Grounding Immigrant Generations in History: Cuban Americans and Their Transnational Ties[1]

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The two paradigms for analyzing immigrant experiences, "assimilationist" and "transnationalist," leave unanalyzed important differences in immigrant adaptation rooted in different historical generational experiences. This article analyzes the importance of a historically grounded generational frame of analysis. It captures differences in views and involvements between two cohorts of first generation émigrés. Empirically, the study focuses on different Cuban-American cohort crossborder ties. The first cohort, comprised of émigrés who left between 1959 and 1979 primarily for political reasons, publicly oppose travel to Cuba because they believe it helps sustain a regime they wish to bring to heel. The second cohort, who emigrated largely for economic reasons, is enmeshed in transnational ties that, paradoxically, are unwittingly doing more to transform Cuba than first wave isolationism. The cohort comparison is based on interviews with émigrés in Union City, New Jersey and Miami, Florida. The analysis of effects of transnational ties rests on interviews in Cuba as well.

Analytically, studies of the pre-1965 old immigrant era drew upon a straight-line assimilationist frame, and variations thereof (*see, e.g.*, Alba, 1990; Gans, 1992; Lieberson, 1985; Waters, 1990). Typically they focused on how assimilated groups, and generations and social classes within ethnic groups, became over time. By contrast, students of post-1965 immigration have introduced a transnational frame of analysis that highlights social ties linking societies of origin and settlement (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton-Blanc, 1994; Guarnizo, 1993; Portes, 1995a; Portes *et al.*, 1999; Smith, 1998; Levitt, 2001; Pessar, 1999, *but see* Rumbaut, 1994; Portes, 1995b, 1996; Alba, Massey and Rumbaut, 1999 for important exceptions). They emphasize how continued home country ties lead immigrants to resist full assimilation.

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In a similar manner, assimilationists and transnationalists portray intergenerational immigrant experiences differently. Assimilationists highlight second-generation adaptation to the country of settlement; transnationalists emphasize the continued ties children of immigrants have with their parents' country of origin and how these ties limit full assimilation into the new country. While portraying generational experiences differently, both schools of thought, nonetheless, share a common conceptualization of generations. Both presume generations to be grounded in biologically-based intrafamily relations (*see* Portes, 1996; Rumbaut, 1998 for intrafamily generational differences).

In our view, generational experiences are historically and contextually grounded, in the sense described by Karl Mannheim (1952). Mannheim, in his classic study of political generations, suggested that common experiences during youth might create a common worldview or frame of reference that influences subsequent political experiences. While Mannheim and others who have studied political generations typically focused on advanced industrial societies, Eisenstadt (1956) noted the role of youth in colonial movements and Zeitlin (1970) focused on the importance of different cohort experiences on views toward the Cuban revolution. 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-based experiences.

Political generational experiences, there is reason to believe, are not entirely left behind with emigration. This would be especially likely in the case of refugees. And there is reason to believe that the generationally variable experiences forming part of the immigrant "baggage" are cultural and economic as well as political, and that these experiences likewise influence country of settlement adaptation.

Meanwhile, people in the country of origin may be influenced by family abroad, by new institutions and practices that integrate "diasporas" into their home country, by the media, and the like. Such transnational exposure, in turn, may form part of historical generational experiences of people never emigrating or who emigrate at a later point in time.

Accordingly, cohorts that differ in their pre-emigration backgrounds can be expected to differ, in certain respects, in their post-emigration experiences. Also contributing to different adaptation experiences are variations in conditions in the country (and community) of settlement, depending on time

of arrival. That is, émigré adaptation may be shaped more by pre- and post-emigration historical and contextual experiences than by the number of generations (and years) a family has settled in a new country.

For these reasons, it is time to deconstruct the concept of generation and reconceptualize it. We illustrate the utility of a historically, rather than intrafamily biologically, grounded generational frame, with reference to Cuban Americans. We focus, in particular, on differences between pre- and post-1980 first generation émigrés in their transnational ties, as reflected in homeland visits, views about visits, and effects of visits. To the extent that immigrant adaptation is shaped by historical and contextual generational experiences, we would expect differences between the two first generation cohorts.

We refer to the two cohorts as first- and second-wavers. The two cohorts, in the main, differ in their social and economic backgrounds, their pre-emigration experiences, and the "opportunity structure" they faced when arriving in the States.[2] The first-wavers were mainly of upper and middle class origins (Table 1). They typically left because of the radicalization of the revolution, which stripped them of property and privilege and left some fearful for their lives. Because of the conditions under which they left, they viewed themselves as political exiles. By contrast, Cubans emigrating in 1980 and thereafter were more likely to be of working class background, and they more typically left for economic reasons to improve their material well-being. However, a minority of this cohort as well left because they suffered political and human rights persecution. The impetus for emigration shifted most dramatically in the 1990s, when the island economy caved following the demise of Soviet aid and trade and survival on peso-earning jobs became nearly impossible.

Aside from differences in socioeconomic background and motivation for emigration, the pre- and post-1980 cohorts were socialized in different milieus. First wave émigrés grew up in the pre-revolutionary conservative social order, while second-wavers grew up in Castro's Cuba in which institutional life had undergone a radical transformation.

The two cohorts also were affected by different governmental responses to their emigration, on both sides of the Florida Straits. On the U.S. side,

[2]While we focus on the main social divide among Cuban Americans, between pre- and post-1980 émigrés, there also are differences, though less significant, among émigrés who left at different times before and after 1980. For more differentiated delineations of émigré waves, *see*, for example, Garcia (1996), Pedraza (1985, 1995), Amaro and Portes (1972).

TABLE 1
OCCUPATIONS OF LEGAL CUBAN IMMIGRANTS AT TIME OF ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES IN SELECT YEARS, COMPARED WITH CUBAN OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE PRIOR TO THE REVOLUTION

(in percentages)

Occupation in Cuba	Years of Arrival					
	1953 Cuban Census	1959-1962	1965-1966	1970	1980	1997
Professional, Semi-professional, Managerial	9	31	21	12	11	9
Clerical, sales	14	33	32	30	7	11
Skilled	27[a]	17	22	25	26	13[c]
Semi-skilled, Unskilled		8	12	16	45	49
Services	8	7	9	9	5	16
Agriculture, fishing	42	4	5	7	7	1
Total percentage[b]	100	100	101[b]	99[b]	101[b]	99[b]
Total individuals	1,938,228	27,419	17,124	14,755	5,809	16,750

Notes: [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.
Sources: Silvia Pedraza-Bailey, 1985:2 and the sources therein, and U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), *Statistical Yearbook* 1997:69.

the first-wavers benefited from immediate unconditional refugee status and from public programs easing their adjustment. On the Cuban side, they experienced state rejection. Stigmatized by the Castro regime, they were denied visitation rights. Consequently, for decades they had minimal contact with any family left behind and with the Cuba that evolved under Castro. Émigrés since 1980 (and especially since the 1990s), in contrast, were less welcome in the United States but more welcome in Cuba. Washington by then had cut off programs for arriving islanders, while Cuban authorities permitted émigré visits within five to ten years after their island departure. And the Cuban authorities did not chastise the latter émigrés, above all those who departed in the 1990s.

