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Cuban Émigrés and the American Dream

Susan Eckstein

According to Samuel Huntington, Latin Americans are eroding our country's core Anglo-Protestant values.¹ The values, says he, made America great, unified the country, and allowed immigrant upward mobility through assimilation and acculturation. Huntington expresses concern that immigrants from Latin America, now our main newcomers, along with their U.S.-born progeny, are creating another America, culturally and socially distinct. The reason for this, he claims, is that they settle in close proximity to one another; they retain use of their mother tongue, Spanish; and they remain, in the main, committed Catholics. These conditions purportedly are bad both for America and for the immigrants. They impede new immigrant ability to live the American Dream and, by implication, America's continued global economic preeminence.²

Huntington bases his argument on his interpretation of the Mexican experience. Mexicans are by far the largest Hispanic immigrant group. They are concentrated in the southwest where most do poorly economically. Huntington, however, also believes his argument applies to Cuban immigrants in Miami, which has come to be dubbed "the northern most Latin American city—the most Hispanic large city in the States. Cubans have contributed to the city's transformation not merely demographically but socially, culturally, economically, and politically. Their Hispanicization of Miami is without precedent in a major American city.

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Huntington argues that the Cuban immigrant experience differs somewhat from the Mexican in that the initial island newcomers were more upper and middle class and the Hispanicization process was more "top down." Yet, like Mexicans, most Cubans continue to speak Spanish, are Catholic, and are geographically concentrated, conditions that Huntington claims are un conducive to ideal assimilation and acculturation into mainstream Anglo-Protestant America.

Below, I focus on the Cuban immigrant experience and assess the validity of Huntington's argument in light of that experience. My analysis demonstrates that there is not one Hispanic mode of adaptation, not even within a single immigrant group. It also demonstrates that the variability is better traced to pre-migration lived experiences, and to labor market opportunities, government supports, and receptivity by established groups where newcomers settle, than to the factors that Huntington attributes for Hispanic adaptation and the lack thereof. My analysis, in turn, demonstrates that immigrants may assimilate, acculturate, and share in the American Dream while holding on to cultural differences and socializing among themselves, and that their distinctiveness may benefit the broader society as well as themselves.

Economic Inclusion, Partial Social and Cultural Exclusion

Cubans more than most Latin American immigrants have lived the American Dream. Indicative of how well some Cubans have adapted economically, and increasingly so, sales and receipts of Cuban-owned businesses, most Miami-based, increased over 37-fold between 1969 and 1997 (in constant dollars), and in 2000 19 percent of Cuban American households earned \$75,000 or more, over twice as many as a mere ten years earlier.³

Cubans in general did well in emigrating. Most of them improved their economic lot with their move to America. By the century's turn, revenue of Cuban-American owned business equaled that of the entire island's gross domestic product measured at the official exchange rate, and substantially more at the unofficial de facto exchange rate. And more Cubans held top-level jobs, managerial and professional, in the U.S. than had in Cuba.⁴

What has been good for Cuban Americans has been good for America. American competitiveness in today's global economy requires somewhat different assets than when our country initially industrialized and was more inwardly oriented. Cubans have helped us develop a new and important base for integrating into the global economy. They have helped transform Miami into a major center of trade, investment, finance, and tourism spanning the Americas, from which we nationally benefit, a city with hemispheric reach.

The cultural along with economic, social, and human capital Cuban émigrés came with, and their concentration in Miami, were key to the city's transformation. Cuban American bilingualism and bicultural understanding helped in promoting and negotiating business oriented both North and South. Multinational corporations have even come to locate their Latin American headquarters deliberately in Miami because they could tap into the large Cuban community for managerial and professional labor. And when large national and multinational businesses squeezed out smaller Cuban-owned firms as the Miami economy took off, they hired Cubans with human capital, plus multicultural and multilingual skills, and by then also multi-country contacts, for middle and top management positions.

Cubans in Miami, in turn, see their Spanish retention as an asset. According to a Florida International University (FIU) 2004 Miami survey of Cuban Americans, 70 percent of those interviewed, both immigrants and U.S.-born, felt that fluency in Spanish facilitated job attainment.⁵ As many as 90 percent of the U.S.-born felt Spanish an asset for work.

Cuban Americans are making it in America while only partially acculturating and assimilating. The FIU survey found that almost without exception the first generation speaks Spanish at home. And 79 percent of those surveyed said they were married to a co-ethnic. So many Cuban Americans intermarry because they not only share a common heritage but also live near and work with fellow émigrés, even if they do not move in exclusively Cuban American milieus.

Meanwhile, few Cuban Americans, like Mexicans, are Protestant. A nationwide 1999 Latino study found the same percentage of Cubans as Mexicans to be Protestant: 11 percent of each to be born-again or other evangelical Protestants and 1 per cent to be other Protestants.⁶ At the same time, nearly the same percentage of the two ethnic groups considered religion important to their everyday life: 66 percent of Mexicans and 60 percent of Cubans. The two ethnic groups share a common religious denominational divergence from the Protestant religious roots Huntington considers central to core American values and to economic success. Although remaining committed to their shared Catholic heritage, Cubans far more than Mexicans have lived the American Economic Dream. Cubans'

more successful economic adaptation cannot be explained in terms of religious values.

