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University of California, San Diego

## **On Deconstructing Immigrant Generations: Cohorts and the Cuban Émigré Experience**

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Working Paper 97  
April 2004

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ON DECONSTRUCTING IMMIGRANT GENERATIONS:  
COHORTS AND THE CUBAN ÉMIGRÉ EXPERIENCE

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## BIO

Susan Eckstein is professor of sociology at Boston University and former president of the Latin American Studies Association. She is currently a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute. Her publications include *Back from the Future: Cuba Under Castro* (Princeton University Press, 1994 and Routledge 2003), *The Poverty of Revolution: The State and Urban Poor in Mexico* (Princeton University Press, 1977, 1988), *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements 1989, 2001* (editor), *What Justice? Whose Justice? Fighting for Fairness in Latin America* (University of California Press, 2003) (co-editor) and *The Struggle for Social Rights in Latin America* (Routledge 2002). In addition, she has written over six dozen articles on Latin America.

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a new approach for deepening our understanding of the immigrant experience. It describes how and explains why a historically grounded cohort analysis brings to the fore aspects of émigré views and involvements, including within a single immigrant generation, other approaches leave undocumented and unexplained.

Differences in pre-migration experiences are shown to shape both how immigrants adapt to their new country of settlement and how they relate to their homeland. The utility of the approach is illustrated by contrasting the experiences of different cohorts of Cuban immigrants: how they have adapted here and the nature of their transnational ties.

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A growing body of studies on the so-called new, post-1965 immigrants have challenged the universality of the assimilationist paradigm that had been applied, with theme and variation, to describe and account for pre-1965 “old immigrant” experiences.<sup>1</sup> Works on the new immigrants draw on a newly conceptualized transnational frame of analysis that highlights continued immigrant home country ties, the significance of the ties both “here” and “there,” and the creation of a transnational social field.<sup>2</sup> The shift in analysis reflects, in part, real differences in “new” versus “old” immigrant practices, but also a paradigmatic shift in the Kuhnian (1996) sense, that is, a new conceptual frame premised on different assumptions capturing dynamics “assimilationists” left undocumented and unexplained. The new frame helps account for ways that and reasons why new immigrants do not fully assimilate, do not “behave” the way assimilationist norms and analyses would suggest.

The two analytic frames, not surprisingly, in turn, highlight different generational tendencies, assimilation versus transnational. While portraying generational experiences differently, however, they in the main share a common conception of generations. They presume generations to be kinship-based, involving people of the same genealogical remove, e.g. first generation immigrant parents and their second generation, new country of settlement children. And they typically presume that people of the same genealogical remove share common characteristics and common experiences for reasons rooted in

generation-linked differences in socialization and opportunities.<sup>3</sup> The big social divide they both point to is between first generation immigrant parents and their second generation immigrant children, born and raised in the new country of settlement.

There exist two important refinements of the generational concept, one rooted more in the assimilationist frame of analysis, the other in the transnational frame. The former points to age-of-migration variability in generational experiences, and offers an explanation for that variability. Immigrant children, adolescents, young adults, and elderly, all first generation, according to this conceptualization, can be expected to differ in their immigrant experiences owing to where they were socialized and schooled and the stage of their lifecycle in which they entered the country of settlement labor market. The first studies highlighting age-of-migration variability focused on pre-1965 “old immigrants” (c.f. Thomas and Znaniecki 1996; Warner and Srole 1949), but this basis of variability has been recently systematically analyzed among diverse “new immigrant” groups (c.f. Rumbaut 2004). Using the individual as the basic unit of analysis, Rumbaut subdivides generations, the first generation into 1.25, 1.5, 1.75 age-of-migration cohorts, and examines differences among them in educational, occupational, and language attainment. Any historically distinctive experiences immigrants have not linked to age-of-migration are not addressed and implicitly assumed, analytically, to not be of major significance.

The other generational refinement entails a post-modern turn. It is addressed in the context of new immigrant transnational dynamics, although not all transnationalist analyses conceptualize generations in this manner (c.f. articles in Levitt and Waters (eds.) 2002). The post-modern refinement deconstructs the concept of immigrant generations as

conventionally understood and reconstructs it anew in a deterritorialized manner devoid of anchorage in individual genealogy and migration experience. Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001), for example, conceive a generation, in the era of cross-border bonding, as including people sharing common experiences irrespective of where they live and irrespective of kinship based genealogical remove. They redefine the second generation to include the entire generation *both in the homeland and new land* who grow up within transnational social fields grounded in informal, diverse social networks spanning country borders. Their generational conception also allows for geographic fluidity, movement to and fro across borders, an aspect of immigrant experience other analyses, especially within the assimilationist school, overlook. This post-modern approach presumes that people in the world today may share non-geographic bound experiences. So too does it presume that such cross-border experiences may be more meaningful than any rooted in kinship genealogy, actual migration, or age of migration. Indeed, migration, in this frame of analysis may be a state of mind, though real in its consequences. Accordingly, the “second generation” may include home country individuals who never physically leave, who do not permanently leave, or who leave at some future time with values, in part, transmitted by earlier migrants from abroad. And it may include people in the homeland incorporated into institutions and practices linking diasporas with their home country, the media, and the like.

Both approaches modify and improve our understanding of immigrant generations in very different ways and for different reasons, and the post-modern conception improves our understanding as well of home country people who do not uproot. Yet, neither grounds the conception or understanding of generations in historically rooted

space-based context and neither provides a frame of analysis that highlights how or explains why views and involvements of any one generation may vary depending on country specific historically rooted experiences. Karl Mannheim (1952) understood the significance of generations in historical along with age terms. A historically grounded "generation as actuality," he argued, involved people sharing powerful experiences. He suggested that key experiences shared during youth may create a common worldview or frame of reference that influences subsequent experiences. While Mannheim focused on political generations in advanced industrial societies, Eisenstadt (1956) addressed the distinctive role of youth in anti-colonial movements and Zeitlin (1970) pointed to how different pre-Revolutionary political generations in Cuba, because of their different experiences, viewed the 1959 Castro-led revolution differently. However, since not all members of an age cohort react the same to the events they experience (e.g. varying by social class) and since political experiences may be shared by people varying in age, political generations should be understood around key historical experiences and not merely youth, age-based experiences.

These historically grounded generation studies did not focus on immigrants, or on experiences in the context of immigration. Yet, there is reason to believe that political generation experiences are not necessarily left behind when people uproot. This would be especially likely in the case of refugees who fled their homeland because of deeply felt beliefs. And there is reason to believe that the generational-consequential experiences forming part of immigrant "baggage" and influencing country of settlement adaptation may be social, cultural, and economic, and not merely political. If different pre-migration political or other experiences are not left behind when uprooting, a historically as distinct



from an age-of-migration grounded cohort analysis may help delineate and explain *intra*-generational variability otherwise undocumented and unexplained.

Such a historically grounded cohort analysis is not inconsistent with the post-modern generational conception; however, it allows for greater specificity and explanation. It provides a bases for capturing and understanding how and why émigrés from particular time periods and from diverse countries may adapt differently and be differently involved across borders. But the conceptualization of sociologically meaningful cohorts requires an understanding of the lived experiences people in a country have, a matter Manheim alerted us to.

The conceptual utility of historically grounded cohort analyses rests on showing a correlation between pre-migration background and post-migration experiences. Yet, the weight of history should not be presumed to operate mechanistically, and history alone should not be presumed to be destiny. The history shaping post-migration experiences does not necessarily hinge on individuals as passive subjects. People who emigrate with different assets have different assets to draw on, the assets of use partly contingent on the structure of opportunities where and when they settle. While émigrés who arrive with human, social, and financial capital would be expected to start life anew with advantage, the economically meek and politically weak may find ways, even if only covertly, to shape and reshape certain conditions of their living to their own advantage. In this vein, James C. Scott (1985, 1990) has masterfully demonstrated how ordinary people may covertly resist domination they can not readily challenge outrightly, and in ways inducing coveted (and possibly also greater) change. Immigrant generational studies, the post-modern transnational conceptualization excepted, typically presume a deterministic

adaptive “invisible hand.” They ignore, descriptively and especially analytically, how men and women may make history, even if not, as Marx (1959) pointed out, under conditions of their choosing. In contemporary parlance, there is an element of “agency” in people’s lives, and the experiences of immigrants should be no exception. Such “agency” may entail use of existing opportunities, as well as creation of new opportunities, that, in turn, may remake the very social context in which people’s lives take form.