Our cohort analysis draws on a variety of sources. First and foremost it draws on interviews the authors conducted with a nonrandom sample of 94 community leaders and rank-and-file residents in the two main U.S. Cuban-American settlements, in Greater Miami-Dade County (Florida) and Greater Union City-Hudson County (New Jersey). The leadership sample includes businessmen, clergy, government officials, politicians, and heads of Cuban-American social 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 about their personal background, reasons for emigration, and transnational contacts. As informants, we asked them for names of other prominent local Cuban Americans and for names of

ordinary Cubans we might interview. The latter inquiry served as a base for a rank-and-file "snowball sample." But to broaden our rank-and-file base we also drew upon contacts we independently established with a range of people in the two communities, specifically targeting émigrés from the pre- and post-1980 period. Using an open-ended questionnaire format respondents were asked about their travel-to-Cuba experiences, motives for trips, the assistance they provide family in Cuba, community views toward travel and their personal views of Cuba and U.S.-Cuba policy, plus personal biographical information (including occupation and year of emigration). We also asked interviewees how their crossborder ties and views have changed over the years, when and why. Then, to learn about how Cubans on the island view transnational ties and the effects of such ties, we interviewed 40 Cubans (ordinary islanders, scholars and government officials) in Havana.

To learn about macro immigration and transnational visitation trends, we also analyzed relevant Cuban and U.S. government policy documents, and we interviewed authorities in relevant government offices in the two countries. Furthermore, we examined government statistical as well as newspaper sources and surveys of Cuban Americans.

Based upon the combination of information, we analyze below official emigration and then official visitation policies and their impact. Then, we examine, respectively, the evolution of the Greater Miami and Greater Union City Cuban-American communities and the significance of transnational ties for residents of pre- and post-1980 émigré cohorts in the two communities.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CUBAN EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Cuban-American homeland ties must be understood in the context of Cuba-U.S. immigration history. Emigration rates have varied with U.S. law, Castro's tolerance and encouragement of emigration, and ordinary Cuban informal covert efforts to leave.

The approximately 672,000 émigrés who arrived before 1980 came to include, in rough chronological order, officials of the Batista government, the upper class, businessmen and professionals, small shop owners, and others of the middle class. Only about 15 percent of the arrivals during the first three years of Castro's rule had been unskilled or semi-skilled workers in Cuba, and another 17 percent were skilled workers (*see* Table 1). With the exeption of laborers, the emigration entailed a class exodus. Indeed, the island class base of large and medium farmers and businessmen, and then of small businessmen,

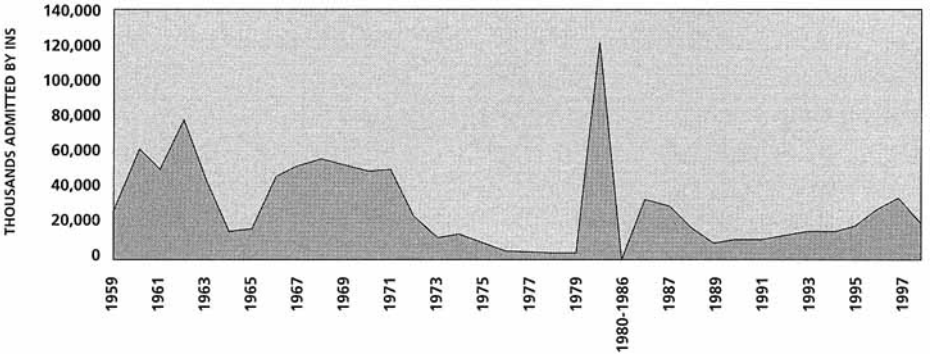
disappeared with the radicalization of the revolution and increased nationalization of property ownership during the first decade of Castro's rule. Washington and Havana, in turn, permissive of family reunification, created a fairly contained émigré community, a community that remained rooted in pre-revolutionary values and memories.

Coming in the heat of the Cold War, Cubans benefited from privileges not offered most other émigrés. For one, under the 1952 McCarren-Walter Act, islanders, defined as victims of Communism, were exempt from national immigration quotas in effect at the time. Second, Cubans benefited from some $957 million worth of official federal, state, and local level programs initiated to help their adaptation. They received food, clothing, and healthcare, assistance in finding jobs, financial aid, employment and professional training, bilingual education (including for adults), and college tuition loans (*see* Pedraza 1985:4–52). Third, the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act eased émigré qualifications for permanent residency status (and citizenship, in turn), and for benefits typically available only to U.S. citizens (such as Medicare). The privileges notwithstanding, both because of Castro's initial popularity among the "popular sectors" and Cuban government-imposed exit restrictions, emigration rates tapered off in the latter 1960s and especially in the 1970s.

By 1980, however, new emigration pressures built up. Fueling the desire to leave were visits by some 150,000 Cuban Americans. They had responded to Castro's first-ever tolerance of exile return trips, following a (temporary) thaw in U.S.-Cuba relations under President Jimmy Carter and an island government dialogue with Cuban-American moderates (many of whom had emigrated, as youths, at their parents' discretion, and who had come of age in the United States during the years of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements). The visits led islanders to fantasize about how attractive material life in the United States would be. Cuban-American/Cuban contact, in turn, stirred anti-regime sentiments. Unable to exit easily, wishful émigrés stormed the Peruvian embassy. Seeking to defuse the political pressure, Castro unilaterally granted islanders permission to emigrate, from the port of Mariel. As highlighted in Figure I, some 125,000 Cubans made their way to the United States during the Mariel boatlift.

The so-called *Marielitos* in the main represented a different Cuba than earlier émigrés: in their social and economic backgrounds and island experiences (*see* Bach *et al.*, 1981; Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, 1981; Pedraza, 1985; Fagen *et al.*, 1968). They were less well-off and darker skinned, and they had been socialized in Castro's Cuba. They also included homosexuals,

Figure I. Cuban Migration to the U.S.: 1959-1998



Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook*, various years.

the mentally ill, criminals, and some political dissidents. Authorities loaded these government-defined undesirables onto the boats transporting islanders to the United States.[3]

With the "new Cubans" emerged a first-ever social divide within the émigré community. Earlier émigrés snubbed the new arrivals, whom they considered their social inferiors. While hostility towards *Marielitos* tapered off over the years, to date Marielitos and earlier émigrés socialize little with each other. Cross-cohort family ties are limited, and most activists in *municipio* (community-of-origin), Cuban-American professional and other groups are first-wavers. Moreover, *Marielitos* and earlier émigrés typically live in different neighborhoods in Miami.

Cuban emigration tapered off again after the Mariel exodus. The threat of ever-more islanders leaving for the United States induced the two hostile governments to sign a bilateral agreement. The United States agreed to accept up to 20,000 island émigrés per year, at a time when other countries no longer were entitled to national quotas. The quota notwithstanding, by the early 1990s Washington granted entry visas to a fraction of the cap. In preventing entry of persons unhappy with Castro, pressure in principle would mount within Cuba for change.