Cuban American cultural differences persist despite a movement among non-Hispanics in Miami to impose Anglo hegemony. An English Only movement designed to insist on Anglo conformity did well at the polls but not in everyday life. The movement won a referendum in the 1980s to prevent use of public funds for non-English speaking activity and for promoting any culture besides that of the United States. But Cubans resisted pressure to abandon their cultural practices. Movement supporters lost the cultural battle *de facto*, and then in 1993 *de jure*, when the electorate, which by then included many Cuban Americans (and to a lesser extent other Hispanics) mandated revoking the English Only amendment of the state constitution. Cuban Americans asserted their right to be different and, in essence, a right to Hispanicize Miami culturally.⁷

Social and cultural separateness spans the class pyramid. Even the émigrés who share most in the American Dream live in social circles apart from their Anglo counterparts. In Miami upper middle class and upper class Cubans and non-Hispanic whites affiliate with different social clubs, different voluntary associations, and different professional associations, and they send their children to different schools.⁸ But the Cubans do so not merely at their own choosing.

Important Cuban émigré groups include the *Municipios de Cuba en el Exilio* (Municipalities of Cuba in Exile). This organization attracted Cuban émigrés across the class divide, though mainly the more working class.⁹ The first who fled the revolution established *municipio* groups so that residents from different island locales could regroup in the States. While the association initially plotted anti-Castro initiatives, its emphasis became more social and cultural with time. Over the years affiliated *municipio* groups helped newcomers from their hometowns adapt to their new land. Members helped one another find work and housing. They socialized together, reminisced, talked Cuban politics, and enjoyed collectively Cuban coffee and food, not merely on a country-of-origin but community-of-origin basis. Each *municipio* group also goes annually to a Miami shrine for Cuba's patron saint, where an especially revered Cuban American cleric gives a mass in their hometown honor. Catholicism hereby reinforces both Cuban and hometown identity.

The Liga Contra el Cancer (League Against Cancer) is another important Cuban American voluntary association. Founded in Florida in 1975, it is modeled after a similar organization formed in Cuba in the 1920s. Its mission is to serve cancer patients and to educate the public about cancer. Well-known among Cuban Americans in Miami and a successful fundraiser for its cause, in 2004 its thirteen-large Executive Board and 49-large Board

of Directors were Hispanic, most if not all Cuban American (www.ligacontraelcancer.org).¹⁰ Both boards included members of the “who’s who” of Cuban American Miami.

In addition, Cuban Americans have formed their own professional associations. There are Cuban American lawyer, physician, builder, and other work-linked associations. Cuban Americans also have their own Chamber of Commerce. Initially Cuban Americans formed their own work-based groups because the established nominally non-ethnic professional and business groups did not welcome them, including into their informal social circles.¹¹ That is, they organized separately at first in no small part because they felt rejected by members of established economic interest groups. Even though formed defensively, some of the Cuban American groups became powerful, as members shared in the American Dream. This has been true, for example, of the Latin Builder’s Association.

Cuban Americans have also formed, de facto, their own branch associations of national and international non-professional organizations. The Miami-Latin and Little Havana chapters of the Kiwanis Club are illustrative. Their members are 100 percent Hispanic, over 90 percent of Cuban origin. With almost entirely Cuban American memberships, they provide occasions for co-ethnics to socialize together, to reinforce their cultural heritage, and, in turn, to build up ethnically-based social capital. Cuban émigrés, in essence, partake in the very organizational life considered fundamental to American civil society and democracy, but in a manner that simultaneously allows them to remain somewhat apart and distinctive socially and culturally.

Meanwhile, upper middle and upper class Cuban Americans send their children to elite parochial schools patronized almost exclusively by co-ethnics. Through these schools, class-based ethnic identity and social ties are reproduced among the younger, U.S.-born generation.

The Cuban Americans are hardly unique. The privileged Anglos in Miami live in their own class and ethnic world. An officer of the Miami chapter of the American Cancer Society, for example, estimated in 2001 that 60 percent of its volunteers were non-Hispanic white and only 30 percent Hispanic. Thus, even around a shared health concern, Anglos and Cuban Americans organize separately. Similarly, Anglo women dominate the Junior League, a prominent group that assists abused women and children. Approximately 80 percent of its membership is non-Hispanic white.

Yet, as Miami became ever more Hispanic the leadership of Anglo-formed groups came to deem it propitious to incorporate Hispanics selectively into its ranks (while not simultaneously joining Cuban formed groups). By the century’s turn, key Miami institutions such as the United Way, the *Miami Herald*, and colleges and universities tapped Cubans to serve in their top positions. Cubans

at the top of the economic pyramid had moved almost entirely in separate circles until doors were selectively open to them.

At the more informal level, non-Hispanic elite nonetheless continue to be exclusionary. Well-to-do Anglos, for example, send their children to two prestigious non-denominational private schools that few Hispanics attend. Upper and upper middle class Anglos, like Cubans, accordingly are raising their children in separate class-based ethnic worlds.

