between 1973 and 1979, mostly via other countries, including Jamaica and Venezuela, which reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba¹⁴. This group of migrants had two major destinations – Miami and New York – where they could find relatives and friends, as well as work. Although the exodus slowed down during this period, it displayed an increasing socioeconomic diversity. By the end of the 1970s, ideological and material incentives to emigrate were practically inseparable¹⁵. Cubans increasingly resembled labor migrants from countries such as Mexico or the Dominican Republic, driven abroad by their desire to improve their standards of living. The main difference was that the U.S. government defined Cubans as political refugees and most of the others as economic migrants¹⁶.

The Mariel Exodus of 1980

The mass migration of Cubans from Mariel harbor to Key West, Florida, took place between april and september of 1980. The sudden and dramatic outflow partly resulted from the visits of more than 100 000 exiles to Cuba in 1979, which familiarized their relatives with economic opportunities in the United States. The immediate cause of the boat lift was the take-over of the Peruvian embassy in Havana by more than 10 000 Cubans. Fidel Castro resented that the Peruvian government failed to return some Cubans who had invaded the embassy requesting political asylum. So he removed its police custody and exhorted all those wishing to leave the country to go to the embassy. In a reprise of Camarioca, the Cuban government opened the

14. Boswell and Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

15. Bach Robert L., « The New Cuban Exodus : Political and Economic Motivations », *Caribbean Review* 11, n° 2, 1982, pp. 22-25, 58-60 ; Portes Alejandro and Bach Robert L., *Latin Journey : Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985.

16. Pedraza-Bailey Silvia, *Political and Economic Migrants in America : Cubans and Mexicans*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1985.

port of Mariel, near Havana, for those who could be picked up by relatives living abroad. When the exiles arrived in Mariel on boats and ships, the Cuban government forced them to take unrelated persons, some of whom had spent time in prisons and mental hospitals.

Contrary to media reports, less than two percent of the *marielitos* (as they were pejoratively labeled) were common criminals, although about 25 percent had been in jail for various reasons, including violating the Cuban law of *peligrosidad*, or « dangerous behavior » such as engaging in public homosexuality, vagrancy, and antisocial acts¹⁷. Approximately 125 000 Cubans arrived in Key West during the Mariel boat lift, representing about 12 percent of the exodus between 1959 and 1996. Most of the *marielitos* were young, single males ; many were black or mulatto ; the majority were of working-class background and had less than a high-school education. In Havana, the government officially branded the refugees as *escoria* (scum) and *lumpen* because it considered them antisocial and counter-revolutionary elements. In Miami, where most of the *marielitos* eventually settled, the exodus deepened the rifts between « old » and « new » immigrants. Date of departure from Cuba – before or after 1980 – became a symbol of one's social status. The diminutive term *marielito* itself reflected the public scorn accorded to the new immigrants, both in Cuba and in the United States.

The Mariel exodus transformed Miami's Cuban community. Approximately 13 percent of the *marielitos* was classified as black or mulatto, compared to only three percent of the exiles in 1973. The occupational structure of Cuban Miami became even more heterogeneous than before as more blue-collar and service workers entered the local labor market. Mariel refugees faced longer periods of unemployment, low-paid work, and welfare dependence than earlier

17. Clark Juan M., Lasaga José I. and Roque Rose M., *The 1980 Mariel Exodus : An Assessment and Prospect*, Washington, D.C., Council for Inter-American Security, 1981, p. 7. Based on Cuban sources, two Cuban researchers estimated that over 45 percent of the *marielitos* had criminal record, but 40 percent of those « crimes » would not be penalized in the United States. See Hernández Rafael and Gomis Redis, « Retrato del Mariel : el ángulo socioeconómico », *Cuadernos de Nuestra América* 3, n° 5, 1986, pp. 124-151.

migrants¹⁸. As a result of the Mariel exodus, the exile community in Miami became much more representative of the entire Cuban population. Furthermore, «the sudden influx of more than 85 000 Mariel refugees in the Miami area has created major problems in housing, unemployment, and apparently crime as well»¹⁹. As Alejandro Portes has pointed out, «The few thousand delinquents and mental patients put by the Cuban government aboard the boats stigmatized not only the entire Mariel exodus, but the pre-Mariel exile population as well»²⁰. In 1981, a Gallup poll showed that Americans perceived Cubans to be the second less desirable group of neighbors after religious cult members²¹.

Cuban emigration slowed down after 1980 because the U.S. government no longer considered all Cubans to be political refugees. Between 1981 and 1990, about 145 000 Cuban immigrants were admitted to the United States, compared to nearly 265 000 during the 1970s²². After Mariel, Cubans were labeled «entrants (status pending)», an ambivalent category that placed them in a legal limbo for an indefinite period and did not provide the special benefits accorded to those granted political asylum. To qualify as refugees, applicants had to prove a «well-founded fear of persecution» in their home country. Only some groups of Cubans, such as former political prisoners, were now eligible for refugee status. Most were labor migrants, such as blue-collar and service workers, reflecting the socioeconomic composition of the Cuban composition more accurately than before. Ideological dissidence with Castro's policies was less common among the émigrés of this period.

18. Portes Alejandro, Clark Juan M. and Manning Robert D., «After Mariel : A Survey of the Resettlement Experiences of 1980 Cuban Refugees in Miami », *Cuban Studies/Estudios cubanos* 15, n° 2, 1985, pp. 37-59.

19. Clark et al., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

20. Portes Alejandro, «The Rise of Ethnicity : Determinants of Ethnic Perceptions Among Cuban Exiles in Miami », *American Sociological Review* 49, n° 3, 1984, p. 394.

21. *The Miami Herald*, January 21, 1982, p. 15A.