[3]Pedraza (1995) reports that approximately 19 percent of the refugees admitted during Mariel had been in jail in Cuba, though typically for minor crimes. Garcia (1996) estimates 1,769 Cuban *Marielitos* were subsequently detained in U.S. federal correctional institutions.

But as in 1980, dynamics "on the ground" operated somewhat independently of government will and law on both sides of the Florida Straits. Cubans determined to come to the United States took to covert means when they could not come legally. Some islanders, able to obtain U.S. family visit permits, took advantage of the opportunity to leave and never return. Others sought refuge in makeshift rafts. The U.S. Coast Guard reported rescuing some 1,000 Cuban rafters between 1982 and 1990 and over 45,000 between 1991 and 1994 (U.S. Coast Guard, 2000). Indeed, the vast majority of the approximately 50,000 Cubans the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) admitted in the early 1990s came covertly (Milan and Díaz, 2000). Once in the United States, illegal entrants became eligible in a year and a day for legal residency status, according to the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act.

Contributing to the stepped up informal emigration was the Cuban government's unilateral decision once again, when times were tough, to permit islanders to leave without respect for U.S. law. He renewed the option in 1994, against a backdrop of mounting economic and political tensions. Triggered by the sinking of a tugboat filled with islanders trying to escape and a short-lived occupation of diplomatic premises by 150 would-be emigrants, some 1,000 to 2,000 desperate, angry, and starving Cubans protested in downtown Havana. Islanders experienced a subsistence crisis as the supply of food reached rock bottom following the demise of Soviet aid and trade. While the logic of the U.S.-imposed embargo suggested that such a pressure-cooker-induced uprising would bring the regime to heel, Castro turned the situation around by opening up the option to exit. Some 38,560 islanders, known as *balseros* or rafters, took advantage of the opportunity and battled their way across the Florida Straits (U.S. Coast Guard, 2000). This time, though, Washington broke its three decades-old policy of automatically accepting Cubans picked up at sea. In the post Cold War context, support for privileging Cubans over other immigrants in the United States tapered off. Nonetheless, any émigré who reached U.S. shores retained the right to stay and qualify for resident status and ultimately for U.S. citizenship.[4]

With the threat of ever more *balseros* flooding the Florida Straits to make their way to U.S. shores, Havana and Washington signed yet another migration agreement in September of 1994. This time Washington pledged to grant a

[4]This came to be known as the "wet foot/dry foot" policy. The "wet foot" component refers to the policy requiring the U.S. Coast Guard to return to Cuba all islanders picked up at sea unless they could prove that they were refugees in need of asylum. The "dry foot" component refers to the continued policy of allowing Cubans who made it to U.S. shores to qualify for resident status.

minimum of 20,000 entry visas per year. Under the new accord, some islanders qualified for U.S. entry through a newly instituted lottery, others through family reunification prerogatives (*see* Nackerud, Springer, Larrison and Issac, 1999).

Even more than the *Marielitos*, the 1990s émigrés bore little resemblance to those who first left – in social class, cultural background, and motives for emigration. The Immigration and Naturalization Service, for example, reported in their 1997 Statistical Yearbook that of the most recent immigrants for whom it had information almost half were operators and laborers, 16 percent were service workers, and 13 percent were craft and repair workers (Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1999). By contrast, only 9 percent had been executives, administrators, and managers. The demographic profile was a near-mirror image of the émigrés who came in the early years of Castro's rule (*see* Table 1).

Also, an even higher percentage of 1990s than Mariel émigrés spent their entire lives in Castro's Cuba. Fewer knew the pre-revolutionary Cuba first-hand. More than *Marielitos*, they came for economic reasons. Typifying the new immigration motives, an arrival at an Immigration and Naturalization Service detention center in Miami noted "without food there was nothing to do but leave" (*New York Times,* June 2, 1991:24). One of our interviewees, now a Miami resident, conveyed that he risked a raft voyage in 1994 with his three sons for "entirely economic reasons." He had been discharged from his job in a state telecommunication enterprise as a result of the economic crisis. "I didn't have and do not have any problems with the Castro regime or the Revolution. I fought for the Revolution . . . Cuba was very, very poor . . . . My choices were to leave with my children or starve."

The 1980–2000 émigré cohort thus experienced a very different Cuba than the first islanders to leave. They also had, in the main, different reasons for coming to the United States.

THE MAKING OF THE CUBAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Cuban-American émigrés gravitated primarily to Dade County, Florida, but also to Hudson County, New Jersey. While Washington from the outset sought to disperse Cubans from South Florida (initially through the 1961 Cuban Refugee Program), its efforts proved to no avail. Over the years, the approximately 1.3 million Cuban Americans, émigrés and their U.S.-born children, became ever more centered in Dade County.

Queries by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (*see* Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1999) reveal how strong the Miami pull had

become by the turn of the century. When surveyed upon entry, Cuban migrants in overwhelming numbers noted their intention to settle in Florida. In 1997, over 80 percent expected to settle there. New Jersey attracted the second largest number, but only 3 percent of arriving island immigrants. By then Dade County had become home to 63 percent of the nation's Cubans, up from 42 percent twenty years earlier (*New York Times,* April 11, 2000: B-1; U.S. Census 1999).

The New Jersey Hudson County Cuban-American community, by contrast, became a shadow of its former self. Union City remains the hub of the state's Cuban-American enclave. But, according to officials, in 1970 Cuban Americans accounted for about 80 percent of the Union City population, 30 years later their percentage dwindled to some 20 percent (*New York Times,* April 11, 2000: B1). Although still the largest single ethnic group in the city and still the symbolic center of the state's Cuban-American community, the very success of émigrés there contributed to their declining numbers. While many have remained in the Union City (New York/New Jersey) metropolitan area, economically successful émigrés, and their children above all, have moved from the city to more affluent suburbs, where they are a numerical minority. By contrast, in Dade County affluent Cuban Americans remain demographically concentrated in posh Greater Miami neighborhoods and municipalities.

Retirees add to the declining demographic significance of Cuban Americans in the Union City area. Upon retirement they gravitate to Florida for climatic as well as social reasons. Miami, since the 1960s has become the "Second Havana." A fair number of relocating New Jerseyites deliberately cluster together. A man from Newark who resettled in Miami Beach jocularly noted that "Half of New Jersey is here." He added that he knew three condominium buildings in Miami Beach where almost everyone is Cuban from New Jersey (*New York Times,* April 21, 2000:12).

Our interviews with businessmen, clergy, politicians, group leaders, and journalists in both New Jersey and Florida reveal that Cuban Americans have come to dominate the smaller, less dynamic Union City as well as the larger, more dynamic Miami community. Other studies of Miami confirm Cuban-American dominance there (Garcia, 1996:8). By the early 1990s, Cubans dominated Miami's city commission, and they accounted for nearly one third of Dade County's delegation in the state legislature. Cuban Americans by then also served as mayors of several Florida cities, including Miami, as well as city and county managers, and two Floridians were elected to Congress. All told, by

2000 Cubans held one third of the top elected and appointed Miami-Dade County positions. In addition, Cubans occupied top administrative posts in key Dade County nongovernmental institutions, including the *Miami Herald* and local colleges and universities, and they became a major entrepreneurial force (*Miami Herald,* September 4, 2000). Fifty percent of local firms came to be Latino-owned, mainly by Cuban Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 1992:18).