Ethnic separateness extends to the social clubs that elite Cubans and non-Hispanic whites join. The island’s well-to-do class founded a club after emigrating that built on Havana’s five most exclusive pre-revolutionary clubs, captured in its name, The Big Five. While the Havana clubs closed down as the revolution eliminated the class base on which they rested, former members regrouped in Miami. At the century’s turn the Big Five’s membership was 80 percent Cuban, 99 percent Hispanic. Meanwhile, Anglo Miami had its exclusive and exclusionary Fisher Island Club. In 2001, 93 percent of its membership was non-Hispanic white.

Even while remaining socially and culturally apart, Cuban Americans acculturated and assimilated to Anglo America. Inclusionary and exclusionary practices co-exist. Many émigrés, for example, are mastering English while continuing to speak their mother tongue. The 2004 FIU survey shows nearly half of Miami Cuban Americans to speak English, or English along with Spanish, outside their homes, 40 percent to get their news in English or English along with Spanish, 62 percent to live in neighborhoods that are not predominantly Cuban, and 75 percent to work with non-Cubans or a combination of non-Cubans along with Cubans. In essence, many are enmeshed in bicultural worlds in pan-ethnic residential and work settings. As many assimilate, acculturate, and experience economic mobility, they concomitantly hold on to island-rooted cultural practices in hybrid form and build up ethnically-based social capital.

Political Incorporation

Cuban Americans in many respects, moreover, have been model immigrants politically. Their citizenship and electoral participation rates are high, they are assuming positions of political preeminence in core U.S. political institutions, and they have come to organize in ways common among interest groups nationally.

Reflecting their political incorporation, in Miami two-thirds of island émigrés had taken out U.S. citizenship as of 2004. Nationally, 53 percent of Cuban compared to 29 percent of Mexican origin *Latinos* report holding American citizenship.¹² And the FIU Cuban American survey found 90 percent of eligible citizens to be registered voters.¹³

Meanwhile, Cuban Americans are well on their way to becoming Greater Miami's political class, minimally the main ethnic group within that class. By the century's turn Cuban Americans had acquired such stature that they were appointed to top administrative posts. They held one-third of the top appointed positions in Miami-Dade, more than any other ethnic group. And 75 percent of the eight hundred Miami-Dade residents polled by the *Miami Herald* in 2000 believed Cuban Americans to be the most politically powerful of the country's ethnic groups.¹⁴

Cuban Americans also increasingly are elected to political office in the Greater Miami area. They are doing so with the backing not merely of the Cuban American community but the broader electorate as well. Each election more Cuban Americans in a range of municipalities in Miami-Dade County are voted into office, a trend that began in the 1980s. And by the century's turn Cuban Americans were elected to county-wide as well as municipal offices, even though they accounted for a mere 29 percent of the county's population.¹⁵ By then the mayor, one of the most important positions in the state, and most of the County Commission, were Cuban Americans, and the county sent a predominantly Cuban American delegation to the state legislature. In addition, by 2002 Cuban Americans could boast three congressmen in the Greater Miami area (and another in Hudson County, New Jersey where many Cuban Americans live as well). Two years later Florida elected the first Cuban American (and Hispanic) senator nationwide.

Cuban American voters are sufficiently forceful in Greater Miami that most politicians address the immigrant group's concerns even if they themselves are not of Cuban background. Most of all, politicians, irrespective of ethnic origin or party affiliation, support the U.S. embargo of Cuba, to appeal to anti-Castro Cuban American voters. Cuban Americans hoped the embargo would debilitate the Castro regime to the point of collapse. Democrats as well as Republicans pander to the Cuban American voter in both national and local elections. The 2000 election made transparent how critical Florida can be to national politics. Cuban Americans helped George W. Bush win the electoral college vote. Some 85 percent of Miami Cuban Americans reported voting for Bush that year.¹⁶ And Cuban Americans defended Bush when the state's vote was contested.

Cuban Americans benefited from the loyalty they lent Bush. Bush appointed Cuban Americans to senior positions on the National Security Council, the State Department, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development during his first term of office, and to the Department of Commerce in his second term.¹⁷ Thus, by the century's turn Cuban Americans were joining the top echelons of our polity, in elected and appointed positions, while accounting for less than 1 percent of our country's population.¹⁸

Nationally, Cuban Americans have become politically influential collectively as well as individually. Their national influence began under President Reagan, who supported the formation of the Cuban American National Foundation (popularly called the Foundation, or CANF) in 1981 in exchange for the Cuban American vote. Jorge Mas Canosa, the community's most influential and charismatic leader and patriarch of the Cuban American anti-Castro movement, gained access to the White House through the Foundation he helped found. Although exiles had founded scores of organizations over the years, none matched the Foundation in the influence it came to wield. Through the Foundation, Mas Canosa steered Cuban Americans away from terrorist tactics they brought with them from their homeland toward mainstream interest-group means of exerting political influence (even if members of the community, including CANF members, never entirely abandoned law-breaking, violent initiatives to advance their anti-Castro cause). The Cuban American community's refusal to turn over six-year-old Elian Gonzalez to U.S. authorities when requested, so that the boy could be returned to his father in Cuba, illustrated their insistence on their own rules of the game as recently as 2000. Elian had been rescued by a fisherman when his mother, whom he had accompanied in a boat from Cuba, died at sea. His mother had hoped to emigrate to the U.S. illegally. The Clinton Administration finally felt pressed to take Elian at gunpoint. The effort to keep Elian in the States had been spearheaded and funded by the Foundation, the Foundation turning Elian into a poster boy for its anti-Castro crusade.