22. U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, *op. cit.*

Migration remained a thorny issue in U.S.-Cuban relations during the 1980s. In december, 1984, both governments signed an agreement allowing the migration of up to 20 000 Cubans per year. But the Cuban government quickly suspended the agreement to protest the launching of Radio Martí in Miami in may, 1985. Consequently, thousands of Cubans moved to other countries, such as Panama and Jamaica, where they hoped to obtain visas to the United States. Others attempted to reach Florida by boat or overstayed their temporary visit permits. The stage was set for another migratory crisis.

The Balsero Crisis of 1994

After a sharp decline in the 1980s, the exodus recovered its pace during the 1990s as a result of growing economic and political hardship in Cuba. Between 1991 and 1996, a total of 94 936 Cuban immigrants were admitted to the United States. In addition, 13 147 rafters arrived from Cuba between january of 1991 and july of 1994²³. In august of 1994, the number of refugees broke all records since the Mariel exodus. By the end of that month, the U.S. Coast Guard had rescued 21 300 Cubans near the coast of Florida. The so-called *balsero* crisis involved about 36 000 Cuban rafters interdicted at sea at the height of the exodus between august 13 and september 13, 1994.

Technically, the *balseros* were undocumented migrants because they left Cuba without authorization. Until august, 1994, the U.S. government had welcomed them as political refugees fleeing Castro's authoritarian regime. However, the Clinton administration increasingly perceived the *balsero* crisis as a national security threat that could quickly become « another Mariel » : that is, a prolonged, massive, and chaotic boat lift from Cuba to the United States. To prevent such a situation, President Clinton decided to return all future refugees to Cuba. From the standpoint of the Cuban government, the crisis also had the potential to destabilize the island's internal security and

23. U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, *op. cit.* ; Ackerman and Clark, *op. cit.*

international image, as the August 5, 1994 riots in downtown Havana clearly showed. Both governments therefore moved swiftly to address the crisis through a series of bilateral measures, beginning in September, 1994. In May, 1995, the U.S. and Cuban governments renewed the 1984 agreement to allow the migration of 20 000 Cubans per year, in addition to a special lottery of 5 000 new visa applications. The *balsero* crisis had been temporarily solved.

The immediate antecedents of the crisis are clear in hindsight. In July, 1991, the U.S. State Department announced the temporary suspension of tourist visas for Cubans due to a backlog of 28 000 applications. Many Cubans overstayed these visas and did not go back home, thus becoming undocumented immigrants in the United States. Moreover, the U.S. Interests Section in Havana only granted 3 250 immigrant visas between 1991 and 1993²⁴. Illegal exits from Cuba therefore became the primary means of migrating to the United States during the early 1990s. These were the worst years of the so-called Special Period in Time of Peace in Cuba, characterized by a sharp decline in economic growth, a dramatic decrease in living standards, a rise in social tensions, and unmet demands for political reform²⁵. Migratory pressures accumulated rapidly, including large sectors of the Cuban population, such as service workers, professionals, and the growing unemployed. In August, 1994, when the Cuban government temporarily lifted all restrictions to leave the country, thousands of Cubans attempted to do so on improvised boats and rafts, especially from the port of Cojímar, near Havana. Cuban scholars have recently

24. Rodríguez Chávez Ernesto, *Emigración cubana actual*, Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1997.

25. For surveys of the economic crisis in Cuba during the 1990s, see Rodríguez Beruff Jorge (ed), *Cuba en crisis : perspectivas económicas y políticas*, Río Piedras, Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1995 ; Hoffman Bert (ed), *Cuba : apertura y reforma económica. Perfil de un debate*, Caracas, Nueva Sociedad, 1995 ; Carranza Valdés Julio, Gutiérrez Urdaneta Luis, and Monreal González Pedro, *Cuba : la reestructuración de la economía. Una propuesta para el debate*, Caracas, Nueva Sociedad, 1997 ; Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, *La economía cubana : reformas estructurales y desempeño en los noventa*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997.

estimated that between 636 000 and a million more Cubans would migrate if allowed to do so²⁶.

In the 1990s, material deprivation and family reunification became increasingly salient reasons for migration²⁷. Thus, the contemporary Cuban diaspora is less of a politically motivated exile and more of an economically motivated migration, as in much of the Caribbean region. A recent sample of *balseros*, detained in their attempt to leave Cuba, still over-represented the white, male, urban, and educated population of the island²⁸. Most of the respondents were manual workers, especially in transportation and communications, although many were professionals, technicians, and administrators. The majority said they wanted to leave the country for economic or personal reasons²⁹; most had relatives and friends living abroad. A surprising proportion (21 percent) were members of the Cuban Communist Party or the Communist Youth Union; not surprisingly, nearly a third (29 percent) were unemployed. Altogether, the data suggest that current emigration reflects the profound economic crisis that affects all strata of Cuban society.

The United States continued to accept unauthorized migrants from Cuba until August 19, 1994, when President Clinton ordered the U.S. Coast Guard to transfer the rafters to U.S. military bases in

26. Aja Díaz Antonio, Milán Acosta Guillermo C. and Díaz Fernández Marta, « La emigración cubana de cara al futuro : estimación de su potencial migratorio y algunas reflexiones en torno a la representación de los jóvenes en su composición », in Universidad de La Habana, *Anuario CEAP 1995, op. cit.*, pp. 142-163; Rodríguez Chávez Ernesto, « El flujo emigratorio cubano, 1984-1995 : balance y perspectivas », paper presented at the workshop on « The Caribbean Diaspora : The Present Context and Future Trends », University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, May 2, 1997.