Cubans, meanwhile, were perceived to dominate Miami. Seventy-five percent of the 800 Miami-Dade residents who participated in a *Miami Herald* poll believed that Cuban Americans were the most politically powerful of the county's ethnic groups (*Miami Herald,* September 4, 2000). And the Cuban Americans who dominate are first-wave émigrés and their grown children, that is, families of the cohort who left Cuba before the Mariel exodus (*see* Didion, 1987; Portes, 1987; Portes and Stepick, 1993; Rieff, 1987, 1993; Garcia, 1996).

The first-wave émigrés and their children, morally driven by anti-Castro Cuban nationalism, seek to speak for all Cuban Americans. They do so even though their interests and experiences typify an ever smaller portion of island émigrés. About one third of all Cuban Americans have come to the United States since the 1980 Mariel exodus.

The first-wave émigrés project their values onto the communities, dominate the community public discourse, and advocate a U.S. foreign policy consistent with their political formation. It is they who deftly lobby at the local and federal levels. They were influential initially because they advanced Washington's Cold War anti-Communist agenda, but more recently because they became wealthy well-organized lobbyists from states, especially Florida but also New Jersey, commanding large numbers of electoral votes in political "swing states."

Among first-wave émigrés and their children, it is the conservative faction that is most outspoken and influential. First-wave anti-Castro émigrés who favor transnational engagement over isolationist economic strangulation and whose views more closely represent those of the numerically growing second-wave lack the organizational presence and clout of the conservative faction. Not all first-wave émigré families, especially their now-grown children, are of one mind.

The dominant first-wave core maintained its hold over the years through intimidation when normative means did not suffice. For decades Cuban Americans who disagreed with the community leadership feared making their views known. They feared social isolation within their community,

and they feared discrimination in the world of work. A Miami businessman in favor of improved U.S.-Cuba relations, whom we interviewed, in this vein noted, "If you don't comply with the 'politically correct' way, they'll hurt your business. They will call your customers and pester you on the phone. If I worked with Cuba or Cuban-Americans my business would be affected." Similarly, a Miami school director explained, "There is not much tolerance here. They call you names and chastise you. They accuse you of being a Communist if you don't say what's mainstream. You can get fired if they don't like what you say about Cuba."

Nonetheless, public discourse somewhat conceals what Cuban Americans actually do and privately feel. By the turn of the century, community leadership intolerance constricted activity less than in years past and less than is publicly acknowledged. In view of community pressures, some Cuban Americans have gone so far as to chastise publicly what they privately do, but, irrespective of what émigrés say, in ever-larger numbers they are quietly defying leadership condemnation of transnational people-to-people ties.

The main privately felt, if publicly unarticulated, fault line within the communities is generational, rooted first and foremost in emigration wave. Marielitos and subsequent émigrés do not publicly challenge community leader views or Washington policies with which they disagree. They do not want to attract attention to themselves. The costs are too high and the task of organizing too difficult. They lack the organizational prowess of those who first came, in part because they grew up in a Cuba in which civil society had no place. Moreover, in reaction to the pressure in Cuba to partake in mass organizations, they reject political involvement in the United States. But because they still have family on the island and because they mainly emigrated for pragmatic rather than principled political reasons, they want to maintain close ties with islanders they left behind.

Whatever their antipathy to the Castro regime, the views of *Marielitos* and subsequent émigrés are grounded in the complexity of life in contemporary Cuba, and the lives of family members there, not in an imagined and idealized pre-Revolutionary social order. They differ here from Cuban émigrés in the first cohort, especially those children of first-wavers who do not even know Castro's Cuba first hand. Coming to the United States mainly for pragmatic economic reasons, not infrequently emigration is a family strategy, a way to earn money for kin left behind in the growing dollarized island economy. Recent émigrés put family first. By contrast, earlier émigrés, whose close relatives in the main are reunified in the United States, are well positioned to

put politics and their personal principles first. Their contrasting social situation has predisposed them to oppose transnational ties they believe bolster the Castro regime.

TRAVEL TO CUBA

Cuban Americans who go to Cuba do so mainly to see kin, and family visits are the only routine travel Washington has permitted since imposing the embargo in the early 1960s. But Cold War anti-Communist isolationist politics, and then effective first-wave émigré lobbying, resulted in the United States restricting even family visits. The Cuban government has similarly tightly regulated émigré visits. But its policies became more permissive in the 1990s as a result of a shift in institutional priorities and mounting pressure from ordinary Cubans.

U.S. and Cuba Travel Policies

The basis for restricted family travel changed over the years. Initially the main restrictions were imposed by Havana. For two decades the Cuban government prohibited visits by most exiles who had rejected the regime. Then, after the 1979 opening generated emigration pressures and the aforementioned exodus of some 125,0000 islanders from the port of Mariel, Havana drastically cut back the Cuban Americans it allowed into the country, and it imposed restrictions on the visitors it let in. Émigrés could stay for no more than two weeks, and they were required to stay in state-run hotels. Then, following the Reagan administration's 1985 beaming of anti-Castro Radio Martí, controlled by first-wavers, Cuba banned émigré visits altogether for a year. When visitation rights resumed, Havana imposed an émigré visitor quota.

In the mid-1990s Havana both eliminated the cap and eased travel. It allowed Cuban Americans to stay with island relatives, and allowed them to stay for up to three weeks per trip. Moreover, the government for the first time allowed pre-1970 émigrés to enter with U.S. (as opposed to Cuban) passports and visitors with Cuban passports to qualify for two-year multiple entry visas. In light of the Mariel experience the opening was politically risky. But so, too, was continued crossborder family isolation. Official tolerance picked up in part because the government had gradually become more accommodating of émigrés – publicly redefined as the Cuban community living abroad, no longer, as previously, counterrevolutionaries. But the government came also to have economic reasons for its more permissive stance toward visits. Visiting émigrés helped subsidize the subsistence of family they left behind, at a

time of deep economic recession. Cuban Americans carried gifts of money with them, and they took their island families to new state dollar stores. Without the help of American kin many islanders could easily go hungry, a politically explosive situation in itself. The 1994 protest in central Havana, which included looting of stores, testified to that.

As Cuban authorities loosened restrictions, Washington became more restrictive. Cuban émigrés became subject to more constraints on homeland visits than almost all other immigrant groups. After the 1994 *balsero* crisis, President Clinton banned island family visits except under extreme circumstances (such as terminal illness or severe medical emergency). And in 1996 the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Act, popularly known by the names of its two sponsors Helms-Burton, called for political reform in Cuba as a prerequisite for the renewal of travel. The bill passed immediately after the Cuban downing of planes flown by the anti-Castro group Brothers to the Rescue. While not codified into law, Section 112 of the law presents a sense of Congress exhorting the U.S. President to insist that the Cuban government release political prisoners and recognize fundamental freedoms before re-instituting general licenses for Cuban-American island travel. Promoted by the powerful well-organized principal anti-Castro Cuban-American lobbying group, the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF), the tightening of the travel embargo was designed to intensify island pressure for change. Wealthy first-wave émigrés and their now-grown children dominate the CANF's leadership.