Under Mas Canosa's leadership the Foundation also organized to exert national influence in ways that build on interest group practices the American political system allows. In this vein, the Foundation formed a separate lobbying organization, the Cuban American Foundation (CAF), and a political action committee (PAC), the Free Cuba PAC. The membership of and contributors to the Foundation and the organizations it spurred became a Who's Who of the Cuban American community. The nearly \$1.7 million that the Free Cuba PAC took in from the time of its formation until the century's turn was five times greater than the amount of money Cuban Americans gave individually to political candidates at the national level during these years.¹⁹ In the main, contributors felt they could exert more influence collectively than individually, and targeted their money accordingly. The Free Cuba PAC funneled funds to help elect anti-embargo and to defeat pro-embargo candidates, not merely from Florida, their home base, but nationwide. Through lobbying and allocation of PAC funds the Foundation won Congressional support for public funding of Radio and TV Marti, to beam anti-Castro programs to Cuba, and then for embargo tightening laws in 1992 and 1996.

Mas Canosa also financed the Foundation with a portion of his fortune. He had owned MasTec, which at the time of his death in 1997 was one of the two largest Cuban American owned firms. The Foundation, in addition, benefited from large annual donations from individual members. At the start of the new century its 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 gave up to \$100 a year.²⁰ The Foundation drew on these funds to buy political influence. Modeling itself after the influential Jewish ethnic lobby, the political contributions it collected came to exceed those by all ethnic groups besides the pro-Israel's (Smith 2000). So influential did the Foundation become that the Center for Public Integrity in 1997 named the Foundation the most effective lobby in America.²¹ Cuban Americans in Florida, and in Greater Miami in particular, provided the lion's share of Cuban American political contributions, both individually and through PACs.

By the 1990s the Foundation was not the only Cuban American lobbying group. However, no other group compared in clout or money raised to buy influence. Between 1989 and 2000 the Free Cuba PAC received 99 percent of all Cuban-related PAC contributions. And during that eleven year period Cuban Americans, spearheaded by the Foundation, stood out among Hispanic political contributors. They accounted for nearly half of all political contributions by Hispanics in Florida, the state ranking first nationwide in money raised by Hispanic PACs.

By 2004, however, the Foundation was a shadow of itself. Its PAC received a mere \$5,000 in contributions. Beginning in December 2003 another Cuban American PAC appeared on the scene, the U.S.-Cuba Democracy PAC. Within a year it raised over half a million dollars in contributions (in individual contributions of \$200 or more), nearly four times as much as the Free Cuba PAC had in any single year between 1998 and 2004 and double the amount the Free Cuba PAC had raised in its peak money-raising year, 1984 (in response to Reagan's courting of Cuban Americans). Almost overnight the newly formed group became one of the one hundred fifty largest of over five thousand PACS nationwide, and allegedly the largest political contributor on a foreign policy issue.²² Like the Foundation through its PAC until then, the U.S.-Democracy PAC funneled contributions to help elect pro-embargo candidates and defeat candidates who favored embargo loosening. The new PAC targeted funds to seventy-five Congressional candidates. And they received a return for their investment. In 2005 an earlier Congressional move to permit freedom of travel was reversed.

Through the new PAC Cubans Americans sought to accomplish what the Foundation no longer managed to do: to counter a growing post-Cold War tide in Congress to loosen the embargo, in particular to remove restrictions on travel and remittance-sending, and the sale of food and

medicine to Cuba. Lobbyists associated with the PAC determinedly fought to strengthen and not merely maintain the politically constructed wall across the Straits, just when Washington improved diplomatic and economic relations with other Communist countries and when the Berlin Wall that had separated the democratic West and the Communist East crumbled.

Because the PAC contributors were issue-oriented, they supported candidates on both sides of the Congressional aisle. While mainly Republican individually at the ballot box, collectively they considered a politician's stance on the embargo more important than his or her party affiliation. Indeed, between 1998 and 2004 more Cuban American PAC money went to Democrats than to Republicans.²³

At the same time, the biggest Cuban American political donors contributed more individually than through PACs. They obviously opted to maximize the build-up of their personal and not merely ethnic group political capital. President Clinton, for example, awarded one of the top Cuban American contributors with an ambassadorship, to Belgium. The fourteen largest Cuban American political donors in the 1979–2000 period allotted to PACs less than a tenth of the more than \$3 million they made in political contributions. Not one of the fourteen gave more to a Cuban American PAC than individually to a political party and to candidates of their own choosing. And reflecting their non-partisan approach, all but two of the fourteen contributed both to Democrats and Republicans.

The Cuban American Divide

While appearing to many Americans as a cohesive ethnic group, the Cuban American community is internally divided, and increasingly so. The first divide has been fermenting mainly away from public view. It is rooted in a shift in the sort of Cuban coming to our shores. The divide centers on differences among first-generation immigrants who came to our shores during different time periods. Compared to the first who fled the revolution, the recent arrivals have different values, lived experiences, and personal assets. The second divide, within the highest circles of the Cuban American leadership, centers on differences among the first who fled the revolution and U.S.-born Cubans. This divide is intergenerational, and involves a power struggle. The factions differ over strategy, though they share antipathy to the Castro regime.