27. Rodríguez Chávez, *op. cit.*; Martín Consuelo and Pérez (Guadalupe), *Familia, emigración y vida cotidiana en Cuba*, Havana, Editora Política, 1998; Arboleya (Jesús), *Havana Miami : The US-Cuba Migration Conflict*, Melbourne, Australia, Ocean Press, 1996.

28. Martínez Milagros et al., « Los balseros cubanos : un estudio a partir de las salidas ilegales », Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1996.

29. Once in Guantánamo or in the United States, most rafters say that their primary motivation was the desire for freedom and release from state control. See Ackerman and Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

Guantánamo and Panama. Thus, the Clinton administration reversed the traditional open-door stance toward Cuban migration and began a series of major policy shifts, such as intercepting, detaining, and repatriating the rafters. This transformation in the official treatment of Cubans in the United States signaled an attempt – not entirely successful – to develop a coherent immigration and refugee policy in the post-Cold War period. More particularly, it was a political response by the Clinton administration to long-standing criticism of U.S. preference toward Cuban over Haitian boat people. Hence, analysts have begun to write about the «Haitianization» or «Caribbeanization» of U.S. Cuban migration policy³⁰. For the first time since 1959, Cubans leaving their country without visas were considered illegal aliens subject to deportation, just like Haitians, Dominicans, or Salvadoreans. This policy shift represents the beginning of the end of the special status of Cuban immigrants in the United States.

In sum, the Cuban exodus has undergone several distinct stages during the past four decades. Emigration began with the disaffected sectors of the Cuban Revolution, initially concentrated in the most privileged groups of pre-revolutionary society (especially urban, upper – and middle – class whites). But the subsequent deterioration in U.S.-Cuban relations, together with faltering economic conditions on the island, produced a much more heterogeneous Cuban-American population in its social, economic, and political origins. This trend toward the diversification of Cuban émigrés became evident during the Freedom Flights (1965-1973) and especially after Mariel (1980). During this period, working-class, dark-skinned, and rural migrants left Cuba in larger numbers than before. In the 1990s, the economic crisis deepened the migratory potential and even impacted formerly pro-revolutionary segments of the population. Except for peasants and blacks, current émigrés represent a wide cross-section of Cuban society. Finally, economic motives have become as important as political ones during the latter phases of the exodus.

30. Duany, « The Recent Cuban Exodus », *op. cit.* ; Rodríguez Chávez, *op. cit.* ; Grosfoguel Ramón, « Migration and Geopolitics in the Greater Antilles », *Review* 20, n° 1, 1997, pp. 115-145.

CUBAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES : SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Within their primary places of destination, Cuban immigrants have carved out distinctive niches, especially in south Florida, northeastern New Jersey, and the metropolitan area of New York. In 1990, the top five Cuban settlements in the United States were Miami, Los Angeles, West New York-Union City, New York City, and Tampa (see Table 2). In addition, a smaller number of Cubans (about 17 000) lives in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Cuban communities are also notable in Madrid, Caracas, and Mexico City, but little has been published about them³¹. For some time now, Miami has had more Cuban residents than Santiago de Cuba, Cuba's second city. Outside of Miami, West New York-Union City in New Jersey is the single largest Cuban settlement in the United States, although the Los Angeles-Anaheim-Riverside consolidated metropolitan area now has more Cuban residents.

Table 2
Geographic distribution of the cuban population
in the united states, 1990

State	Number of Cubans	Percent of Cubans
Florida	675 786	64,2
New Jersey	87 085	8,3
New York	77 016	7,3
California	75 034	7,1
Illinois	17 165	1,6
Other states	121 111	11,5
Total	1 053 197	100,0

31. See Martín Consuelo and Romano Vicente, *La emigración cubana en España*, Madrid, Fundación de Investigaciones Marxistas, 1994; Aja Díaz Antonio, « La comunidad cubana en Venezuela », paper presented at the International Workshop on « The Cuban Community Abroad : Profiles and Processes in the Nineties », Center for the Study of Policy Alternatives, University of Havana, June 20-22, 1996.

State	Number of Cubans	Percent of Cubans
Metropolitan area		
Miami, Florida	561 868	53,3
Los Angeles, California	60 302	5,7
Union City-West New York, New Jersey	57 604	5,5
New York, New York	57 019	5,4
Tampa, Florida	33 933	3,2
Other areas	282 471	26,8
Total	1 053 197	100,0

Source : U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, *Census of the Population of the United States*.

Each of these communities remains connected to the Cuban homeland through specific spatial practices, such as renaming streets and schools, establishing businesses with the same names as in the home country, redecorating inner and outer spaces, establishing hometown associations, and organizing parades and festivals based on Cuban traditions. In Little Havana, Cubans rechristened Calle Ocho in honor of the Miami Sound Machine. In San Juan, they built condominiums with Cuban names like Varadero and Comodoro, and opened restaurants like Kasalta or Havana's. In Union City, Mariel refugees recently organized a rumba group at the Esquina Habanera restaurant³². In Madrid as well as in San Juan and earlier in Tampa, the émigrés formed social clubs like Casa Cuba ; and in Caracas, they founded the Church-supported Unión de Cubanos en el Exilio, which soon expanded to Miami, Union City, and other centers of the diaspora. Initially deterritorialized identities have taken hold across national boundaries through such settlement patterns.

In Miami as well as in New York City, Cuban immigrants tend to live apart from non-Hispanic whites, blacks, and even other

32. Knauer Lisa Maya, « Las culturas de la diáspora : rumba, comunidad e identidad en Nueva York », *Temas* 10, 1997, pp. 13-21.