Pressure from first-wavers notwithstanding, before the close of the 1990s the Clinton administration defied the sense of Congress and the CANF. It not only resumed Miami flights to Cuba, but for the first time also allowed direct travel to Cuba from Los Angeles and New York, connecting with island cities besides Havana. But Washington only permitted émigrés one routine visit per year. While Clinton legitimated the opening in terms of Pope John Paul's call, on his 1998 visit to Cuba, for the world to open up to Cuba, the opening reflected a growing post-Cold War consensus in the United States (outside the Cuban-American community) that the embargo was ineffective, that transnational engagement would prompt more island change than would isolation, and that crossborder people-to-people interchange, in particular, would stir islander interest in a political-economic transition. But just as support for removing all travel restrictions heated up, reflected in a nonbinding House vote in July of 2000, the Cuban-American Congressional lobby managed to get the travel restrictions (a maximum of one trip per year)

codified into law three months later in an amendment to the Agricultural Appropriation Act. With the 2000 presidential election highly contentious and the Florida vote too close to predict, Congress accepted the amendment without much debate. By 2002 the House actually voted to relax travel restrictions, although at the time of writing no new law was put into effect.

Meanwhile, Cuban visits to family on the U.S. side of the Florida Straits were not an option for many. For one, Washington very cautiously issued visas, as of the 1990s, because it feared visitors would resist returning home. Second, Cubans did not have the hard currency needed to finance trips.

Cuban-American Travel

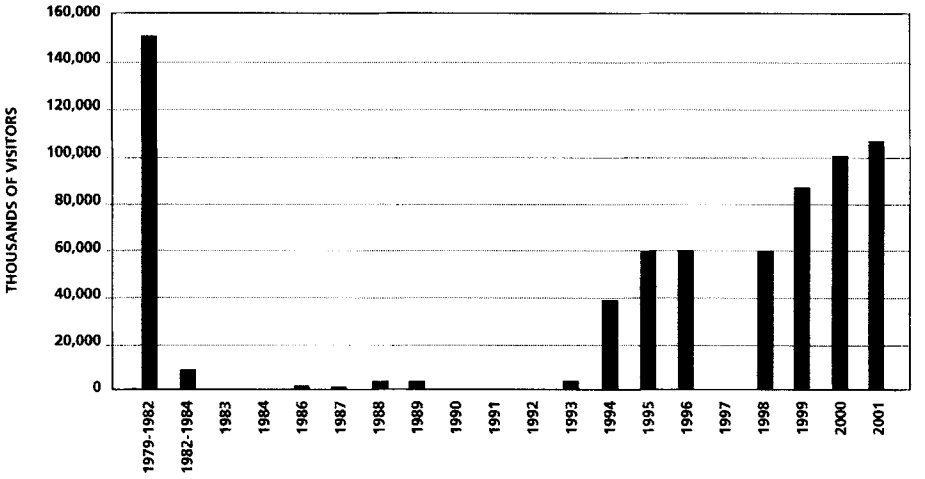
Cuban-American views toward travel, not surprisingly given our thesis, varied mainly along cohort lines. While the influential first-wave leadership remained hard-line in publicly opposing travel, ordinary émigrés, second-wavers above all, visited Cuba as never before. And they did so covertly when Washington banned direct travel.

In the course of the 1990s, travel reached levels reminiscent of 1979, this time for consecutive years and without the same political impact. Cuban-American travel increased from approximately 7,000 to over 140,000, with an estimated minimum of 100,000 émigrés visiting annually between 1996 and 1999 (*see* Figure II). The heightened travel meant that by the turn of the century an average of one in about every ten émigrés traveled to Cuba.

As travel picked up, the profile of the typical returnee changed. The average travel age dropped, and émigrés began to visit more frequently with shorter intervals between trips. Although our Hudson and Dade County rank-and-file samples are small and nonrandom, interviewees reveal a shift in views toward transnational people-to-people ties and a growing willingness to defy both official U.S. travel restrictions and pressure from the Cuban-American leadership. Consistent with the stepped-up travel, official U.S. and Cuban sources report, 87 percent of all travelers in our rank-and-file sample had visited island family in the 1990s. Thirty-nine percent of those questioned traveled for the first time between 1994 and 1999, despite Washington's ban at the time on direct travel. They evaded U.S. restrictions by entering Cuba through third countries.

Seemingly surprising, first-wave émigrés made more visits to Cuba than later émigrés. Since 1979, the first-wavers went, on average, 3.8 times, compared to second-wave émigrés who averaged 1.9 trips. But first-wavers, for one, were more likely to travel by virtue of having lived in the United States

Figure II. Cuban-American Visits to Cuba 1979-2001[a]



Note: [a]Data on Cuban-American travelers for 1979-1993, 1998, 2000. Figures for other years are estimates, based on information on total number of U.S.-to-Cuba travelers and estimates of the percent Cuban-American (60%). No information available for 1983-1985, 1990-1992 and 1997.
Sources: Marazul Tours (2000); *New York Times* (August 24, 1994: A14 and June 14, 2000: A10); *Miami Herald* (February 11, 1997 and June 26, 2002), plus interviews with a leading U.S.-Cuba travel service provider and leading Cuban authority on migration.

longer. Second, in part fewer second-wavers traveled because of reasons beyond their control. Cuba restricted entry of 1980 *Marielitos* until the end of the 1980s and 1994 *balseros* until 1999.

Consistent with our historically grounded émigré wave thesis, first- and second-wave émigré respondents differed in their travel patterns. Second-wave émigrés were much more likely than the earlier émigrés to make their first trip in the 1990s, to be expected given past Cuban government initial *Marielito* and *balsero* travel restrictions. Second-wavers accounted for 80 percent of 1990s first-time travelers (while only 41% of the sample). And among repeat travelers, second-wave émigrés tended to go with shorter intervals between trips. The time between first and second trips averaged 6.0 years for those who emigrated prior to 1980, while among those who subsequently emigrated only 2.2 years, on average, elapsed before a second visit.

In essence, our survey suggests that the Cuban-American leadership publicly opposing travel speaks increasingly less for the yearnings of the expanding émigré community. Our survey also suggests that U.S. travel

restrictions are out of sync with the wants of ordinary Cuban Americans, especially second-wavers. However, we found that, on average, Cuban Americans traveled no more than once a year, consistent with Washington's cap in the years in the 1990s when it permitted travel.

WHY CUBA TRAVEL INCREASED

Why did Cuban-American travel pick up just when Washington visitation rights became more restrictive? Our rank-and-file and leadership interviews suggest several reasons, rooted mainly, though not exclusively, in émigré cohort differences.

Increased Numbers of Émigrés with Family in Cuba

Stepped up emigration since the enactment of the 1994 U.S.-Cuba migration agreement, combined with second-waver transnational family spread, contributed to heightened Cuba travel. Recent arrivals tend to be young men without immediate family in the United States (Rodríguez, 1999). The greater kinship networks span the Florida Straits, the more likely émigrés want to visit the island. Post-1980 émigrés are much more likely than their predecessors still to have family on the island.