The utility of a historically grounded cohort analysis is illustrated below in reference to U.S. Cuban émigrés. Different cohorts of first generation immigrants from the island will be shown to differ in pre-migration background, in ways influencing post-migration experiences. An analysis focusing on first versus second (or subsequent) generation differences would leave cohort variability among first generation immigrants both undocumented and unexplained.

My U.S.-based cohort comparisons draw mainly on material from the *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)* 2000 census and from published survey data on Cuban Americans in Miami, where approximately half of all Cuban Americans live (Boswell 2002: ii). However, when useful I also draw on open-ended interviews with over two hundred people I conducted in Miami and Cuba in conjunction with a broader transnational study of which the cohort analysis forms part.<sup>4</sup> In addition, I draw selectively on secondary sources.

### **Pre-Migration Background of Cuban Émigré Cohorts**

Cubans who have made their way to the U.S., the home of an estimated 89 percent of island émigrés (Aguilar Trujillo 2001), have differed in assets they came with

and pre-migration experiences, and in their *weltanschauung*, world view and basic values. They differ depending on when they left Cuba: before the 1959 Castro-led revolution, soon after the revolution, or decades later, in which case they lived the revolution. Because few Cubans emigrated before the revolution, I will not focus on them.

In 2000 over a million people in the U.S. identified themselves as Cuban-American (Diaz-Briquets and Perez-Lopez 2003: i). Nearly half were U.S. born (see Table 1), children, one can assume, mainly of families who emigrated soon after the revolution. And among the Cubans who emigrated after 1959, approximately half arrived before 1980 and half since. Since émigrés who arrived in the first five years of Castro’s rule lived almost their entire lives in pre-revolutionary Cuba and little at all in Cuba-transformed, my cohort analysis of pre-1980 émigrés will focus on them. Similarly, my analysis of post-1980 émigrés will focus mainly on islanders who emigrated since 1990, in the post-Soviet era. Émigrés of the 1990s, like those of the 1980s, lived the revolution. However, émigrés of the 1990s also experienced the revolution’s unraveling, once the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc were relegated to the dustbin of history and aid from as well as trade with the allies of thirty years ground to a halt.

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The first émigré cohort included the pre-Revolutionary middle and upper classes who lived a privileged lifestyle. For this reason I refer to them as the privileged cohort, even though some were far more privileged than others. The class background of the first

to flee the revolution contrasts with that of most who left in the 1980s and 1990s, whom I refer to as the proletarianized cohort.<sup>5</sup> By the 1990s subsistence had become so problematic, even for the working classes in whose name the revolution allegedly had been made, that they too sought refuge abroad. The economy contracted over 30 percent between 1989 and 1993 (c.f. ECLAC 2000).

### ***The Privileged Cohort***

The first cohort to leave Cuba after Castro took power included many pre-Revolutionary professionals and managers, more than three times their percentage of the pre-revolutionary social structure (see Table 2).<sup>6</sup> Well-standing Cubans fled as the revolution stripped them of their property and bases of wealth.

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Even when fleeing because their economic interests were at stake these émigrés interpreted their exodus politically. They were deeply anti-Castro and anti-Communist, and they considered themselves exiles from a country (and lifestyle) they much loved. Only a small portion of the first wave of émigrés, however, left exclusively for political reasons: because their life was endangered. Genuine political refugees included associates of the Batista government whom the revolution discredited and anti-Castro activists.

The 1959-1964 émigrés typically were conservative and religious Catholics, and many racist and elitist. They had hoped and anticipated that their stay in the U.S. would be short-lived, until Castro was deposed and they could return Cuba to the status quo

ante. While in exile they lived with idealized memories of times past, which most had no desire to dispel. They barely if at all knew the revolution first hand and rarely wanted to. Their conception of Castro's Cuba became largely a construct of their imagination, and a very negative construct at that. Hostile to the Castro regime, and wanting to bring it to heel, they advocated a personal along with official national embargo of Cuba. They advocated the embargo on moral grounds, and believed it would cause regime collapse. Meanwhile, with their political mission in mind they used their political muscle in the U.S. to keep cross-border ties, by individuals and institutions, at bay.

The pre-revolutionary middle class followed the upper class into exile. More than twice as many clerical and sales workers as their portion of the pre-revolutionary work force joined the exodus to the U.S. by 1962 (see Table 2). No doubt many had been *petit bourgeoisie*, small businessmen and white collar workers before leaving. If they lost less than the professional and managerial classes with the revolution it was because they had less to lose. But they shared with the more well-to-do, in many respects, a similar *weltanschauung*, a similar cultural and ideological mindset.

The laboring classes, especially those who worked in agriculture, were far less likely to leave Cuba as the revolution radicalized in the first years of Castro's rule. In contrast to pre-revolutionary elites, they benefited from the revolution almost immediately. This was especially true of farm laborers. They gained access to schooling, plus a stable and improved income. And sharecroppers and tenant farmers gained legal rights to the land they had been tilling. They also gained a new sense of dignity. Accordingly, the class base of the revolution shaped the class background of who sought

refuge abroad. However, as Table 2 demonstrates, the pre-revolutionary privileged were most inclined to leave but they were not alone to join the diaspora.

### ***The Proletarianized Cohort***

Émigrés of the 1980s and 1990s represent another Cuba. They are the antithesis, in many respects, of the first cohort. They are the antithesis partly because the revolution early on eliminated the social and economic base of propertied classes, so that there no longer were independent entrepreneurs and independent professionals to leave.

But the proletarianization of the labor force alone does not explain why growing numbers of workers came to seek refuge abroad. With time many workers became disillusioned with the revolution, as their living conditions stalemated and the revolution made political and labor demands on them that they disliked, such as exhorting them to help in unpopular back-breaking sugar harvesting. Yet, they in turn were not alone in leaving. The large exodus from Mariel, in 1980, for example, included a spectrum of Cubans, ranging from intellectuals, artists, and homosexuals, to long-time disaffected who for one reason or another previously had been unable to leave, to criminals and mental patients the government loaded on to boats picking islanders up.

Beginning in 1990-1991 everyday living for almost everyone took a downward turn. The value of peso earnings plunged as the official currency, de facto though not de jure, lost former value. The black market dollar/peso exchange rate rose to 1:130 in 1993, subsequently stabilizing within a 20 to 27 pesos-to-the-dollar range (while officially the two currencies remained on par). Prior to the devaluation no one became rich on their state earnings but few were poor or indigent or without cradle-to-grave social benefits. In the new post Soviet era economy, however, no one could live on their official salary. The

increase in service employees joining the diaspora in the 1990s, shown in Table 2, include pauperized employees of the welfare state.<sup>7</sup>

The 1990s émigrés differ from the early émigrés also in their island political formation, and associated views. They lived the revolution, many with little or no first-hand knowledge or memories of the pre-revolutionary period. They consequently experienced no civil society involvement independent of the state, as had the middle and upper classes before the revolution. But by virtue of living most if not all their lives under Castro they had a nuanced understanding of conditions in Cuba, and they were socialized by the revolution. Thus, for this cohort, unlike the first, Castro's Cuba was not imagined and pre-revolutionary society not idealized.

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Many islanders who emigrated after 1990 had political reasons for emigrating, as had the first cohort. This interpretation was reinforced by U.S. immigration policy, which automatically classified incoming Cubans as refugees, in accordance with the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act. However, for most 1990s émigrés economic concerns were paramount (c.f. Eckstein and Barberia 2002). As living conditions deteriorated after the Soviet Union became a matter of history, many islanders saw life abroad their best hope. Yet, unlike the first cohort, many post-1990 émigrés relocated abroad with the intent to help, not break with, family they left behind. Indeed, emigration became part of a family survival strategy. The moral frame of reference of these émigrés was family based across borders, not as among the earlier cohort ideologically grounded in opposition to the Castro regime and opposition, therefore, to any island ties.

### **Post-Migration Economic Adaptation**

Cubans did well economically in emigrating. They quickly became one of the most successful immigrant groups in America. Indicative, revenue of Cuban American owned businesses by the turn of the century was equal to that of the entire island's GDP measured at the official exchange rate, and substantially more at the unofficial de facto exchange rate (Diaz-Briquets and Perez-Lopez 2003: 12, 15). Sales and receipts of Cuban owned businesses increased over 37-fold between 1969 and 1997 in constant (1997) dollars.