Latinos³³. Even where they share the same neighborhoods with other ethnic and racial groups – such as Nicaraguans in Sweetwater or Colombians in Queens –, Cubans tend to remain socially encapsulated in their own communities. Although residential segregation has many pernicious effects, it allows for the consolidation of Cuban *barrios* and the transformation of the urban landscape along transnational lines. It also makes possible some degree of political representation through concentration in certain electoral districts. Since the 1970s, Cubans in the United States have been increasingly empowered, partly as a result of their extreme clustering in south Florida and northern New Jersey.

Miami's Cuban Enclave

With nearly 562 000 Cubans in 1990, Miami is the undisputed center of the Cuban exile. Little Havana stretches across scores of blocks southwest of downtown Miami, around Calle Ocho, toward the suburban area that Cubans affectionately call *la sagüesera*. Another large Cuban enclave is found in Hialeah to the north of Dade County. In 1990, sixteen percent of all Cubans in the county lived in the core of Little Havana and another 22 percent lived in Hialeah³⁴. In Miami, Cuban-American culture thrives through numerous commercial Spanish-language signs and mass media, coffee shops, grocery stores, restaurants, social clubs, political organizations, Catholic and Afro-Cuban yard shrines, artistic and musical activities, and the popular Calle Ocho Festival. The shrine to Our Lady of Charity, the patron of

33. Boswell Thomas D., *The Cubanization and Hispanicization of Metropolitan Miami*, Miami, Cuban American National Council, 1995 ; Conway Dennis, Bigby Ualthan and Swann Ronald S., « Caribbean Migrant Experiences in New York City », paper presented at the XIII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Boston, Massachusetts, October 1986.

34. Boswell, *The Cubanization and Hispanicization of Metropolitan Miami*, *op. cit.*

Cuba, located in downtown Miami, embodies the diasporic identity of Cubans in exile³⁵.

The Cubans of Miami have formed a tightly knit community that resists physical and cultural dispersion. Kenneth Wilson and Alejandro Portes associate this pattern of residential segregation with the enclave economy and its high proportion of Cuban-owned businesses that prefer to hire Cuban employees and serve mainly the needs of the émigré community. In several essays, Portes has defined the enclave as a spatial concentration of ethnic enterprises and residences with a wide variety of economic activities and a large ethnic market that competes with the dominant economy³⁶. According to this definition, the Cuban enclave of Miami has expanded dramatically over the past four decades. In 1977, Cubans owned 7 336 businesses in the Miami-Hialeah area, most of them in services, retail trade, and construction. By 1992, Cubans owned 46 900 firms in the Miami metropolitan area.

35. Tweed Thomas A., *Our Lady of Exile : Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997. For recent studies of Cuban Miami, see González Pando Miguel, *The Cuban Americans*, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1998 ; García María Cristina, *Havana USA : Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996 ; Pérez-Firmat Gustavo, *Life on the Hyphen : The Cuban-American Way*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1994 ; Portes Alejandro and Stepick Alex, *City on the Edge : The Transformation of Miami*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993 ; Grenier Guillermo and Stepick Alex III (eds), *Miami Now ! Immigration, Ethnicity, and Social Change*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1992 ; and Jorge Antonio, Suchlicki Jaime and Leyva de Varona Adolfo (eds), *Cuban Exiles in Florida : Their Presence and Contribution*, Miami, University of Miami, North-South Center, 1991.

36. Wilson Kenneth and Portes Alejandro, « Immigrant Enclaves : An Analysis of the Labor Market Experiences of Cubans in Miami », *American Journal of Sociology* 86, n° 2, 1980, pp. 295-319 ; Portes and Bach, *op. cit.* ; Portes Alejandro and Manning Robert D., « The Immigrant Enclave : Theory and Empirical Examples », in Nagel Joane and Ozlak Susan (eds), *Competitive Ethnic Relations*, Orlando, Fla., Academic Press, 1986, pp. 47-68 ; Portes Alejandro, « The Social Origins of the Cuban Enclave of Miami », *Sociological Perspectives* 30, n° 4, 1987, pp. 340-372 ; Portes Alejandro and Jensen Leif, « What's an Ethnic Enclave ? The Case for Conceptual Clarity », *American Sociological Review* 52, 1987, pp. 768-770.

The city now has the second largest concentration of Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States after Los Angeles³⁷.

Although the exiles' political activities continue to focus on Cuba, they show increasingly more interest in the United States. Because less than half of Miami's Cubans were U.S. citizens in 1978, they held few elective offices and had little bargaining power relative to their numbers. By 1997, more than half of all foreign-born Cubans in the United States had become U.S. citizens³⁸. Once they naturalize and register to vote, Cuban-Americans tend to support the Republican Party and its conservative ideology. The exiles have recently organized as a pressure group to defend their interests in U.S. society. As a result, their voice has been heard more clearly in local, state, and national arenas. In 1985, for example, the city of Miami elected its first Cuban mayor, Xavier Suárez. With the establishment of the Cuban American National Foundation in 1981, the exiles' political clout in Washington increased considerably, particularly during the Reagan and Bush administrations. During the 1980s, three Cuban Americans were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, two from southern Florida (Lincoln Díaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen) and one from New Jersey (Bob Menéndez).

West New York-Union City, New Jersey

The second Cuban concentration in the United States is in Hudson County, New Jersey, across from New York City. In 1990, nearly 58 000 Cubans lived in the West New York-Union City area, where a Cuban community has existed even before 1959. Here, too, the exiles have created a strong ethnic community that protects them from personal and social disorganization, although scholars have debated

37. Díaz-Briquets Sergio, «Cuban-Owned Businesses in the United States», *Cuban Studies/Estudios cubanos* 14, n° 2, 1984, pp. 57-64; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises: Hispanic*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996.

38. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997 Current Population Survey, *op. cit.*

whether they have constituted an economic enclave such as the one in Miami. For instance, the residential pattern of Cubans in West New York-Union City is much more dispersed than in Miami, and their occupational distribution is much more concentrated in blue-collar jobs in light manufacturing. At any rate, the Bergenline Avenue of Union City bustles with Cuban restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, music stores, and other businesses catering primarily to Cuban émigrés³⁹.

Cubans in northeastern New Jersey are primarily employed as factory operatives and service workers. Many were members of the lower class in Cuba, but others were professionals and managers who were forced to accept lower-status jobs in the United States. As Rafael Prohías and Lourdes Casal put it, « The high percentage of blue-collar and manual workers in West New York suggests a community in which emigration has meant an even more catastrophic loss of status than for Miami refugees »⁴⁰. However, initial downward occupational mobility has been a common experience for Cubans in the United States, especially those arriving in the early 1960s.

The Cuban community in West New York-Union City remains strongly identified with its culture of origin. This allegiance to Cuban identity is partly due to the predominance of foreign-born immigrants, but also to the proliferation of Cuban organizations in the area. West New York-Union City has many Cuban-owned businesses⁴¹ ; several

39. On Cubans in West New York-Union City, see Rogg Eleanor Meyer, *The Assimilation of Cuban Exiles : The Role of Community and Class*, New York, Aberdeen, 1974 ; Rogg Eleanor Meyer and Santana Cooney Rosemary, *Adaptation and Adjustment of Cubans : West New York, New Jersey*, New York, Fordham University, Hispanic Research Center, 1980 ; Prieto Yolanda, « Cuban Women in the U.S. Labor Force : Perspectives on the Nature of Change », *Cuban Studies* 17, 1987, pp. 73-92 ; Knauer Lisa Maya, « Eating in Cuban : Place-Making, Consumption and Imagined Geographies », unpublished manuscript, Program in American Studies, New York University, 1998.

40. Prohías Rafael J. and Casal Lourdes, *The Cuban Minority in the U.S. : Preliminary Report on Need Identification and Program Evaluation*, Washington, D.C., Cuban National Planning Council, 1974, p. 65.

41. In 1992, the Jersey City and Bergen-Passaic metropolitan areas of New Jersey had 2 705 Cuban-owned businesses. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises*, op. cit.

newspapers and tabloids like *La Tribuna*, *El Clarín*, and *Ultima Hora* ; a host of Church-related voluntary associations, like the Unión de Cubanos en el Exilio ; and even right-wing terrorist organizations like Omega 7. The net result of all these ethnic associations has been to slow down the exiles' cultural assimilation while fostering their adaptation to American society. Just as Miami is known for its Little Havana, West New York-Union City is known for its Little Santa Clara, because many migrants from the former province of Las Villas (now Villa Clara) have settled in the area⁴².

Other Cuban Communities in the United States

In other cities, such as Los Angeles or Chicago, Cubans are more affluent but more thoroughly acculturated to American society than in either Miami or West New York. In Milwaukee and Indianapolis, for example, most exiles quickly adjusted to their new occupations and regained their former Cuban status⁴³. On average, Cubans have higher incomes, educational levels, and occupational skills in states like Illinois and California than in Florida and New Jersey. Unfortunately, little detailed information is available for Cuban communities outside the main centers of the diaspora⁴⁴.

Aside from Dade County, Florida, the New York metropolitan area has the largest Cuban population in the United States. In 1990, over 57 000 Cubans lived in New York City alone. Prior to the Revolution, Cubans were the second most numerous Latino group in New York City, after Puerto Ricans. Since 1959, many Cubans continued to move to New York and settled primarily in Washington

42. Rogg and Santana Cooney, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

43. Portes, « Dilemmas of a Golden Exile », *op. cit.* ; Casal Lourdes and Hernández Andrés R., « Cubans in the United States : A Review of the Literature », *Cuban Studies/Estudios cubanos* 5, n° 2, 1975, pp. 25-51.

44. See Amalia Lucía Cabezas, « The Cuban Community in Los Angeles », paper presented at the International Workshop on « The Cuban Community Abroad : Profiles and Processes in the Nineties », Center for the Study of Policy Alternatives, University of Havana, June 20-22, 1996.

Heights, in northwest Manhattan. By 1970, the majority of New York Cubans lived in upper-middle class neighborhoods like Jackson Heights in Queens⁴⁵.

Wherever they reside, Cuban-Americans exhibit a lack of social integration with other Hispanic immigrants such as Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. They are often physically removed from other minorities because they tend to live in the suburbs of metropolitan areas, whereas the latter are largely confined to inner-city districts. Even when they share the same neighborhoods, as in Washington Heights, Latinos usually cross national lines only in public places such as parks, schools, markets, and churches⁴⁶. In the last three decades, Cubans have been moving out of New York and New Jersey and into Florida, as part of a resettlement pattern characteristic of the entire Cuban population in the United States.

The Cuban Middleman Minority in Puerto Rico

Compared to the two major Cuban communities in the United States, the Cubans of Puerto Rico are a small population – 19 736 persons or less than two percent of all the émigrés in 1990. But they deserve special attention because they display yet another adaptive strategy among Cubans in exile. The Cubans who moved to San Juan were even more over-representative of the propertied classes in their

45. Santana Cooney Rosemary and Contreras María Alina, « Residence Patterns of Social Register Cubans : A Study of Miami, San Juan, and New York SMSAs », *Cuban Studies/Estudios cubanos* 8, n° 2, 1978, pp. 33-49.