The Shift from Political to Economically Driven Migration

While first-wave émigrés left Cuba for political reasons and to preserve their socioeconomic status jeopardized by the radicalization of the Revolution, the vast majority of second-wavers, especially those emigrating in the 1990s, came to the United States for economic reasons, to improve their material well being. They came to help, not break with, family they left behind. Reflecting the shift in motivation for emigration, a 1993 University of Havana study of 188 rafters whom the Cuban government intercepted at sea found 83 percent to be seeking refuge in the United States to help island families in need (Martínez *et al.*, 1996).

The more Cubans emigrate for income-earning purposes, the less likely are politics to stand in the way of transnational family ties. For economic immigrants, visiting Castro's Cuba poses no moral dilemma, even if they would welcome the leader's downfall.

The Pope's Visit

Pope John Paul II's January 1998 visit to Cuba proved the biggest boon to

travel since Castro's 1979 opening. In the year after he stepped on island soil, travel increased some 25 percent. His visit influenced first-wavers in particular. Many devout Catholics, they heeded the holy leader's call for the world to open up to Cuba. Meanwhile, a religious revitalization in Cuba, predating the Pope's visit but strengthened by it, contributed to a mending of relations among families divided by religious conviction as well as politics. In addition, television coverage of the Pope's journey around the island stirred memories, peaked émigré homeland interest, and evoked a yearning to visit the island.

Reflecting on the impact of the Pope's visit, one anti-Castro civil liberties activist who himself has, in his own words, "not gotten up the courage yet to visit Cuba," noted that "the Pope's visit broke the ice. His Holiness conveyed the message that it was not only alright to help Cubans, but that people had a moral obligation to do so." This first-waver felt that the best way to heal and assist Cubans was to help them help themselves, best done not with showy projects but through people-to-people contact.

Both U.S. and Cuban priests, moved by the Pope's trip and his homilies in Cuba, in turn are contributing to changing cultural attitudes toward transnational family ties. The number of clergy in Cuban-American congregations who use their influence quietly and cautiously to change parishioner's views towards Cuban citizens has stepped up. Some priests have taken to visiting Cuba themselves and to encouraging parishioners to help island brethren. Similarly, visits to the United States by Cuban-based priests are building transnational bridges, including between émigrés and their parishes of origin. The religious-based activity is reducing moral barriers to travel.

Nostalgia and the (Re) Establishment of Roots

Some first-wave émigrés entering old age are stirred by a yearning to see their homeland after years of separation. This age-related yearning helps explain why older people accounted for most travelers until the 1990s.

Children of first-wave émigrés, in small but growing numbers, also want to connect with their roots. While many continue to honor their parents' morally based travel boycott, some second generation Cuban Americans as well as first generation Cuban Americans with only childhood memories and a conception of Cuba more imagined than real, are breaking with their parents' views and visiting the island. Family identity with Cuba is so deep-rooted among émigrés that even children who emigrated at less than a year old refer to trips as "going back." For them, returning is a state of mind, but

a powerful one. Such Cuban Americans typically visit cousins and distant relatives whom they never previously personally knew. Reunification may be traumatic, but bonds are fast to form in a culture where blood ties are strong.

Diminution of Fear and Social Pressure Regarding Travel

Until recently, community pressures among first-wave émigrés kept travel desires at a minimum. As a man who emigrated in the 1960s explained, "My social class doesn't go to Cuba. Mas Canosa is a saint. We won't break ranks." The man remained loyal to Mas Canosa's wishes even after the revered charismatic former Cuban-American National Foundation leader died. In other instances, though, fear of community retribution more than community moral commitment discouraged travel.

Anti-travel pressure notwithstanding, visits have a contagious effect. Visitors return with stories and videos of their trips that they show friends and family. In so doing, they spark interest in travel informally and contribute, consciously or not, to a changed stance toward island visits. Cuban Americans once reluctant to return to Cuba see that nothing happened to those who went, either in Cuba or within the Cuban-American community that once ostracized those who defied the local leadership's travel boycott. "People don't criticize you anymore if you go," émigrés now tell you.

Polling data concur that Cuban Americans have gradually become more supportive of family visits. In surveys of Miami Cuban Americans conducted between 1991 and 1995 by Florida International University's Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR), roughly 40 percent supported negotiations with the Castro government to promote family visits to Cuba. In 1995, the only year in which the poll was conducted in Union City, 56 percent reported supporting travel negotiations. By 1997, however, IPOR found a dramatic shift in views. Seventy percent of the Miamians interviewed endorsed travel to the island. No difference existed among respondents across gender, education, and income lines.

However, views toward travel were found to differ somewhat by race and citizenship. Seventy-seven percent of blacks and mulattos supported travel versus 69 percent of whites, and whereas 65 percent of émigrés who were U.S. citizens favored visits, 81 percent of those who were not citizens approved of homeland trips. With second-wave émigrés more likely to be dark-skinned and less likely to be U.S. citizens, race and citizenship-linked differences probably reflect émigré cohort linked differences in views. Differences aside, the polls suggest that Cuban Americans became more supportive of island family

visits just when U.S. policy, with the blessing of the first-wave conservative Cuban-American leadership, became more restrictive.

IPOR's 2000 poll further speaks to the generational divide. Although the percentage of Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade County supporting travel that year fell from 70 percent in 1997 to 53 percent, there were significant cohort differences. Whereas only 43 percent of pre-1984 émigrés supported unrestricted travel to Cuba, 75 percent of respondents who emigrated subsequently favored unregulated visitation rights (for a detailed summary of Cuban émigré opinions on a variety of policy issues by period of immigration, *see* 2000 IPOR FIU Poll, *<http://www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba2000/q15.htm>).*

Ease of Travel

Difficulties of travel did not keep Cuban Americans from flying to Cuba through third countries when the Clinton administration prohibited direct flights. Similarly, hours of waiting and security checks in the Miami airport do not keep determined travelers away. However, Washington's resumption of flights and the establishment of new U.S. and Cuban landing and departure sites, along with Havana's initiatives to ease travel, make visits the more likely.

Improved Communication

The more Cubans on the two sides of the Florida Straits communicate, the more they desire to see each other. Both phone and mail communications improved in the 1990s. Reflecting the impact of long distance conversations, a staunch Union City anti-Castroite who emigrated in 1970 noted, when interviewed, that she decided to visit island family after talking to them by phone.

REMAINING TRAVEL BARRIERS

While increased travel suggests that a new permissive subculture is evolving within the Cuban-American community, constraining factors remain. Legal restrictions, travel costs, and lingering fear continue to inhibit the number of Cuban Americans visiting Cuba and the frequency of their travel.

U.S. Law

Given that a maximum of one visit per year is allowed by U.S. regulations (except in emergency situations), law-abiding Cuban Americans cannot travel freely. In view of how deeply Cubans value family and the proximity of the

island, especially to Floridians, it is hard to imagine that the two sets of Cubans would not get together more frequently were bilateral relations normalized – for holidays, birthdays, sick-visits, and casual get togethers. Indeed, Cuban authorities we interviewed report that one third of travel by Cuban Americans to the island takes place during the Christmas and spring holidays. Moreover, the frequency with which Cuban Americans shuttle between Florida and New Jersey to visit family also suggests that transnational family travel would increase substantially were there a relaxation of travel restrictions (and costs).