And many Cuban Americans besides those who went into business prospered in the States. In 2000 the median annual Cuban American household income somewhat exceeded \$30,000, and 19 percent of households earned \$75,000 or more. In contrast, in 1990 only 9 percent of Cuban American households had earnings in this upper-end income bracket (Diaz-Briquets and Perez-Lopez 2003: 6). Related, Cuban Americans did well occupationally. By 2000 more Cubans in the U.S. held top-level jobs, managerial and professional, than had in Cuba before the revolution (see Tables 2 and 3).

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The cohorts, however, differ significantly in how well they have done here. Islanders of the first cohort to flee Castro's Cuba may not have emigrated by choice, but they benefited economically in uprooting. In 2000 islanders who emigrated between 1959 and 1964 were about five times more likely to hold high level professional and managerial jobs than Cubans held at the time of the last pre-revolutionary Cuban census (in 1953).



Far fewer émigrés of the 1980s and 1990s by 2000 shared the American Dream. Their experience in the U.S. proved the mirror opposite of the first cohort. The more recent arrivals were two to three times less likely to hold top jobs and two to three times more likely to be laborers (especially unskilled) than the 1959 to 1964 arrivals.

Earnings of the cohorts, in turn, not surprisingly differ. At the century's turn less than half as many émigrés of the 1959-1964 cohort as of the 1980s and 1990s cohorts lived below the U.S. poverty line. Fewer of the first cohort also ranked among the lowest tercile of American income earners then (see Table 3). On a household basis émigrés did better than individually, but, again, the first cohort did better than islanders who subsequently joined the diaspora. However, more recent arrivals benefited from multiple income earners.

The cohorts differ also at the upper income end, especially in personal income. Roughly twice as many of the 1959-1964 as later arrivals in 2000 ranked among America's top income earners.

There proves to be “Another Cuban American,” alongside the émigrés living the American Dream. There is “Another Cuban American,” just as Michael Harrington (1981) argued decades ago there was “Another American,” excluded from the nation's post World War Two prosperity. The archetypal well-to-do Cuban American is predominantly a first cohort phenomenon, but even among that cohort 9 percent lived below the poverty line and one-third of the households ranked among the country's poorest income earners after some forty years in the U.S. Most likely those of the first cohort who came with the greatest economic, social, and human capital assets have been best able to take advantage of opportunities here, but there is nothing in Cubans' ethnic

heritage assuring success upon emigration. And with many who emigrated in 1980 still doing poorly after twenty years here, there is no reason for optimism that their plight, and that of 1990s émigrés, is transitory.

Several factors help explain the economic disparities between the cohorts. For one, the recent émigrés, as noted, came with fewer human, social, and economic assets. By the time the 1980s as well as 1990s émigré cohorts came of age in Cuba the revolution had eliminated private business opportunities and accordingly opportunities to accumulate capital, to acquire entrepreneurial expertise, and to build up a business reputation potentially transferable to Miami. The more recent arrivals also tend to be significantly less educated (see Table 4). Around 70 percent of the 1980s and 1990s émigrés but only 48 percent of the 1959-1964 cohort have a high school degree at best. Moreover, the recent émigrés entered the U.S. labor market at a time when human capital requirements for jobs had increased. Recent émigrés even lack the social capital first arrivals came with, described in more detail below. Post-1980 émigrés thus came without the range of personal assets helpful for “making it” in America.

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The recent poorly educated émigrés also faced a less favorable labor market. By the century’s turn blue collar manufacturing jobs offering a stable middle-level income had largely moved overseas, where labor was cheaper. The garment industry, for example, which had employed many émigrés in the 1960s, especially women, by the 1990s had all but disappeared. In the changed context, Cuban American factory

employment (operators, fabricators, and handlers, in the census) in Miami-Dade County, where most Cuban émigrés live, especially recent arrivals, plunged. It declined from 34 to 19 percent just in the course of the 1990s (Boswell 2002: 35). By the turn of the century transnationalization of production, and not merely mechanization, as Harrington noted decades earlier, eliminated blue collar work. The restructuring no doubt pushed some of the workforce into the ranks of the “Other American.” Post-migration adaptation results from an interplay between pre-migration background and country (and community) of settlement opportunities.

Meanwhile, the first but not later émigrés benefited from large-scale government aid that facilitated adjustment here. They received nearly a billion dollars worth of assistance, including food, clothing, and healthcare, assistance in finding jobs, financial aid, job and professional training, bilingual education, and college tuition loans (see Pedraza 1985: 4-52). No other Latin American immigrants received comparable assistance. Cubans were singled out because they advanced Washington’s Cold War concerns at the time. In adapting well, they demonstrated to the world the superiority of capitalist democracy to Communism. The programs tapered off in the early 1970s, so that the ‘80s as well as ‘90s émigrés benefited from no comparable supports.

The first cohort also benefited from government programs that did not target them in particular, such as Small Business Association (SBA) loans. Cuban émigrés of the first cohort managed to receive nearly half the loans the SBA awarded in Miami between 1968 and 1980 (c.f. Portes and Stepick 1993: 46).<sup>8</sup> The SBA subsequently stopped breaking down its dispersed loans to Hispanics by ethnicity. However, in 2000, according to the census, 9 percent of employed émigrés of the 1990s cohort were self-employed, or

unpaid family workers, compared to 19 percent of the 1959-1964 cohort. Whether recent émigrés were less inclined to go into business for themselves, or less likely to qualify for government help to give them a boost, recent émigrés are not following the small entrepreneurial Horatio Alger sort of path to nearly the same extent as the first cohort to leave Castro's Cuba.

Immigrant economic adaptation also hinged on the embedding of opportunities. In the 1960s Cuban arrivals with assets formed a local enclave economy, an economy both for and by Cubans (c.f. Portes and Stepick 1993: 123-49). Entrepreneurial and professional émigrés established businesses and practices that fellow émigrés patronized, and that hired co-ethnics. They did so with and without SBA support. Small exile-owned banks helped finance start-up businesses, and exiles who became loan officers at, and managers of, non-Cuban-owned banks similarly favored fellow émigrés. Initially they made so-called character loans, to collateral-less émigrés, based on known reputation in Cuba (c.f. Portes and Stepick 1993: 139-40). The first cohort accordingly developed institutional practices enabling them as a group to benefit from assets they came with.

The first cohort to settle in Miami, moreover, benefited from being in the right place at the right time, and capitalizing on it. Beginning in the 1970s the Miami economy restructured, diversified, and expanded, and took on hemispheric reach. The city became a hub of regional trade, banking, multinational corporate activity, and tourism. Trade became the city's number one industry, most hemispheric based (c.f. [www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/portofmiami/cargo\\_facts.htm](http://www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/portofmiami/cargo_facts.htm); Kanter 1995: 285). Concomitantly, the city became the U.S.' fourth most important international banking center (Grenier and Stepick 1992: 2), with the banking, like trade, hemispheric focused. Multinational corporations,

in turn, further contributed to Miami's economic transformation. Companies set up new facilities in the city and relocated others previously based in Latin America (c.f. Kanter 1995: 284, 303; Mohl 1983: 75). U.S. corporations transferred operations from Latin America to Miami as stepped up crime, kidnappings, and civil strife in the region made living there unsafe for management. Under the circumstances, Miami became a preferred base for Latin American operations.

Large national and multinational businesses squeezed out many smaller Cuban-owned firms. But they hired Cubans who had the human capital, plus multicultural and multilingual skills, and by then also multi-country networks, for middle and top management positions. Indeed, business with a hemispheric focus located in Miami over other border cities mainly because Cuban Americans offered the bilingual skills, networks, and experience useful for economic activity spanning the Americas. Aside from previously discussed assets, the 1959-1964 cohort acquired mastery of English while holding on, remarkably, to their mother tongue, even some forty years after settling in the U.S. (see Table 4). In Miami most Miami Cuban Americans concurred that fluency in Spanish facilitated job attainment (FIU-IPOR 2004:2-9, language questions)

In Miami, Cubans of the first cohort also benefited from, as well as contributed to, the city's transformation into a hemispheric national security outpost (c.f. Grosfoguel 1994). This development had roots in Washington's Cold War geopolitical concerns. Intelligence agencies had feared a regional contagion of the Cuban revolution. Cuban exiles not only shared the agencies' political-ideological preoccupation but offered requisite linguistic skills for national security espionage and counter-revolutionary activity in the region. Intelligence agencies therefore hired Miami Cubans, turned to them

for businesses that served as “fronts,” and contracted them for work they needed. Some 12,000 Cuban exiles are believed to have been on the CIA payroll in the early 1960s. National security agencies accordingly helped the then new Cuban arrivals gain an economic footing in the U.S.(c.f. Dideon 1987: 90; Grenier and Stepick 1992: 11). Nicaragua’s left-leaning Sandinista revolution in 1979 and the civil wars in neighboring countries in the 1980s made Miami all the more relevant to Washington’s national security concerns. Cuban Americans again were hired. However, by the 1980s intelligence agencies had refugees from the Central American wars they also could and did hire. Consequently, more recent émigrés have not had the same national security employment opportunities as the first cohort. And the post Cold War reduced Washington demand for immigrant help in hemispheric counter-insurgency work. The government’s concerns shifted to other regions, especially after September 11 (2001), Colombia excepted.