46. See Rodríguez Orlando, « A Sociodemographic Profile of the New York Region Cuban Population », paper presented at the First Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, Cuban Research Center, Florida International University, October 9-11, 1997 ; Duany Jorge, *Quisqueya on the Hudson : The Transnational Identity of Dominicans in Washington Heights*, New York, Dominican Studies Institute, City University of New York, 1994 ; Domínguez Virginia, « Show Your Colors : Ethnic Divisiveness Among Hispanic Caribbean Migrants », *Migration Today* 6, n° 1, 1978, pp. 5-9 ; and Cohn Michael (ed), *The Cuban Community of Washington Heights in New York City : A Report*, New York, Brooklyn Children's Museum, 1967.

country of origin than those who moved to the U.S. mainland. For example, the Cuban-born population in Puerto Rico has a much larger share of upper-status workers, such as managers and professionals, than in the U.S. mainland (see Table 3). Cuban immigrants also have higher income and educational levels than the Puerto Rican-born population. And they tend to live in upper-middle class neighborhoods within the San Juan metropolitan area⁴⁷.

Table 3
Occupational distribution of Cubans in the United States and Puerto Rico, 1990 (in percentages)

Occupation	United States	Puerto Rico
Managerial and professional	20,4	36,2
Technical, sales, and administrative support	33,4	42,7
Precision production, craft, and repair	12,3	8,5
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	8,0	5,1
Service	14,9	5,9
Farming, forestry, and fishing	1,0	1,6
Total	100,0	100,0

Sources : U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of the Population of the United States ; 1990 Census of Population and Housing : Social and Economic Characteristics, Puerto Rico.

Cubans in San Juan come predominantly from Havana, Santiago, and other major Cuban cities. Prior to the Revolution, most of them were employed in the service sector of those urban centers, primarily as white-collar workers such as professionals and managers.

47. Santana Cooney and Contreras, *op. cit.* For more details on Cubans in Puerto Rico, see Cobas and Duany, *op. cit.*, and Esteve Himilce, *El exilio cubano en Puerto Rico : su impacto político-social, 1959-1983*, San Juan, Raíces, 1984.

Many émigrés had entrepreneurial experience in Cuba ; some took capital and marketable skills to Puerto Rico. To a large extent, their economic adaptation depended on their ability to transfer past resources, both economic and social, to a new environment. For example, many early refugees established credit with U.S. banks with which they had conducted business in Cuba. Others formed commercial partnerships with friends and relatives who had moved to San Juan. Although many exiles suffered an initial loss of occupational status in Puerto Rico, most regained it within a single decade. In brief, an important sector of the Cuban petty bourgeoisie was reconstituted in San Juan between 1960 and 1970.

The Cubans of Puerto Rico function primarily as a middleman minority, a culturally distinctive group specializing in the selling of goods and services within the host society. Like other middleman minorities, Cubans entered the middle and higher levels of commerce and in some cases virtually monopolized entire sectors of trade and services, such as small shops, bakeries, food retailing, the mass media, real estate, and advertising. They gained a special access to occupations that were either above the reach of the majority of the Puerto Rican population or beneath the dignity of the local elite, filling a status gap between dominant and subaltern classes. Like other middleman minorities, Cubans in Puerto Rico are almost exclusively urban dwellers ; unlike ethnic enclaves, they do not concentrate spatially in a single residential district. Nor do they focus on an ethnic market, like Cubans in Miami, but rather cater to the larger economy. Finally, in contrast to the situation in south Florida, Cuban enterprises in San Juan tend to employ a majority of non-Cubans, except in positions of trust.

Cubans' incorporation into the Puerto Rican labor market has been different from other locales in the U.S. mainland. While Cubans in Miami have established an economic enclave, those in West New York-Union City have developed a working-class community, and others have been absorbed into the primary labor market, Cubans in Puerto Rico have assumed a distinctive commercial and entrepreneurial role. They have invested most of their capital and labor in retail trade and business services, primarily as managers, administrators, sales and clerical workers. Most work for themselves, for their

compatriots, or for other foreigners. In sum, Cubans in San Juan fit the occupational profile of a middleman minority.

The comparison between Cubans in Puerto Rico and in the U.S. mainland suggests that linguistic and cultural factors can shape immigrants' socioeconomic incorporation. Among other things, Cuba and Puerto Rico share a tropical insular geography, a common colonial history dominated by Spain, an Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage, a predominantly Catholic religion, and a Creole dialect of the Spanish language. Such similarities have made Cubans' adaptation to Puerto Rico much easier than in the United States. In contrast, Cuban-Americans have faced a predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant establishment. Hence, the ethnic boundaries between Americans and Cubans are much sharper than the ones dividing Cubans from Puerto Ricans. Such cultural differences such be explored further as contributing causes of the various paths followed by the Cuban diaspora⁴⁸.

To recapitulate, the Cuban migrant experience differs widely from place to place. In Miami, Cubans have created an institutionally complete community that provides an alternative to the secondary labor market as well as to mainstream American culture. In West New York-Union City, they have formed a tight ethnic community that has facilitated their adjustment to the new society. In Puerto Rico, the Cuban middleman minority shows signs of increasing assimilation through intermarriage and cultural interpenetration. Elsewhere, the exiles have quickly integrated to the occupational structure and cultural identity of the United States. In short, the Cuban exodus varies greatly across space as well as time and should not be generalized from the unique case of Miami.

48. I have developed these points elsewhere, for the case of Cubans in Puerto Rico. See Duany Jorge, « Two Wings of the Same Bird ? Contemporary Puerto Rican Attitudes Toward Cuban Immigrants ? », unpublished manuscript, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, 1997.