The immigrant cohort divide

The intra first-generational divide is most marked between the pioneering and most recent émigrés from Castro's Cuba. While the largest influx of Cubans came during the first decade of Castro's rule, approximately half of island émigrés have arrived since 1980. The different émigré waves experienced different Cubas, leading them to have different perspectives on life. Their different island social

formations impact on their post-migration views and involvements across borders. Reinforcing their differences in social formation, the émigré waves arrived with different assets and they experienced different Americas. Differences are most marked between émigrés who came to the U.S. during the first five years of Castro's rule, who thus new mainly only pre-revolutionary Cuba, and post-1990 émigrés, who not only lived the revolution but also its unraveling, once Soviet bloc aid and trade ground to a precipitous halt.

The archetypal 1959–1964 émigré experienced a life of privilege in pre-revolutionary Cuba, and is conservative, a devout Catholic, elitist, and deeply anti-Castro and anti-Communist. This immigrant wave's conception of Castro's Cuba is largely imagined, not based on first-hand familiarity, and the conception is very negative. Hostile to the regime and wanting to bring it to heel, émigrés of this cohort advocate a personal along with a state-to-state embargo of Cuba. In contrast, the archetypal post-1990 émigré is a laborer, and had a very different island political formation. Émigrés of this wave, in addition, have a more nuanced, first-hand understanding of the revolution. For them the island social transformation is not imagined and pre-revolutionary society not idealized. At the same time, they experienced no civil society involvement independent of the state, as had the upper and middle classes of the first wave before emigrating. And unlike earlier émigrés who view themselves as exiles, many recent arrivals moved to America for economic even if also for political reasons. They want to help, not break with, family left behind. The moral frame of reference of these émigrés is family-based across borders, not ideologically grounded in a blockade between life in a capitalist democracy and a Communist dictatorship.

The different first generation cohorts, in turn, have shared unequally in the American Dream. Differences in their economic success are traceable to the different assets they emigrated with on the one hand, and to differences in the labor market conditions they faced and government supports they received upon arrival here on the other hand. Most recent émigrés might best be referred to as the "Other Cuban Americans," similar to the "Other Americans" Michael Harrington (1981) brought to our attention decades ago as excluded from the American Dream.²⁴ Nationally, as of 2000 nearly three times as many of the 1959 to 1964 émigrés held high level jobs and more than twice as many of them ranked among America's wealthiest tercile of income earners, compared to émigrés of the 1990s.²⁵

Pre-migration Cuban class differences that the revolution obliterated have been reproduced in America. The first to flee the revolution successfully transferred their pre-revolutionary acquired human, social, and economic capital into assets here. By the time recent émigrés came of age in Cuba, the revolution had eliminated private busi-

ness opportunities and accordingly opportunities to accumulate capital, to acquire entrepreneurial expertise, and to build up a business reputation transferable to Miami. The different cohorts even came with different social capital, networks to draw upon here in the world of work. The clubs, voluntary, and professional associations Cuban Americans have joined here, and the schools they send their children to, solidify, in the main, class-linked émigré cohort differences. They mainly involve émigrés of the first cohort, and their U.S.-born children.

The different cohorts also faced a Washington differing in generosity. Washington provided financial aid, job training, job placement, bilingual education, college loans, and the like, to the first refugees of the revolution, through programs that terminated before the most recent émigrés arrived.²⁶ The first but not the most recent post-revolutionary émigré cohort to settle in Miami, moreover, benefited from being in the right place at the right time, and capitalizing on it. It was the first post-Castro cohort who spearheaded the transformation of Miami's economy. Even Washington's shifting geopolitical concerns in the post-Cold War impacted differentially on labor market options for the different émigré cohorts. In the 1960s and 1970s intelligence agencies had provided jobs and business opportunities for many new arrivals from Castro's Cuba. The agencies took advantage of early émigrés' linguistic skills and anti-Communist political pre-occupation for national security espionage and counter-revolutionary activity south of the Rio Grande.²⁷ But the Cold War's end reduced Washington's concern with hemispheric counter-insurgency activity, with the exception of Colombia.

Within Miami, the émigré cohorts differ in their acculturation. According to the 2004 FIU survey of Cuban Americans, among the 1959 to 1964 émigrés 46 percent relied exclusively on Spanish for media news, 67 percent spoke exclusively Spanish at home while 44 percent spoke only Spanish outside, and 64 percent felt more comfortable speaking Spanish than English.²⁸ The corresponding percentages among post-1984 émigrés were, respectively, 82, 90, 69, and 94 percent.²⁹ While both cohorts continued to draw on Spanish in their everyday lives, though to somewhat different degrees, the FIU survey suggests that the cohorts differ substantially in their mastery of English. Far more of the first émigrés functioned bilingually or only in English. Over half of the 1959–1964 cohort relied on English, or English along with Spanish, for news and for conversing outside their homes, and one-third spoke English, or English together with Spanish, at home. The corresponding percentages among the post-1984 émigrés were 19, 32, and 10. Yet, it is noteworthy that the early, more than the recent, émigrés believed command of Spanish made work attainment easier. The two cohorts quite possibly had different jobs in mind, but 80 percent of the first post-Castro cohort, compared to 57 per cent of the