Finally, recent émigrés faced more immigrant labor market competition, and not only for national security work. While the first Cubans to flee the revolution were the vanguard of the new immigrants, recent émigrés arrived in the thick of the new immigrant era. And by the latter decades of the twentieth century Miami, where most post-1980 Cuban émigrés settled, was, along with New York and Los Angeles, a new immigrant magnet.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, by the 1990s other immigrants, in Miami mainly from Latin America, flooded the local labor market, both taking jobs that incoming Cubans otherwise might have secured and driving wages down. Even businesses within the original enclave put ethnic loyalty aside if they could hire hardworking, trustworthy immigrants from elsewhere in the region for less. Whatever advantage the enclave

initially offered incoming immigrants from Cuba seems to have subsequently disappeared. At the turn of the century Cuban Americans of the different cohorts who settled in Miami were more likely to be low income earners, both on an individual and household basis, than their former Cuban compatriots who took up roots elsewhere in the States (see Table 3). However, 1990s émigrés tended to do poorly no matter where they settled.

In sum, the different cohorts came with different assets, and they faced and created different opportunity structures once resettled. The cohorts, as a result, experienced America differently.

### **Power and Influence**

Cuban Americans also have become one of the most politically influential immigrant groups, and the most influential from Latin America. They have become important players in administrative governance and electoral politics in the communities where they mainly settled, and they have gained national influence on matters pertaining to U.S. policy toward their homeland. And especially in Miami their influence has extended to the media, through which they have been able to shape public opinion on Cuba.

#### ***Leveraging Local Politics***

Beginning in the 1980s Cuban Americans increasingly were elected to political office. Wherever they live in large numbers even if not the numerical majority, they have joined the political class (c.f. Garcia 1996, Stepick et al 2003). The city of Sweetwater became the first city in South Florida to elect a Cuba-born mayor. And the City of Miami has had a majority Cuban American Commission since 1985 and a Cuban American mayor almost continuously since then. Similarly, the City Commission of Miami Beach,

the county's third largest city, became majority Cuban American around the same time. Meanwhile, Hialeah, home to more Cubans than any city other than Havana, has had a Cuban American mayor since the early 1980s.

Cuban Americans also became politically important at the county level, in Miami-Dade. In the latter 1990s the first Cuban American was elected countywide mayor: Alex Penelas. By then Cuban Americans also constituted the majority of the County Commission, and the county sent a predominantly Cuban American delegation to the state legislature. Cuban Americans became politically influential at the county level even though they accounted for only 29 percent of the county population (Boswell 2002: 11).

By 2000 Cuban Americans held one-third of the top appointed as well as elected positions in Miami-Dade, more than any other ethnic group. Miamians, in turn, perceived Cuban immigrants to be the city's dominant ethnic group. Seventy-five percent of the eight hundred Miami-Dade residents who participated in a *Miami Herald* poll at the turn of the century believed Cuban Americans to be the most politically powerful of the county's ethnic groups (*Miami Herald* September 4, 2000).

The Cuban Americans who dominate politically, as economically, are almost without exception from the privileged émigré cohort, or their U.S. born children. While I am aware of no data that documents first cohort political domination, in my research I never came upon or heard of an influential politician who emigrated in the 1980s or 1990s, and the most influential Cuban Americans without question are of the first cohort, or their children as they have come of age. The more recent émigrés are being bypassed.

U.S. born children of the first cohort who have risen to political preeminence include Jorge Mas Santos, who took over the helm of the Cuban American National



Foundation, after his father, Jorge Mas Canosa, died in 1997. The Foundation, as it is commonly called, at the time Mas Santos assumed its helm, was the most influential Cuban American organization and lobbying force. And two of the four Cuban American Congressmen, Robert Menendez in New Jersey, a former mayor of Union City, once the second most important city of Cuban settlement, and the 2002-elected Miami Congressman, Mario Diaz-Belart, are U.S. born children of émigrés. Diaz-Belart, as well as Mas Santos, are children of influential first cohort families. Mario Diaz-Belart, and his more established, older, Cuban-born brother, Lincoln, also a Miami Congressman, moreover, come from a family politically prominent in pre-revolutionary Cuba. Their uncle served in Batista's cabinet. While Castro's government crushed the family influence in Cuba, Miami Cuban Americans polled in 2000 named Lincoln more frequently than anyone else as the local person most likely to play a major role in Cuba when a transition to democracy occurs (FIU-IPOR 2000).<sup>10</sup>

In terms of voting, ordinary émigrés who resettled in the States in recent decades also are at the sidelines. As of 2000, only 26 percent of the eligible 1990s émigrés and about half of the eligible 1980s émigrés, but 92 percent of 1959-1964 émigrés, were citizens and therefore eligible to vote (see Table 4). Since Cuban émigrés, according to the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, are entitled to citizenship after five years of U.S. resident status, islanders who emigrated before 1995 not "naturalized" by 2000, almost without exception, remained so at their own discretion.<sup>11</sup>

Several factors contribute to the low citizenship rate among the 1980s as well as 1990s cohort. One, poor and uneducated Americans generally tend to have low rates of electoral and other political participation (c.f. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Post-

1980 émigrés, as noted, tend to be both low income earners and poorly educated. Securing citizenship is a first step for entitlement to vote. Two, many 1990s émigrés, as detailed below, remain enmeshed in homeland ties, so that becoming politically engaged locally is not necessarily a priority of theirs. Three, recent émigrés possibly feel politically alienated, because the first cohort dominating political class does not speak to and represent their interests, as also detailed below. These factors may leave recent émigrés with minimal incentive to take out citizenship. Their resident status entitles them to most benefits other than voting.<sup>12</sup>

Cuban American voters are, nonetheless, sufficiently numerous in Greater Miami that most politicians, even if not of Cuban background, address Cuban American concerns. However, politicians through the turn of the century focused almost exclusively on the concerns of the politically active first cohort. For opportunistic reasons if not political conviction politicians advocate a “hardline” on U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba. In particular, they publicly support retention of the embargo, a mantra in Miami. Foreign policy regarding Cuba is a local political issue, alongside usual local political concerns, such as taxes.

### ***Leveraging National Politics***

Even though Cubans comprise less than 1 percent of the U.S. population (Boswell 2002: 2), they have, in turn, become one of the most influential ethnic groups in Washington. They have become influential in part because their concentration in Florida gives them leverage in national electoral politics. Florida commands the fourth largest number of electoral college votes and it is a “swing state.” Therefore, both parties pander to the Cuban American vote. The 2000 election made transparent how critical Florida can

be to national politics. Florida was decisive to George W. Bush's winning the electoral college but not national popular vote. Some 85 percent of Miami Cuban Americans reported voting for Bush (FIU-IPOR 2000),<sup>13</sup> and they defended Bush when the state's vote was contested. Politically indebted, Bush appointed several Cuban Americans to senior posts on the National Security Council, the State Department, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Such appointments ensured that first cohort views could be heard in the highest circles. The appointees all emigrated in the early years of the revolution.

Cuban Americans became influential at the national level also because they became adept lobbyists, moneyed and well organized. Their national influence began under President Reagan, who supported the formation of the Cuban American National Foundation, in exchange for the Cuban American vote. Jorge Mas Canosa, the community's most influential and charismatic leader as well as chief Foundation spokesperson, in the process gained access to the White House.