Even in emergency situations, U.S. law complicates travel. Under situations of urgency, family members may solicit a humanitarian visa from Washington. However, official responses take weeks, which may be too long in times of crisis. Under the circumstances, émigrés are faced with being apart from loved ones or going to Cuba illegally. A 56-year-old retired former aviation industry employee who emigrated in 1961, for example, reports having applied for a humanitarian visa upon learning that his elderly mother in Cuba was gravely ill. Notified by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) three weeks after submitting his application that he still needed to complete a phone interview prior to approval for a travel license, he had reluctantly left in the interim without permission. Time was of the essence.

Cost of Travel

Costs include not merely air tickets and hotel accommodations (unless hosted by island family). They also entail government fees. In the year 2000, the Cuban government charged returning émigrés $230 for a passport,[5] $150 for a multiple entry visa, and $60 for a humanitarian visa.

But costs are moral and informal as well as bureaucratic. No Cuban American goes empty-handed to family in Cuba. While gift-giving is not new, the scale of expected generosity increased dramatically in the 1990s and came to include money, as Cubans could no longer subsist on their peso earnings and the dollar became legal tender. Reflecting on the impact of the informal costs associated with family travel, Eugenia (a pseudonym, as are all names used for interviewees), in Dade County Hialeah, recalled, "I go to help. If I can't help, I don't go." And in the words of Margarita, a first-wave Union City émigré who herself boycotts travel to the island, "By the second

[5]According to the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., Cuban citizens who arrived in the U.S. after 1970 must use a valid Cuban passport to enter their homeland.

trip, Cubans are asking for money. But many Cuban Americans want the money for their own children and for better housing. This makes them have second thoughts about visiting Cuba."

Speaking to the weight of gift-giving, a priest noted that many Cuban Americans "suffer a 'Messiah complex.' When they go to Cuba they feel like God, like saviors. They go with big packages and fat wallets. And in Cuba they take family to stores where you can only pay in hard currency. They buy fans and other things that Cubans can't buy for themselves."

Whatever pleasure émigrés get from helping island family, gift-giving costs probably inhibit first- more than second-wave émigrés. Recent arrivals, though poorer, not only often emigrated with the intent of helping family back home but their transnational family ties also are stronger.

Lingering Anti-Travel Social Pressures

Lingering fear of community stigma and retribution dissuades some émigrés from travelling or from travelling as frequently as they might like. Several people interviewed reported unpleasant incidences. After returning from his second trip to Cuba in 1999, an émigré who left as a teenager and who now works for the U.S. government, for example, received an anonymous letter with a copy of a newspaper editorial opposing Cuba travel. Similarly, a retired émigré who left in 1961 recalls television footage aired on local Miami stations in which Cuba-bound travelers were filmed at the city's international airport. According to him, camera crews were allowed to film travelers because the airport was considered a "public space." Another traveler, in turn, recalls the Miami airport atmosphere as tense and unpleasant, with numerous security checks. With travel still not publicly sanctioned by the community leadership, many émigrés remain secretive about their trips and ambivalent about going.

THE IMPACT OF VISITS

The ripple effects of visits are multiple and far greater than most travelers intend or even understand. Travel humanizes feelings towards family abroad and softens views toward both countries. Accordingly, the growing number of trips is serving to strengthen transnational people-to-people ties and attitudes, in a manner having potential ramifications for bilateral relations. So too are visits having unintended macroeconomic, social, and cultural, and, to a lesser extent, political, consequences. In this section, we explore effects of travel on émigrés and their island family and on transnational group, organizational, and institutional relations/dynamics.

Impact on Travelers

Reactions to visits vary first and foremost by émigré cohort. At one extreme, recent immigrants are unfazed by visits. On the other hand, there are first-wave émigrés whose visits confirm their preconceived views of Castro's Cuba and some grown foreign-born children of first-wave émigrés who are transformed by island encounters. Nearly all reacted well, though, at the people-to-people level.

First-Wave Émigrés. First-wave Cuban Americans who left the island as adults under difficult circumstances often find that visits reconfirm their dislike of the regime. They remain convinced that ties between the two countries should stay minimal as long as Castro is in power. Moreover, they do not identify with the Cuba they see. Reflecting on the impact of visits, a New Jersey priest commented that most émigrés "find that visits confirm their prior beliefs. They return saying, 'I was right,' more convinced than before that the government is a disaster."

In this vein, the reaction of Josefina, an elderly Union City woman who went to Cuba in 1998 to visit a sister she had not seen in 32 years, is telling. Josefina went into exile after members of her family had been imprisoned and tortured by Castro's army. Her husband, whose brothers all live in the United States, chose not to accompany her. He echoes the view shared by many first-wave émigrés: " I won't visit, I will return (when Castro falls)." Fearing that the opportunity "to return" would not come about before either she or her 81 year old island sister passed away, Josefina decided to make a one-time pilgrimage with another sister who lives in Miami. Two years after the visit, Josefina still cannot speak of the visit without becoming overwhelmed with emotion. She describes encountering a country "filled with misery and destruction. It was like Beirut. My sister's house was collapsing. As I drove with my family to my hometown, I saw everyone walking alongside the highway. There wasn't transportation and people had to walk many miles." For her, the purpose of the trip was to seek reconciliation and closure with family. While there she also made peace with a niece, a fervent supporter of the Revolution whom she had chaperoned as a young girl. Ideologically at odds, the two had severed ties. When her trip drew to a close Josefina knew "that this was goodbye. I vowed never to return again while Fidel is in power."

Another Union City woman, who left in 1970 and went back for the first time 25 years later, had a similar reaction. "I went to see the family that I remembered and family I never previously met. But it looked like Beirut.

Everything was in a state of decay, falling apart. I couldn't help it. I just began crying. What made it tolerable for me was the family warmth. It was a big event for them that I came . . . . That Hitler monster. When he is gone it could be wonderful. But there are 40 years of decay. Even people's spirits have been affected. For generations they have been unable to express themselves." Similarly, a first-wave émigré social service worker reconfirmed her negative views of the regime on two church-related visits. Said she, "I was astounded at the level of distrust and the animosity that Castro injected in people. I was called a foreigner in my own country! I saw a hardened and stressful people, so 'imbibed' with stupid nationalism that they couldn't see through it."

Grown Children of First-Wave Émigrés. Some first-wave émigrés who left the island as infants or young children have had different experiences when daring to defy their parents' personal travel boycott. Those who grew up outside Union City and Miami, and the hostile anti-Castro cultures there, were most apt to break with the family travel ban. Having only vague memories, at most, of their native country and having left the island at their parents' will, they were prompted to visit the island out of curiosity and a desire to assess the accomplishments and failures of the Revolution for themselves. They also sought to re-establish ties with family, often distant family, whom they barely if ever knew. For some of them visits were very positive and transforming experiences, even if they returned critical of the government.