THE CURRENT SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE CUBAN-AMERICAN POPULATION

The most recent Census data allow a comparison of the basic characteristics of Cubans, other Hispanics, and non-Hispanics in the United States (see Table 4). The data reveal striking differences and some similarities among the three groups. Compared to the other two groups, the Cuban population is much older, has more males than females, and has a larger percentage of married couples. On most counts, Cubans resemble more closely the non-Hispanic population than the Hispanic population. For instance, Cubans have fewer female-headed households, are better educated, have lower unemployment rates, earn higher incomes, and have a lower poverty level than other Hispanics. Thus, Cuban-Americans are a relatively advantaged group among U.S. Latinos. They also fare well in comparison to other minorities, such as African-Americans and Asian Americans⁴⁹.

Table 4

**Selected socioeconomic characteristics of cubans,
all hispanics, and non-hispanics in the united states, 1997**

Characteristic	Cubans	All Hispanics	Non-Hispanics ^a
Median age	40,8	26,1	35,5
Percent female	46,5	48,7	51,3
Percent married	57,3	53,8	56,6
Percent female-headed households	12,5	19,7	12,0
Percent completed high school	65,2	54,7	84,8
Median earnings in 1996, females (\$)	16 356,0	11 830,0	16 459,0
Percent below poverty level in 1996	17,3	29,4	11,8

49. See the data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, *1997 Current Population Survey, op. cit.*

(continued)

Characteristic	Cubans	All Hispanics	Non-Hispanics ^a
Percent completed college	19,7	10,3	25,2
Percent unemployed	6,1	9,2	5,2
Median earnings in 1996, males (\$)	22 650,0	16 284,0	26 943,0

^a Includes both whites and blacks of non-Hispanic origin.

Source : U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997 *Current Population Survey*.

Most sociological and anthropological studies of Cuban exiles have highlighted their socioeconomic success in the United States and Puerto Rico. In a recent review of the literature, Silvia Pedraza⁵⁰ noted three prevalent lines of explanation for this success : the privileged class origins of early Cuban migrants, leading to the creation of an enclave economy in Miami ; the definition of Cuban exiles as political refugees by the U.S. government ; and the unusually high participation of Cuban women in the U.S. labor force. Each of these explanations stresses the distinctive characteristics of Cuban exiles vis-à-vis other immigrants, especially Latinos in the United States. Because of this emphasis on the exiles' unique success, important facets of the Cuban-American experience have been overlooked. Among other issues, the persistence of social inequality within Cuban communities in the United States has not been adequately researched⁵¹.

Returning to Table 4, several problematic trends can be identified. In 1997, fully one-third of the Cuban-American population had not completed high school, compared to less than one-third among the non-Hispanic population. Similarly, less than one-fifth of the Cubans had finished college, compared to one-fourth of the non-

50. Pedraza Silvia, « Cubans in Exile, 1959-1989 : The State of the Research », in Fernández Damián J. (ed), *Cuban Studies since the Revolution*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1992, pp. 235-257.

51. An exception to this trend is Valdés Paz Juan and Hernández Rafael, « La estructura de clases de la comunidad cubana en los Estados Unidos », *Cuadernos de Nuestra América* 1 (1983), pp. 5-35.

Hispanics. Furthermore, unemployment and poverty rates were much higher for Cubans than for non-Hispanics. Finally, median earnings among Cuban males were substantially lower than among non-Hispanic males, and slightly lower among Cuban females than among non-Hispanic females. The available data suggest that most Cubans have not yet bridged the gap with the general population of the United States.

Moreover, the overall statistics of the Cuban-American population hide significant internal cleavages. Although Cubans approximate the national income, occupational, and educational norms, economic success remains a mirage for many of them. In 1997, nearly one-fourth of the émigrés earned less than \$ 10 000 and over one-sixth lived under the poverty level. Less than one-fourth of all Cuban-Americans held high-status jobs such as managers and professionals ; almost half were part of the lower strata of operators, laborers, and service workers. Finally, more than one-fifth had less than an eighth grade education⁵². These figures do not agree well with the rags-to-riches stories that one commonly finds in journalistic reports on Cuban migrants.

On the contrary, many Cubans have suffered a loss of occupational status or have undergone a process of proletarianization in the United States. It is not unusual to find a Cuban lawyer selling used cars in Miami, or a trained teacher working as a seamstress in a West New York factory. When the *marielitos* and *balseros* are brought into the picture, the success stories of self-made Cuban businessmen become more scanty. As I have shown, these last two migrant waves consisted of people with less educational and occupational skills than the first two waves ; they looked more and more like traditional labor migrants in search of higher standards of living. Even before Mariel, the émigré population of lower class extraction had increased as a result of continuing material scarcity in Cuba.

In sum, Cuban exiles are located at all levels of the U.S. occupational structure ; they come from all sectors of their home society ;

52. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997 Current Population Survey, *op. cit.*

they are a heterogeneous group economically, socially, and politically as well. This profile renders simplistic class explanations of the exodus grossly inadequate. The retired aged couple living modestly in Little Havana is no less typical of Cuban Americans than the well-to-do family living in plush Coral Gables. It is a mistake to think of Cuban migration exclusively as a white urban elite of ideologically conservative exiles. Extreme right-wing organizations such as the Cuban-American National Foundation do not adequately represent the views of most Cubans in Miami and elsewhere⁵³. As I argued before, it is equally wrong to hold that the ethnic enclave in Miami is the dominant form of incorporation for Cuban immigrants in the United States. The Miami enclave is certainly the most prominent Cuban-American community, but it is by no means the only one, nor can its characteristics be easily extrapolated to other Cuban settlements in New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

To restate my main thesis, the legend of the Golden Exile does not do justice to the complex and diverse experiences of Cubans in the United States. Although much has been written about Cuban refugees, a good deal of it has been biased and inaccurate. The U.S. mass media and some academic researchers have tended to perceive the immigrants as a modern-day version of the American dream. Because they flee a Communist regime – the last one in the western hemisphere –, Cuban exiles have often been portrayed as noble heroes caught in the Cold War between Cuba and the United States. As a general rule, they have been praised for their entrepreneurial spirit, work ethic, and thirst for

53. For instance, recent public opinion polls show that a growing proportion of Cubans in Miami advocates some form of dialogue with the Cuban government, although many continue to support the tightening of the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba. See Grenier Guillermo J., Gladwin Hugh and McLaughlin Douglas, *Views on Policy Options Toward Cuba Held by Cuban-American Residents of Dade County: The Results of the Second 1991 Cuba Poll*, Miami, Institute of Public Opinion Research and Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, 1992.

freedom, as well as their leading role in the conversion of Miami from a quiet tourist resort into a booming trading and financial center. With some variations on a recurring theme, the Cuban success story has been told and retold in many influential academic, policy-making, and journalistic circles.