Mas Canosa financed the Foundation with a portion of his fortune. He had owned MasTec, which at the time of his death was one of the two largest Cuban American owned firms. The Foundation received 200,000 shares of the company's stock. The Foundation also benefited from large annual donations from individuals who by virtue of their contributions influenced Foundation policy. As of the early 2000s the Foundation's 170 directors, trustees, and associates each typically gave \$1,000 to \$6,500 (if not more) annually to the organization, and some 55,000 regular members paid up to \$100 a year (Tamayo 2002).<sup>14</sup> The Foundation drew on these funds to buy political influence. It formed a Political Action Committee (PAC) that deftly targeted its money for a number

of years through a dedicated lobbying office in Washington. The Foundation modeled itself after the very influential Jewish ethnic lobby, and among ethnic PACs its contributions were greater than all but the pro-Israel's. Cuban Americans in Florida provided the lion's share of the funds (c.f. [www.opensecrets.org/pubs/cubareport/comparisons.asp](http://www.opensecrets.org/pubs/cubareport/comparisons.asp)).<sup>15</sup> In 1997 the Center for Public Integrity named the Foundation the most effective lobby in America (*Miami Herald* March 23, 2002, at [www.canfnet.org](http://www.canfnet.org)), a lobby that advanced the political concerns of the first cohort from which it emanated. Although other Cuban Americans have formed lobbying groups, at the century's turn none had comparable clout.

The national influence of the Foundation, however, began to crumble in the early 2000s. Changes in Washington, Cuba, the global political economy, and Miami all contributed, in different ways, to a waning of Foundation, and in the process Cuban American, influence. Immigrant influence rests not merely on assets émigrés came with and accumulate here but on the interplay between them and macro historical conditions in which their involvements become embedded. Cuban American unwillingness in 2000 to allow six year old Elian to be returned to his father in Cuba, when brought ashore after his mother died at sea, for one, discredited the Foundation in Washington circles. The Foundation had fought for Elian to stay. Other Cuban American groups also fought to keep Elian in the States, but none had national preeminence comparable to the Foundation's. Owing to Cuban American resistance, the Clinton Administration had to take Elian at gunpoint.

At about the same time business, farmers in particular, convinced Congress to permit agricultural exports to Cuba, defying the embargo the Foundation defended. The

end of the Cold War and new prioritization of neoliberal economics, which included trade liberalization, contributed to diminished Congressional commitment to extant trade embargos, such as on blocking exports to Cuba.<sup>16</sup> In the changed context, business interests got the upper hand, despite continued distaste in Washington for the Castro regime. As Dennis Hays noted when head of the Foundation's Washington office, For a long time there was no significant economic power working against the embargo. Now the mantra is 'market, market, market' (Tamayo 2002). Although the Foundation's muscle proved no match to farmers', it sufficed to insert a proviso in the new legislation requiring Cuba but none of the other affected countries to pay cash for U.S. purchases. The Cuban American lobbyists assumed that without access to credit the Cuban government would be too poor to purchase goods. Within two years, however, Castro's government produced the cash, and strategically made purchases from over half U.S. states; in so doing, it astutely broadened the American base of support for trade with Cuba. The Cuban government, along with U.S. business, accordingly eroded Cuban American influence over U.S. Cuba policy.

Against the backdrop of such highly visible defeats, as well as some political seachange in Cuba, Mas Santos, and other younger generation Foundation members, began to rethink their strategy. Concomitantly, some wealthy, prominent conservative Miami businessmen did the same, independently of the Foundation.<sup>17</sup> They both began to support selective cross-border political engagement and to put faith in islanders, and not exiles singlehandedly, to democratize island governance. Mas Santos went so far as to announce a willingness both to meet with high-level Cuban officials, other than Fidel and his brother, second in command, to discuss a democratic transition, and to support a

nascent dissident movement on the island (Elliott and de Valle 2003). Especially appealing to Mas Santos and his backers was Oswaldo Paya's Varela Project, which mobilized over 11,000 signatures for island political and economic constitutional reforms. Meanwhile, in Miami Mas Santos promoted the city hosting the Latin Grammys, even though Cuban music groups could be expected to be award-winners ([www.Cunet.org/CNews/y03/jan03/31e3.htm](http://www.Cunet.org/CNews/y03/jan03/31e3.htm)). His supporters believed the event would add to the city's luster, plus be a money-maker. But Mas Santos continued not to challenge the embargo, the moral symbol of the community's anti-Castro stance.

Mas Santos legitimated his new cross-border tolerance in terms of his deceased father. The charismatic Mas Canosa commanded more respect in death than his son in life (c.f. [www.centredaily.com/mld/centredaily/news/4899576.htm](http://www.centredaily.com/mld/centredaily/news/4899576.htm)), but not enough to avert a split within the Foundation that further weakened its influence. Mas Canosa's son faced the problem of institutionalizing charismatic rule. He was competent, but more business-like. And U.S.-born, he lacked certain authenticity. Adding fuel to the fire, Mas Canosa's heirs secretly removed some longtime members from the board controlling Foundation funds, replacing them with Mas family members (c.f. Yanez and San Martin 2001; Tamayo 2002).

The combination of circumstances led an impassioned, articulate, and moneyed faction to split off in 2001 and form a rival group, the Cuba Liberty Council (CLC). Mas Santos' support of Miami hosting Latin Grammys that Cubans could attend proved the coup de grace leading them to bolt. The CLC immediately attacked the Foundation, while using its influence to promote a continued hard line toward Cuba. Although not large in size, CLC members, all of the first cohort, are politically well connected. Ninoska Perez

Castellon, who had hosted a Foundation radio program, for example, maintained a Miami program of her own. And she, among others, had close ties to then Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, and through him a pipeline to his brother in the White House. Lending symbolic strength to the new splinter group, President Bush invited CLC members to join him in the Rose Garden on October 10, 2003, when he announced harsher U.S. Cuba travel restrictions. The Foundation was noticeably absent. And the CLC won over the support of some other groups “hardline” groups of the first cohort, such as Mothers and Women Against Repression and Unidad Cubana, an umbrella organization comprised of more than thirty exile groups (San Martin 2003).

The Foundation was further weakened by new, internal financial problems. Its revenue nosedived for reasons besides the loss of annual contributions the bolting members of the directorate previously provided. Coincidentally, the price of MasTec stock, the Foundation’s main endowment source, plunged. At the time of Mas Canosa’s death the stocks had been valued at about \$5 million. By 2001 their value had halved (*Miami Herald* August 8, 2001 <http://64.21.33.164/CNews/y01/ago01/08e7.htm>, p. 3).

In 2003 the Foundation was in such financial duress that it sought to sell off both its Washington townhouse, from where it had coordinated its lobbying, and its recently acquired Freedom Tower property in Miami. Cuban émigrés of the first wave considered the Tower their symbolic equivalent to Ellis Island to immigrants a century earlier. Before closing in the 1970s it housed government immigration offices. The Foundation also downsized its staff, closed its Washington office for lobbying, and shut down its radio station, its key venue for influencing public opinion. Foundation monthly income from all sources allegedly dropped from \$80,000 to \$60,000 (Tamayo 2002; *Miami*

*Herald* March 28, 2002, cited in [www.canfnet.org/News/archived/020401nesa.htm](http://www.canfnet.org/News/archived/020401nesa.htm)). The crisis was such that a former Foundation employee disappointingly acknowledged to me, when interviewed in late 2003, that the Foundation persisted mainly as a figment of the imagination. “It existed because in the minds of people it existed,” said she.

In essence, at the same time that Cuban Americans, as individuals, were increasingly joining the ranks of Miami’s political class,<sup>18</sup> collectively the political class was fragmenting and weakening. Nonetheless, members of the community continued to have influence in the highest circles of the Bush Administration. The 2004 election assured them influence at least until then. First cohort émigrés knew how to leverage Cuban American concentration in Florida electorally, organizationally, and personally through ties to powerful non-Cubans.

Despite institutional influence on the decline, Cuban Americans stand out politically among *latinos*, both at the national and local level. The comparison with Mexicans is telling. In 2000 Mexicans were by far the largest immigrant group. They accounted for 59 percent of all *latinos*, Cubans for a mere 6 percent (Ruggles and Sobek et al 2003). Yet, Cubans have been much more effective at leveraging political influence. Although Mexican Americans, for example, are the largest ethnic group in California, and in Los Angeles in particular, few have joined the political class there, or capitalized significantly on the state commanding the largest number of electoral college votes. Mexican Americans lack the money, organization prowess, and political connections of Cubans of the first émigré cohort.