Table 1
Cross-Border Views and Involvements among Émigré Cohorts
in 2004

	Cohorts	
	1959–1964	1985+
SHARED VIEWS		
1. At the time of the case interviewee felt Elian Gonzalez should have been returned to father in Cuba*	17	22
2. Strongly favors support for human rights groups in Cuba	84	87
3. Believes that in Miami not all points of view concerning how to deal with Castro are heard	70	74
DIVERGENT COHORT VIEWS		
1. Favors diplomatic ties	29	61
2. Believes that embargo does not work	67	81
3. Favors continuation of embargo	75	56
4. Favors unrestricted travel to Cuba	28	68
5. Favors ban on Cuban musicians	64	44
6. Favors dialogue among exiles, dissidents and Cuban government	45	68
7. Opposes farm trade with Cuba	65	35
CROSS-BORDER INVOLVEMENTS		
1. Currently has close relatives in Cuba	54	95
2. Traveled to Cuba since left	23	45
3. Sent money to relatives	31	75
4. Sent money in 2003	20	50
5. Sent \$1,000+ in 2003	3	11

* Survey query in 2000.

Source: FIU-IPOR, *FIU/Cuba Poll 2000 and 2004* (www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba2000/years.htm).

most recent cohort, saw Spanish as a work-related asset. Assuming that their perceptions are accurate, insistence that today's immigrants only speak English may impair employment options and possibly economic mobility in turn. Bilingualism enables communication across the America, an economic asset, as well as communication with Miami's ever-growing Hispanic population. Nearly all of the city's foreign-born come from Latin America.

In turn, Cuban American political incorporation and influence varies very much by cohort. The Cuban Americans who dominate politically typically either emigrated in the 1960s or are U.S.-born children of émigrés of this cohort. The new immigrants are being politically passed by. While I am aware of no data documenting first cohort political domination, in my research I never came upon or heard of an influential politician who emigrated since 1980. Recent émigrés are so at the political sidelines that few even vote. As of 2000, nationwide only 26 percent of eligible 1990s émigrés had taken out citizenship, a prerequisite for voting. In contrast, 92 percent of 1959–1964 émigrés were citizens.³⁰

Several factors contribute to recent émigrés' low citizenship rate, and low voter participation rate in turn. First, in general, poor and minimally-educated Americans, which most recent émigrés are, typically have low political partici-

pation rates.³¹ Second, many 1990s émigrés, as detailed below, remain enmeshed in homeland ties. Consequently, political engagement locally is not a priority of theirs. In addition, recent émigrés may feel politically alienated because the first cohort political class does not address or represent their interests, also detailed below.

The Cuban American political class and well-to-do Cuban Americans who individually and collectively support political candidates and lobbying initiatives in the main use their influence to advance the (self-defined) interests of the cohort from which they emanate. They press for a foreign policy consistent with their pre-revolutionary political and class formation. In the main they oppose cross-border engagement on the presumption that it legitimates and bolsters Castro's government, which is unconscionable in their opinion.

The first cohort has taken advantage of its political dominance both to establish hegemonic influence within the Cuban American community and to speak in the community's name to the non-Cuban American world. The FIU 2004 survey shows that Cubans across the cohort divide concur that not all points of view are heard in Miami, e.g. on how to deal with Castro (see table 1).

Yet, table 1 demonstrates that first-cohort influence is far from complete. Although recent émigrés remain near-voiceless publicly, the survey points to cohort differences in views about relations with their homeland. The 1959 to 1964 and post-1984 émigrés differ significantly in their stance towards (1) the embargo, (2) the sale of food and medicine to Cuba, (3) diplomatic relations with Cuba, and (4) U.S.-to-Cuba travel restrictions. They also differ in their views toward cross-border political dialogue and cultural exchanges. The 1990s much more than the first post-Castro cohort want policies that will benefit on-island Cubans and that facilitate bonding across borders.

The survey also points to differences in actual cohort involvements across borders. In 2004 recent émigrés were nearly twice as likely still to have relatives on the island and to have visited them since emigrating. Even when the first arrivals had family still on the island, they chose not to visit them. And although the new immigrants are poorer,

more than twice as many of them send money to help island relatives. Recent émigrés, moreover, send more money, if 2003 is a typical year.

Thus, in advocating for a tightening of the embargo on trade and on travel and remittance-sending rights the Cuban American leadership is promoting interests of its cohort but *not* the interests of the new immigrants who are increasing in number by some twenty thousand a year. Recent émigrés are more pragmatic in their views toward cross-border ties and they are guided by a family moral economy that has been transnationalized with their move to America. Because they want to help and bond with family left behind, they oppose the personal embargo that the first cohort promotes.

If recent émigré attitudes differ so markedly from the first cohort's, why are their views not heard? There are several reasons for the silence. For one, the more working-class cohort lacks the personal attributes associated with political involvement in America. Two, Cubans raised in Castro's Cuba are without civil society experience on which to build. The Castro regime prevented civic engagement independent of the state. And many recent émigrés developed a distaste for political involvement in Cuba, a distaste they brought with them to the States. They disliked the Communist Party-controlled political life they experienced in Cuba.³²

But recent émigré views also have not been heard because for decades the first cohort leadership made no effort to represent the interests of recent arrivals *ill-served* by the embargo-tightening policy it advocated. The views of post-1990 émigrés were off the political radar not because of benign neglect, leadership unfamiliarity with, and therefore insensitivity to, recent arrivals' concerns. The leadership never even spoke for all of its own cohort, and deliberately so. Over the years the dominating faction 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 their co-ethnics in tow.³³ Early hard-liners violated American political norms at the same time that they individually and collectively incorporated into mainstream politics.