However, recent research on the Cuban population in the United States does not support the idealized image of the Golden Exile. First of all, most Cuban-Americans are not wealthy, well-educated, and highly skilled, especially when compared with non-Hispanics. Nor have they been without problems in adjusting to life in the United States. Cuban-Americans share the difficulties of many other immigrant groups, such as learning a new language, overcoming ethnic discrimination, gaining access to public services, organizing themselves as a pressure group, reconstructing family ties, and forging a new cultural identity. Secondly, the Cuban exodus during the past four decades has followed the changing fortunes of the Cuban Revolution and its relations with the United States. As I have argued throughout this article, successive migration waves drew deeper into the middle and lower strata of Cuban society. Whereas the early refugees came predominantly from the privileged classes of pre-revolutionary Cuba, many *marielitos* and *balseros* came from the disadvantaged sectors of post-revolutionary society. As the Cuban government itself recognized (although using derogatory terms), the *gusanos* (worms) of the first waves became the *escoria* (scum) after Mariel.

Finally, U.S. policy toward Cuban migration has changed dramatically over the last forty years. As the title of a recent book on the topic notes, Cubans were transformed from « welcome exiles » in the 1960s to « illegal migrants » in the 1990s⁵⁴. The long-term impact of this policy shift on the Cuban-American population remains unclear. A prominent sociologist, Lisandro Pérez, has predicted « the end of

54. Masud-Piloto Félix, « From Welcome Exiles to Illegal Migrants : Cuban Migration to the U.S. », 1959-1995, Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.

exile » as it is now known among Cubans in the United States⁵⁵. Current trends suggest that Cuban-Americans are making the ideological transition from political refugees to an ethnic minority group⁵⁶. Should this pattern continue, Cubans will no longer perceive themselves as unique, exceptional, or radically distinct from other Latino or Caribbean immigrants in the United States. Clearly, they have lost the symbolic value they once had for the federal government during the heyday of the Cold War against Communism.



Résumé

Cet article aborde les principales phases de la migration cubaine vers les Etats-Unis au XX^e siècle, spécialement après 1959, et retrace ses origines historiques au XIX^e siècle. L'auteur insiste sur l'évolution des caractéristiques socio-économiques des émigrés ainsi que sur leur répartition spatiale aux Etats-Unis. Il montre que les émigrés sont devenus, au cours des quatre dernières décennies, de plus en plus représentatifs de la société cubaine, du point de vue des revenus, de l'emploi et de l'instruction, mais pas en ce qui concerne la race ou la couleur et la région d'origine : ils sont prioritairement blancs et urbains. La seconde

Abstract

This article sketches the principal migration waves from Cuba to the United States during the twentieth century, especially since 1959, and traces their historical background in the nineteenth century. The author focuses on the changing socioeconomic characteristics of the migrants over time as well as their spatial distribution within the United States. He shows that, throughout the past four decades, the émigrés have become more and more representative of Cuban society with regard to income, occupation, and education (but not so much with regard to race or color and region of origin – they are still predominantly white and

55. Pérez Lisandro, « ¿ Fin del exilio cubano ? », paper presented at the XX International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997.

56. See Duany Jorge, « Neither Golden Exile nor Dirty Worm : Ethnic Identity in Recent Cuban-American Novels », *Cuban Studies* 23, 1993, pp. 167-183.

partie de cet essai analyse les différences et similitudes entre le mode d'incorporation des Cubains à Miami, West New York-Union City, San Juan et d'autres villes. En particulier, l'auteur estime que c'est une erreur que de considérer l'enclave ethnique de Miami comme un modèle de l'expérience de tous les Cubains en exil. La dernière partie du travail examine brièvement le profil socioéconomique de la population cubaine aux États-Unis pour conclure que les images stéréotypées de son succès au plan matériel ne trouvent guère confirmation dans la recherche académique. Au contraire, les cubain-américains font face à plusieurs défis communs à d'autres immigrants récents aux États-Unis et ailleurs. Parmi ces défis, il y a la question de l'identité culturelle hybride, laquelle maintient des liaisons transnationales entre le pays natal et le pays d'adoption.

Mots-clés

Communautés cubano-américaines
– Cubains aux États-Unis – Enclaves ethniques – Immigration cubaine

urban). The second part of this article analyzes the differences and similarities in the settlement patterns of Cubans in Miami, West New York-Union City, San Juan, and other cities. In particular, the author argues that it is a mistake to take the ethnic enclave in Miami as the prototype for the experiences of all Cubans in exile. The last section of the essay briefly examines the socioeconomic profile of the Cuban population in the United States and concludes that stereotyped images of its material success have little basis on academic research. Instead, Cuban-Americans face many of the same challenges as other recent immigrants in the United States and elsewhere. Among these challenges is the question of developing a hybrid cultural identity that maintains transnational linkages to the homeland as well as to the adopted country.

Keys-words

Cuban-American communities – Cuban immigration – Cubans in the United States – Ethnic enclave