### **Cohorts, Their Cross-Border Views and Involvements**



Although the Cuban American leadership by the early 2000s showed signs of divide, the early émigrés continued to dominate public discourse. They advocated a foreign policy consistent with their pre-revolutionary political and class formation. On most matters they pressed for minimal cross-border engagement, engagement which they perceived would both help keep Castro in power and taint their moral highground. When the Foundation under second generation immigrant leadership, influenced by U.S. politics-of-compromise, took issue with the “hardline,” first cohort members broke rank, undermining the organizational influence they had built up over twenty years.

But independently of division at the highest levels, the émigré community was not of one mind even if, until the early 2000s, of nearly a single public voice. The pre and post 1990 cohorts differ on many issues. One matter on which the cohorts agree, though, is that not all points of view are heard in Miami, such as on how to deal with Castro (see Table 5).

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ENTER TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

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Dominating the media and public discussion, the first cohort influences second cohort thinking. Yet, first cohort influence is far from complete. While most recent émigrés remain publicly voiceless, survey data permit uncovering cohort differences in cross-border views and involvements (see Table 5).

Florida International University’s (FIU) Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) 2000 survey reveals *some* shared views among the “privileged” and “proletarianized” cohorts. Cuban Americans who emigrated between 1959 and 1964, between 1975-1984, and after 1984,<sup>19</sup> for example, concur that the embargo is ineffective and that six-year old Elian Gonzalez should have been able to stay in the States. So

widespread were sentiments that Elian should have stayed that the lawyer of the Miami relatives who fought to keep him here, Manny Diaz, rose from political obscurity to city mayor in 2001. In 2001, for only the second time in the previous thirty years, an incumbent mayor lost a race. Although I know of no analysis of voting by cohort, and many recent émigrés are not registered voters, Diaz is reputed to have captured, in general, the Cuban “ethnic vote” (c.f. [www.usatoday.com/news/washington/nov01/2001-11-13-miami-mayor.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/nov01/2001-11-13-miami-mayor.htm)).

Cuban émigrés of the different cohorts also concur that the U.S. should be very involved in what happens politically in Cuba after Castro (and his brother, Raul) leave power. The cohorts may each have their own reasons for thinking so, or, on these issues, the first cohort may influence more recent arrivals through its hegemonic media influence.

The survey data show, however, that the cohorts differ in their views on a range of U.S. Cuba-related policy issues. The 1959 to 1964 and post-1984 émigrés differ significantly in the extent that they (1) favor ending the embargo, (2) favor allowing U.S. companies to sell food and medicine to Cuba, (3) favor resumption of diplomatic relations with Cuba, and (4) favor unrestricted travel to Cuba. Washington at the time permitted (with rare exception) only one family visit a year. The survey reveals that the 1990s much more than the first cohort desire to improve cross-border ties and to promote measures benefiting on-island Cubans. On these matters the 1975-1984 cohort, comprised of émigrés who left before the post Soviet crisis, agree more with the first than the 1990s cohort.

The cohorts differ in their support of the embargo while agreeing that it works poorly. To early exiles the embargo is politically and symbolically significant even if not economically efficacious in bringing the Castro regime to heel. For them the embargo represents moral rejection of the Castro government, consonant with their political-ideological formation. Recent émigrés are more pragmatic and they have a different morality, rooted in the moral economy of family, not grandiose abstract ideological principles. Illustrative of how recent émigrés want to help, not hurt, family left behind, they strongly support American companies selling food and medicine to Cuba. First cohort lobbyists had opposed the partial loosening of the embargo.

And for similar reasons most 1990s émigrés feel there should be no restrictions on travel to Cuba. While most émigrés across the cohort divide continue to have close family in Cuba (see Table 5), recent émigrés almost without exception do, and their lives were mutually enmeshed on a routine basis until not long ago. In contrast, between 1959 and 1989 the first cohort had minimal ties with family left behind. Both the Cuban and U.S. governments restricted cross-border travel, and pre-1990 émigrés supported a personal embargo of Cuba, alongside the embargo on trade and investment (though more in principle than practice). As a consequence, first cohort bonds across the Florida Straits are weaker.

Pre-migration political socialization may also contribute to cohort differences in views toward the embargo in general and toward specific aspects of it. Cuban authorities blame island economic problems on the blockade, and a 1994 island Gallup poll showed Cubans to believe that interpretation. While conducting the survey at the time the economy hit rock-bottom, soon after Soviet aid and trade ended, islanders attributed the

country's problems mainly to the U.S. embargo (*Miami Herald* December 18, 1994: 39A). Post 1990 émigrés who want their island families' well-being to improve and who see the embargo a key source of island economic woes would be expected to want the embargo terminated. Reflecting lingering influence of pre-migration socialization, some recent arrivals can be heard speaking of "the blockade," language Cuban authorities use, not exile "embargo" lingo. For the first cohort, in contrast, opposition to the embargo is a moral matter. Out of principle, they feel the embargo should remain in tact, if not tightened.

If recent émigré attitudes differ so markedly from the first cohort's, why are their views not heard? There are several reasons for their silence. For one, the more working class cohort lacks the personal attributes previously discussed that are associated with political involvement in America. Two, the Cubans raised in Castro's Cuba lack experience in civil society involvement. Batista highly circumscribed political activity, but the permissible involved the upper and middle classes. With rare exception, Castro's Cuba did not provide people with a semblance of a civic and political repertoire to draw on. The revolution rooted out most group life autonomous of the state. And some recent émigrés developed a distaste for political involvement in Cuba, a distaste they brought with them when resettling in the U.S. They disliked the Party controlled political life they experienced in Cuba.<sup>20</sup>

But recent émigré views were not heard, at least until the early 2000s, also because the first cohort made no effort to represent them, no effort to address ways 1990s émigré interests were *ill-served* by the Washington Cuba policy the leadership advocated. Only in 2003 did the Foundation address recent émigré cross-border concerns, such as

raising the bar on the amount of money émigrés could legally remit to on-island kin. Backed by Cuban American lobbyists, Washington had permitted Cuban Americans to remit no more than \$300 quarterly to island family, at a time when immigrants from other Latin American countries remitted, on average, between \$150 and \$378 monthly, depending on country,<sup>21</sup> in the absence of restrictions. The Foundation supported a shift to a cap of \$3,000 in 2003 possibly out of weakness, not institutional strength. It sought to broaden its social base to include recent émigrés as the CLC eroded its original base.

That the 1990s cohort's views were off the political radar screen until the century's turn was not merely a matter of benign neglect, of early émigrés' unfamiliarity with, and therefore insensitivity to, recent émigré concerns. The recent cohort was publicly silent in part because they were silenced, and felt themselves to be. My "open ended" interviews with Miami Cuban Americans reveal that recent émigrés who tried publicly to take issue with the dominant early émigré viewpoint faced repression, rejection, and resistance. Much of the silencing occurred removed from public viewing, for example, when recent émigrés submitted editorials to the news media and when they tried to voice their opinion on popular Miami call-in radio shows. They interpreted their rejection politically. Some of them attributed the lack of democracy in Miami specifically to the older émigrés who criticized Cuba for its lack of freedom!

Although recent arrivals are publicly silent and silenced, they are quietly contributing to a change in popular opinion in Miami. The Cuban American community is increasingly coming to share new Cuban immigrant views, in part because the new arrivals are becoming, yearly, an ever larger demographic force. By law the U.S. accepts minimally 20,000 new islanders a year. In addition, though, the sheer weight of recent

émigré cross-border ties is eroding first cohort effectiveness at cross-border moral policing. In the changed milieu support for a tightening of the embargo decreased and support for sales of food and medicine and unrestricted travel to Cuba increased (see Table 6). Recent émigré covert non-compliance with the first cohort's personal embargo is serving as a bedrock for normative change. It is illustrative of an "everyday form of resistance" that Scott (1985, '990) argued can prompt change from below.

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ENTER TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

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Meanwhile, the dominant Cuban American leadership never spoke for all of their cohort even before the very public Foundation split. Over the years the dominating first cohort relied on intimidation, economic blackmailing, and violence (especially in the 1960s and 1970s), and denial of media access when normative means did not suffice to keep others in tow (c.f. Forment 1989; Dideon 1987; Portes and Stepick 1993). In the changing milieu opposition within the first cohort is also getting new if still weak voice.