Recent émigrés have been publicly silent in part also because they too have been silenced. Post-1990s arrivals who have tried to challenge the dominant early émigré viewpoint have experienced repression, rejection, and resistance.³⁴ Much of the silencing occurs removed from public viewing, for example, when recent émigrés submit editorials to the news media and try to voice their opinion on popular Miami call-in radio shows. They claim to be rejected because of their point of view.

The clash of cohort interests came to the fore for the first time in 2004 when President Bush announced that émigrés could visit island family only every three years and even then only visit immediate kin, parents, children, and siblings, not grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins,

and the like. The assault on transnational family rights brought hundreds of the new immigrants to the streets. They picketed offices of the first-cohort Cuban American legislators whom they blamed for the new restrictions.³⁵ The Bush Administration imposed the new restrictions at a time when new immigrant visits soared. The percentage of the cohort who traveled to the island to see family jumped from 31 to 45 between 2000 and 2004.³⁶

The leadership divide

Bush tightened the personal embargo when pressured by first cohort hard-liners, to gain their electoral support. Stepped up high-level Cuban American political pressure picked up when the first-cohort Cuban leadership divided. Jorge Mas Santos, who took over the helm of the Foundation when his father died, proved too tolerant of selective cross-border ties and too ineffective in stopping a Congressional softening on the embargo for the most hard-line. Mas Santos, U.S. born, represented a younger generation within the Foundation.

Against the backdrop of a softening in the Foundation's foreign policy stance, an impassioned, articulate, influential, and moneyed faction split off in 2001, and formed a rival group, the Cuba Liberty Council (CLC). CLC members are well connected politically.³⁷ They had close ties to then Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, and through him a pipeline to his brother, George W., 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 other hard-liner first émigré cohort based groups.³⁸

The Foundation was further weakened by new, internal financial problems. Coincidentally, the price of MasTec stock, the Foundation's main endowment source, plunged. The Foundation downsized its staff, closed its Washington office, and shut down its radio station, its key Miami venue for influencing public opinion. And in 2004 the Foundation's articulate Executive Director, Joe Garcia, a second-generation Cuban American whose family emigrated in the 1960s, left the job. The formation of the U.S.-Cuba Democracy PAC and the Free Cuba PAC's loss of contributions reflected the war within the leadership class, and the decline of Foundation influence. The CLC is the main force behind the U.S.-Cuba Democracy PAC, although the PAC brings in contributions from members of other hard-line groups and even from selective members remaining active in the Foundation who are willing and wanting to put their money wherever they perceive they can have an impact. Searching for a new political base against this backdrop, and no longer weighed down by its most conservative directors, the Foundation reversed its earlier hard-line stance. It began to support immigrant

rights to visit and to send remittances to island family, as well as to support cross-border dialogue. These are new immigrant concerns. The Foundation remains deeply anti-Castro, but it has shifted its strategy for dealing with its enemy. However, in that the Foundation is a shadow of its former self, new immigrant interests remain poorly defended by the Cuban American leadership.

Conclusion

Many Cuban immigrants have shared in the American Dream and in a manner contributing to our economy and broadening the political base of our democracy. And while retaining command of Spanish, socializing and marrying among themselves, and rarely converting to Protestantism, so too are many of them learning English and working and living in multi-ethnic worlds. Empirically, Huntington focuses mainly only on one side of the coin, Hispanic social and cultural separateness.

Huntington, moreover, fails to offer an adequate explanation of the Cuban experience. For one, his explanation of the Hispanic group's limited assimilation and acculturation to a certain extent blames the victim. Cuban separateness resulted partly from Anglo rebuff. The Anglo upper class and the Anglo professional and business community excluded Cuban immigrants from their informal social circles and from their economic interest groups. And the non-Hispanic community at large wanted Cubans only on their cultural terms and tried to use political and legal means to impose their way. If Cuban émigrés remain socially and culturally apart, they have done so not entirely at their own choosing. Anglo rebuff contributed to and reinforced the very immigrant group differences Huntington argues are ruining America. If Cuban Americans are ruining America, the Anglo community has not been an innocent bystander. Ironically, Anglo social exclusion had the unintended effect of solidifying co-ethnic social ties in a manner contributing to Cuban American social capital formation, social ties of economic and political worth.

In addition, Huntington's analytic frame fails to direct our attention to and account for intra-ethnic group differences. Cuban immigrants are not woven of a single ethnic cloth. We have seen that Cuban Americans differ among themselves—economically, socially, culturally, and politically—depending first and foremost on when they emigrated. Immigrant cohorts may differ, as the Cuban case demonstrates, in pre-migration-attained assets and in experiences and values that they do not leave behind when moving across borders. Their pre-migration social formation impacts on their post-migration adaptation. And so, too, may immigrants who uproot at different points in time meet up with different new country political and social receptivity and with different labor market options. The Cuban experience accordingly suggests that the bet-

ter the economic, social and human capital assets immigrants come with; the greater the state assistance received upon emigration; the more inclusionary groups in the host society are; and the better the labor market and creatable labor market opportunities are, the more economically successful will newcomers be and the more likely that they will assimilate and acculturate even if concomitantly they hold on to cultural practices from their homeland.