First cohort "hardliners," who second cohort émigrés refer to as "radical exiles," have, however, not passively acquiesced to nascent new norms, views, and practices. Indeed, they have spearheaded a culture war. They have tried to stave off the mounting popularity of an emergent nominally nonpolitical Cuban American "counterculture," among the younger generation, that has partial roots in the Cuba the new immigrants left behind. It is an incipient borderless subculture, reshaping popular culture in Cuba as well as Miami.

Viewing the transnational popular culture a threat to the Miami of their making, "radical exiles" aggressively protested a local concert in 1999 featuring Cuba's Los Van

Van, who appeal especially to recent émigrés. Although the “radical exiles” failed to prevent they managed to obstruct the concert. Demonstrators tossed eggs, batteries, and soda cans, and shouted obscenities, at music fans during the performance. So fearful of retribution were some in the community who wished attend the concert that they dressed up in costumes to disguise their identity. Others, fearful, said they stayed away.

The culture war even impacted on the Latin Grammys. Mas Santos of the Cuban American National Foundation, among others, in 2001, as noted, had tried to bring the event to Miami, which by then had become the capital of the Latin music world. But threat of violent opposition to Cuban participation led the organizers to move the Grammys to Los Angeles. In this instance, the hardliners won the battle. Two year later when Miami announced plans again to host the Grammys, local exiles threatened a 1,500 person protest if Cubans attended, performed, and accepted awards. This time the State Department intervened, no doubt at the urging of first cohort opponents to Cuban participation. The Bush Administration, beholden to the “hardline” Cuban American leadership faction, denied visas to musicians associated with the ten nominated island acts. Absent the Cubans, the event proved a glittering success. Washington did not resolve the underlying culture conflict, rooted in the new immigrant supported cross-border culture, but it resolved a momentary manifestation of it.

Winning the war, as opposed to specific battles, was far more difficult. Even though first cohort “radical exiles” had resources at their disposal with which to impose their way, post 1990 émigrés are embedded in an emergent transnational subculture. The cross-border culture is fueled by the annual arrival of new Cubans as well as by an

upsurge of visits to Cuba by recent émigrés (c.f. Eckstein and Barberia 2002). Recent émigrés visit the island more frequently than the first cohort (see Table 5).

New transnationally rooted norms, in turn, induce remittance-sending, cross-border income sharing, transmitted to homeland kin on visits or through wire and informal courier services. The FIU study found that in 2000 40 percent of Miami Cuban Americans sent money to island relatives, despite the personal embargo the first cohort promoted. Available information does not specify cohort breakdown of remittance-senders. Because recent arrivals are more enmeshed in the lives of family left behind, no doubt they are more likely to share their income, and more likely even though poorer.

### **Conclusion**

Historically grounded cohort analysis highlights aspects of immigrant experience that extant theoretical approaches leave undocumented and unexplained. Analyses that presume the main divide to be between immigrants and their children, or between age-based immigrant cohorts, leave history and social context out of the equation. The former approach presumes the most defining experience to be migration itself, while the latter presumes stage of life cycle to condition the migration experience. Both perspectives view immigration from an individualistic perspective.

These individualistic grounded analyses ignore or belittle, and analytically leave unexplained, the significance of the historical context in which people's lives transpire, in which their ideas are formed, and through post-migration experiences are filtered. Indeed, these analyses imply an invisible hand of assimilation impacting on individuals once they set foot in our country, akin to the invisible hand operating in market economies that Adam Smith pointed to.



The post-modernesque approach, in contrast, deterritorializes the concept of generations. Generational experiences do not require physical or permanent uprooting. This approach accordingly flattens the concept of generations, and transforms the concept as we knew it.

In this article I have argued why and illustrated how, among Cuban immigrants, a historically grounded cohort analysis helps describe and explain aspects of the immigrant experience other approaches ignore. This is not to say that historically grounded cohort pre-migration experiences alone determine post-migration experiences, or that historically grounded cohort analyses should replace all other modes of immigrant analysis. However, a full understanding of immigrant views and involvements requires consideration of where people are coming from, their social formation, and under what conditions. Influential pre-migration experiences are linked to historically grounded experiences in particular times and places, partly class based. Accordingly, the sort of cohort analysis proposed here requires an understanding of the history of the country of immigrant origin, of changes in that history over time, and of how people of particular backgrounds experienced that history.

As important as pre-migration experiences prove to be, the Cuba case study, in addition, illustrates that they alone do not necessarily determine post-migration adaptation. Pre-migration background affects the assets and *weltanschauung* émigrés take with them when resettling elsewhere, but their adaptation hinges also on the uses to which those assets are put. Those uses depend on an interplay between structural, cultural, and individual dynamics. History circumscribes possibilities but does not entirely predetermine them. And because history is not all-determining, even immigrants

who arrive with few assets and who remain at the political and economic margins are not necessarily entirely a victim of circumstance. They may covertly if not overtly challenge structures of domination in ways that modify conditions, at least somewhat, to their advantage.

TABLE I  
CUBA ÉMIGRÉ COHORTS IN 2000

<u>Year of arrival</u>	<u>percent</u>
Before 1959	3
1959-1964	9
1965- 1979	17
1980s	11
1990-2000	15
U.S. born	45

1  
 Infants emigrating through age five are considered second generation, along with the U.S. born, in that all or nearly all their socialization outside the home occurred post-migration. I have hereby conceptualized cohorts and generations sociologically, in a manner relevant for a historically grounded cohort analysis.

Source:  
 Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek, et al, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)*, Version 3.0 (Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects University of Minnesota, 2003 ([www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org))).

TABLE 2

CUBAN OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE AND JOB HELD BY EMIGRES TO THE U.S.  
IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO LEAVING CUBA

(in percentages)

JOB IN CUBA <sup>e</sup>	Cuban occupational structure				last job in Cuba held by emigre cohorts (f)		
	1953	1980	1989	2000	1959-1962	1980	1998
Professional/manager	9	9	6	8	31	11	13
Semi-professional							
Technical		19	22	21			
Clerical, sales	14	7	7	4	33	7	9
Skilled	27 <sup>a</sup>	52 <sup>a</sup>	52 <sup>a</sup>	50 <sup>a</sup>	17 <sup>c</sup>	26	14
Semi-skilled, unskilled					8	45	47
Services	8	13	14	17	7	5	15
Agriculture, fishing	42	--	--	--	4	7	1
TOTAL PERCENTAGE <sup>b</sup>	100	100	101	100	100	101	99
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS <sup>d</sup>	1,938 <sup>d</sup>	2600 <sup>d</sup>	3641 <sup>d</sup>	3843 <sup>d</sup>	27,419	5,809	16,750

a includes semi-skilled and unskilled workers

b total percentages do not always equal 100 due to rounding of occupational distributions to the nearest whole number

c includes operators and laborers, craft and repair workers

d thousands

e officially reported occupational categories change after 1959 to worker, technical, administrative, service, and management, roughly equivalent, respectively, to worker (skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled), technical (without equivalent), clerical and sales, service, and professional/manager in the 1953 census.

f among people working, for whom information available

source:

Silvia Pedraza-Bailey, 1985: 2 and references therein, and U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), *Statistical Yearbook 1997*, p. 69; Comité Estatal de Estadísticas (CEE), *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 1989* (Havana: CEE, 1991), p. 126; Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE), *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 2000* (Havana: ONE, 2001), p. 123.

TABLE 3  
ECONOMIC STATUS OF COHORTS IN 2000  
(in percentages)

a	year of arrival		
	1959-1964	1980s	1990s
WORK			
Professional/managerial/technical	43	21	15
Worker			
skilled (crafts)	8	16	14
semi and unskilled	11	26	33
self-employed/unpaid family worker	19	15	9
	b		
PERSONAL INCOME			
no/low	41	52	56
high	22	7	10
	b		
HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
no/low	35	44	51
high	39	24	18
INCOME: POVERTY LEVEL OR LOWER	9	19	22
	b		
MIAMI INCOME EARNERS			
no/low personal income	45	53	58
no/low household income	38	46	52
	b		
NON-MIAMI INCOME EARNERS			
no/low personal income	35	49	51
no/low household income	30	40	48

a  
information on selective employment

b  
a Cuban American is ranked as a low income earner if his or her, individual or household, income falls among the lowest tercile of income earners in the country; similarly a Cuban American is ranked as a high income earner if his or her, individual or household, income falls among the top tercile of income earners in the country.

c  
as a percentage of the employed labor force

Source:  
Ruggles and Sobek et al, *IPUMS* (2003).

TABLE 4  
 CULTURE AND CITIZENSHIP IN 2000  
 (in percentages)

	year of arrival		
	1959-1964	1980s	1990s
high school education or less	48	73	67
speaks English only, well, or very well	74	51	41
speaks Spanish at home	92	94	95
citizen (among people eligible)	92	51 <sup>a</sup>	26 <sup>a, b</sup>

a  
 among immigrants 18 years of age or older

b  
 emigrated between 1990-1994 and therefore eligible for citizenship, if of age, according to the Cuban Adjustment Act, in 2000

source:  
 Ruggles and Sobek et al, *IPUMS*, 2003.

TABLE 5

## COHORT CROSS-BORDER VIEWS TOWARD AND CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL TO CUBA

	Cohorts		
	1959-1964	1975-1984	1985-2000
<b>SHARED VIEWS</b>			
1. At time of the case felt Elian should have been returned to father in Cuba	17	22	22
2. Embargo does not work or not well	73	74	82
3. Some views are not heard in Miami on how to deal with Castro regime	79	78	78
4. U.S. should be very involved in what happens In Cuba after Fidel & Raul Castro leave power	80	79	69
<b>DIVERGENT COHORT VIEWS</b>			
1. U.S. should reestablish diplomatic ties	26	37	74
2. U.S. should end embargo	30	36	53
3. favor U.S. companies selling			
a. medicine to Cuba	60	62	80
b. food to Cuba	46	54	73
4. Favor unrestricted travel to Cuba	39	52	74
5. Actually traveled to Cuba	18	33	31
6. still have close kin in Cuba	62	81	95

source:

Florida International University, Institute for Public Opinion (FIU-IPOR),  
*FIU/Cuba Poll 2000* ([www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba2000/years.htm](http://www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba2000/years.htm)).

TABLE 6  
CHANGING CROSS-BORDER VIEWS IN THE 1990S

(percentages)

	<u>1991/1993</u>	<u>2000</u>
Favor tightening embargo	80	57
Allow medical sales to Cuba	48	64
Allow food sales to Cuba	23	55
Allow unrestricted travel to Cuba	43	51

Source:  
FIU-IPOR, 2000([www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba2000/years.htm](http://www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba2000/years.htm)).



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\*Richard Alba very generously helped me conceptualize my census analysis. I am also grateful to Wendy Roth for assistance in the census analysis and the Radcliffe Institute where I wrote this article when a resident fellow (2003-04).

<sup>1</sup> A sampling of assimilationist studies, addressing variants thereof, include Alba (1990), Alba and Nee (2003), Lieberman 1985; and Waters 1990.

<sup>2</sup> This literature as well has already become too extensive to cite in full. Some examples include Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton-Blanc (1994), Glick-Schiller (1997), Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001), Guarnizo (1997 and 1998), Levitt (2001), Portes et al (1999), Smith (1998), Pessar (1999), and *International Migration Review* (Winter 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Portes and Zhou (1993) correctly point out that generational experiences, e.g. for today's new second generation, may be segmented, varying with the social context in which assimilation transpires.

<sup>4</sup> For more differentiated delineations of émigré waves, see, for example, Garcia (1996), Pedraza (1985, 1996), and Amaro and Portes (1972), and on contrasts between earlier and recent émigrés see Grenier and Perez (2003). The more refined delineations can point to further differences among émigré waves, though the differences are less marked than among the cohorts I have denoted.

<sup>4</sup> I have conducted over two hundred open-ended interviews in total, some also in Union City, New Jersey, once the second most important place where Cuban émigrés settled. The interviews were both with ordinary individuals and leaders in diverse institutional domains. The leadership sample included businessmen, clergy, government officials, politicians, and heads of Cuban American non-governmental groups. These individuals served as key informants about the communities, about community changes over the years, and about changes in ties with Cuba. They also were asked for names of other prominent and rank-and-file local Cuban Americans, which provided a base for snowball sampling. But to broaden the rank-and-file base I also drew upon contacts independently established with a range of people in Miami and Union City. I am grateful to Lorena Barberia for help in the interviewing. For a fuller description of the interviews and sampling procedures see Eckstein and Barberia (2002).

<sup>5</sup> Studies of other immigrant groups have similarly noted a tendency for the vanguard of a migrant stream to be more skilled, those to follow less so. However, the changing socioeconomic composition of successive immigrants waves typically is explained at the individual level, not in terms of historically

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explained cohort differences. On changes in the Mexican migration, see Massey, Duran, Golding (1994).

<sup>6</sup> All references in the text to the census, unless otherwise indicated, come from Ruggles and Sobek, *IPUMS* (2003).

<sup>7</sup> Professionals did not leave in larger numbers in the 1990s partly because the Cuban government restricted their emigration. The government, for example, required doctors to provide five years of public medical service before they could even go abroad to attend a conference. Doctors had taken advantage of international conferences to emigrate illegally. Wanting to recoup its investment in the training of medical cadre, the government imposed the five year waiting period. Cubans receive all schooling and training free of charge.

<sup>8</sup> Blacks in Miami received only 6 percent of SBA loans at the time (Portes and Stepick 1993: 46).

<sup>9</sup> My IPUMS analysis indicates that 58 percent of 1980s and 61 percent of 1990s émigrés in 2000 lived in Miami. In my analysis I combine anyone emigrating as an infant, five or under, to be U.S.-born. I do so because their socialization outside the home for all intents and purposes occurs post migration. In essence, I am defining the second generation sociologically, not purely demographically.

<sup>10</sup> In an ironic twist of history, an aunt of Lincoln's and Mario's was Fidel Castro's first wife, their son, Fidelito, thus a Diaz-Belart relative!

<sup>11</sup> All Cubans who reach U.S. territory are presumed to be refugees and made eligible, after a year and a day (and after having been inspected, paroled, or admitted), for U.S. residency status.

<sup>12</sup> The Cuban Adjustment Act guarantees any Cuban stepping foot on U.S. soil, dubbed to have "dry feet," resident rights. It was a Cold War measure designed to privilege Cubans fleeing Communism. The law remains in force in the post Cold War. However, since 1994 Cubans picked up at sea, with "wetfeet," no longer are entitled to U.S. entry, unless they can prove themselves in need of asylum. The new "wetfoot" policy is indicative of declining Cuban American influence over U.S. Cuba policy, the "dryfoot" policy revealing their continued if reduced influence.

<sup>13</sup> For this and other FIU-IPOR references in the text, see FIU-IPOR (2000).

<sup>14</sup> It is my understanding that Foundation directors contributed \$10,000 annually, more than Tamayo specified.

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<sup>15</sup> On ethnic lobbies, see Tony Smith's (2000) interesting work.

<sup>16</sup> New legislation opened Cuba to U.S. exports, but Washington continued to restrict Cuban imports to the U.S. Accordingly, U.S. business benefited while the Castro regime could lower its import bill but not gain possible export revenue.

<sup>17</sup> These businessmen formed the Cuba Study Group. Although moneyed, the businessmen's group never managed to become a significant political player. Politically inexperienced, they proved no match to the Miami leadership opposed to their conciliatory stance. Other anti-Castro groups, such as the Cuban Committee for Democracy (CCD), opposed the embargo and favored cross-border engagement. The CCD sponsored a radio program but it lacked the economic resources of the more "hardline" group players.

<sup>18</sup> In Union City, New Jersey, and neighboring West New York, Cuban Americans also became the single most important ethnic group politically. Cuban American elected mayors were either first cohort émigrés or grown children of first cohort émigrés.

<sup>19</sup> Most émigrés of the 1975-1984 period came in 1980 and, secondly, between 1981-1984, and most émigrés in the 1985 to 2000 period arrived after 1990. FIU-IPOR uses different cohort delineations than I do, but most émigrés in their cohort categories arrived during years corresponding to my categories.

<sup>20</sup> Both my U.S. and Cuban interviews suggest this.

<sup>21</sup> Based on a study of immigrants from fourteen countries in the region in 2003 (c.f. Orozco 2003). Cuban émigrés sent the least, Mexicans the most. Indicative of Cuban émigrés' dissatisfaction with U.S. remittance restrictions, and their willingness to defy regulations standing in the way of their transnational family commitments, islanders on average remitted \$150 monthly. Until 2003 Washington, as noted, imposed a \$100 monthly cap (that is, \$300 quarterly).