If there is not a single Cuban American experience, even less is there a single Hispanic experience. The political and economic experiences of the first Cuban émigré cohort remain, to date, exceptional among Latinos. Although a comparative Hispanic group analysis is beyond the scope of this article, a brief contrast with Mexican American experiences is noteworthy. In 2000 Mexicans were by far the largest new immigrant group. They accounted for 59 percent of all Latinos, Cubans for a mere 6 percent.³⁹ Yet, in California, including in Los Angeles where so many Mexican origin people reside, few Mexican Americans have attained political preeminence and the immigrant group has not capitalized on the state commanding the largest number of electoral college votes. The contrast with Cubans in Miami is striking. In 2005 Los Angeleans elected a Mexican American mayor for the first time, twenty years after Cuban Americans began to enter in sizable numbers Miami's governing political class. And far fewer Mexicans than Cubans to date have lived the American Dream. With both Cuban Americans and Mexicans in the main Catholic, Spanish-speaking, and living in close proximity to their co-ethnics, Huntington correctly points to certain similar experiences of the two Hispanic groups but does not provide an adequate explanation of their differing economic and political experiences. The factors helping to account for the contrasting American experiences of the different Cuban émigré waves no doubt also help account for overarching differences between Cuban and Mexican ethnics, and for differences among Mexican ethnics in turn.

Last but not least, the Cuban American experience demonstrates that Hispanics may give and not merely take from America. Cuban Americans in Miami have helped make America stronger economically, richer culturally, and possibly also better positioned politically to compete in our era of economic globalization and anti-Americanism, even if they have yet to assimilate and acculturate fully and even if they have not entirely played by dominant Anglo-set norms and rules of the game.

Notes

- 1 Huntington 2004.
- 2 I focus exclusively on Huntington's analysis of Hispanics in the chapter he dedicates to them.
- 3 Diaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2003, 6, 12, 15.

- 4 Eckstein 2004, tables 1 and 3; Diaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2003, 12, 15.
- 5 FIU-IPOR 2004.
- 6 Kaiser Foundation 1999, 58, 87.
- 7 García 1996, 74, 210.
- 8 Unless I indicate otherwise, my summary of Cuban American non-Hispanic white organizational involvements in Miami draws on an excellent 2001 undergraduate term paper by Anne Fernandez at Harvard University.
- 9 García 1996, 92.
- 10 I could not identify the ethnicity of two members of the Board of Directors. The Boards include prominent Cuban Americans in Miami.
- 11 Stepick et al. 2003, 152.
- 12 Kaiser Foundation 1999, 67.
- 13 FIU-IPOR 2004.
- 14 *Miami Herald* September 4, 2000.
- 15 Boswell 2002, 11.
- 16 FIU-IPOR 2000.
- 17 Clinton also rewarded major Cuban-American political donors. For example, he appointed businessman Paul Cejas of Miami, the second largest Cuban American Democratic contributor between 1979–2000), an ambassadorship to Belgium (www.opensecrets.org).
- 18 Boswell 2002, 2.
- 19 Unless otherwise indicated, my analysis of Cuban American PACs draws on data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics. See www.opensecrets.org/pubs/cubareport.asp.
- 20 Tamayo 2002.
- 21 *Miami Herald* March 23, 2002, at www.canfnct.org.
- 22 www.uscubapac.com/nav.html.
- 23 Candidates who received Cuban-American PAC money included Democrats Bill Clinton, Bob Graham, Joe Lieberman, and Republicans George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, Bob Dole, Jesse Helms, and Dan Burton (www.opensecrets.org).
- 24 Harrington 1981.
- 25 Eckstein 2004, table 3.
- 26 Pedraza 1985, 4–52.
- 27 Didion 1987, 90.
- 28 FIU-IPOR 2004.
- 29 IPOR lumps late 1980s with post-1990 émigrés in their year-of-migration categorization. Few émigrés, however, came to America in the latter 1980s.
- 30 Eckstein 2004, table 4. Since the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act entitles all Cuban émigrés to citizenship after five years of U.S. resident status, and resident status after one year on U.S. soil, almost all islanders who emigrated before 1995 not naturalized by 2000 remained so at their own choosing.
- 31 C.f. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Eckstein 2004, tables 3 and 4.

- 32 Both my U.S. and Cuban interviews suggest this.
- 33 C.f. Forment 1989; Didion 1987, Portes and Stepick 1993. My interviews suggest that the less hard-line first cohort émigrés had moved to America as children at their parents' discretion. They thus were socialized partly in the U.S. when young.
- 34 Based on interviews I conducted with recent Cuban émigrés between 2000 and 2005.
- 35 *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 2004, 4.
- 36 See FIU-IPOR 2000 and table 1.
- 37 This was not the first rift the Foundation experienced. However, it was its most devastating.
- 38 San Martin 2003.
- 39 Ruggles et al. 2003.

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