Liliana, who lived only part of her life in Miami, for example, recounted the dramatic impact of her first visit. She visited Cuba initially in a professional capacity. One year old when her family fled the island in 1959, she was the first in her family to go back.

> I was blown away on my first visit. I grew up thinking that Cuba was like Eastern Europe – gray and fearful. But I found it gorgeous. People have a hard time, but they also have a sense of life. It was very different than the Miami image, an image my family had given me. I cried every night because it was the first time I felt at home. It was similar to when Jews go back to Israel and experience their roots. There were Cubans talking with their hands! And I knew their accent! I began to change. While I didn't agree with Castro, I felt as if I would have stayed in Cuba had I been old enough to make the decision in 1959. I experienced a sense of homecoming. My sister, who left at 6 and went back with me at age 45, felt the same. Both of us were young when we left and lived most of our lives outside Miami.

The experience of Liliana and the sister who accompanied her was not shared, though, with other family members:

> For my mother it was different. I took her with me on my second trip. She expect-

> ed that she would cry, but she found it was not her home anymore. The country was different than the Cuba she remembered, so that the trip was not an emotional homecoming for her. She shed only a few tears, when she saw old friends. My father, in contrast, refuses to go back or even look at my photos. He observes a personal boycott of Cuba. He has a vision of Cuba and doesn't want it to change. His family lost more wealth than my mother's did. Perhaps that explains his view. And my older sister, who was 16 when we left in 1959 and who has lived in Miami all her life, won't step foot in Cuba.

The older sister, like the mother, remembers the good life enjoyed before the revolution. Both also live in the Miami milieu that scorns island travel.

Alejandra, who grew up in the Midwest but subsequently resettled in Miami, had a similar experience to Liliana. She was sent as a child, after the Bay of Pigs invasion, to live with family in Mexico. Her parents, who ultimately joined her, had feared that the Communist government might take her away. "For years I resisted going to Cuba," she explained. "but in my dreams I would walk the streets." Having lived imagining Cuba, she decided a safe time to go was during the Pope's visit. "It was almost surreal. Things were much smaller than I had remembered and trees had grown. But once setting foot in Cuba, I made several trips back. I feel so free there. I now go about three times a year. I decided to make documentaries there." While taking pleasure in her trips, her initial decision to visit was difficult, in part because of family disapproval.

> I went after my father died. I don't think I could have gone if he were still alive. Still, my sisters and mother are unhappy with me, as are my Miami relatives. In Cuba I have distant relatives – second and third cousins. I see them whenever I go, more frequently than I see many of my relatives here. My Cuba family never asks, but I bring them presents and give them money. They give me things too. If I say I like some food they prepare it for me the next time I go. The Cubans I see are so resilient. Life is frustrating, but the people try to put on their best. Their education and cultural awareness are impressive, even in the towns.

Yet another woman who emigrated as a child, Elisa, was similarly transformed by a visit. She, too, got up her courage to make her first trip when the Pope traveled to Cuba. From an ardently anti-Castro Catholic family, she was so moved by her experience that upon return to the United States she became an activist for improved bilateral and improved transnational religious ties.

Some Cuban Americans who came when young and who lived through the generational experiences of their American-born age cohort also came to question their parents' hostility toward the Castro government, even if they grew up in the main Cuban-American enclaves. Their historically grounded relevant generational experiences were U.S. more than Cuba based. The civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, in particular, led some Cuban

Americans who came of age at the time to be more critical of the United States and more open-minded about Cuba than were their parents. Those who pushed for and engaged in the so-called Dialogue of the late 1970s typify this group. Noted one such participant, Aurelio, now a successful Miami travel agent, whose family fled the island in 1960:

> The civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements led me to question a lot. They led me to question my parents and to question the situation in Cuba. For a few years I refused even to speak to my parents . . . . I was among the first Cubans to return to Cuba. I went with the first Antonio Maceo Brigade. It was an emotional experience, to see the country where I was born and its culture. Things that I thought were unique to me I saw to be Cuban. I was also impressed with the kids there, how self-confident they were, compared to us in the exile community. And I was impressed by the education and healthcare systems. I became idealistic about Cuba, although with time more realistic . . . . I am impressed now with how they are able to sustain the system despite hardships. Changes are needed from the Cuban side, and they have been happening. There is no way back. And if there were less U.S. pressure the changes would be a lot faster.

Aside from affecting him emotionally and helping him understand Cuba better, Aurelio's homeland visits led him to become very close to his island relatives. In this vein, he explained that "I see them whenever I go. They talk with passion and love. They worry about how we are doing. The people there have a greater sense of family, even when their family has left." He noted no comparable concern on the part of his family in the United States toward those they left behind.

Other now grown children of first-wave émigrés, however, remain committed to the anti-Castro mindset they acquired from their immigrant parents. One professional woman, who visited the island in 1998, for example, upon her return remained active in a conservative anti-Castro Cuban-American group. Yet, she came to understand Cuba differently as a result of her trip. She came to the realization that Cuba had changed and would never be the island her parents had known and loved.

While family bonds and parental political passions continue to disincline many of the now grown first-wave children from breaking their parents' travel boycott, these examples show how individually transforming visits by grown children of first-wave émigrés may be. Gradually, the younger generation wants to "connect" with their roots, to link their childhood memories to their adult identity.

Second-Wave Émigrés. Though poorer typically than first-wave émigrés and their children, *Marielitos* and especially post-1990 émigrés are more apt to

travel whenever they can. Still adapting to the United States, they have fewer U.S. and more Cuban ties. For them trips are less traumatic. Since they grew up on the island, they are fairly unfazed by the visits. Their reactions are personal, not political.

Orlandina typifies the "new émigré." A housekeeper in a New Jersey suburb, she has returned to Cuba every two years since obtaining U.S. residency in 1993. Leaving her children behind, Orlandina emigrated to help them. "My family in Cuba is very poor," she explained. "Growing up, we worked in the tobacco harvests. The Revolution didn't take anything away from us. I never expected to come to the United States, but I'm here working to help my family. I don't care about who is in power. I just want to help my family." Aside from visiting biannually, Orlandina phones home to Cuba weekly and sends packages when she can. "The economic situation in Cuba has worsened since I left. Because of the blockade and other problems, my family is experiencing tremendous difficulties," she explains. The $300 Orlandina sends monthly (in lump sum, in violation of an official U.S. quarterly $300 cap since 1999, and a mid-1990s remittance-sending prohibition) goes for food and medicines for her elderly mother, her two sisters, a disabled brother, and a daughter who is an unemployed single mother. For Orlandina, travel to see family is essential. "I would return to Cuba more often. The only thing holding me back is the cost of trips."

Natalio, a more well-off Miami small businessman who left Cuba in 1981, also travels routinely to Cuba. A former high school teacher in Havana, Natalio emigrated in his thirties, leaving close kin behind, including his daughter, ex-wife, and father. Through friendship with a Cuban government official, Natalio obtained special permission to visit Cuba before his cohort of émigrés could officially return. He has gone back eleven times, traveling mainly through third countries. Contrasting first- and second-wave émigrés, Natalio noted that:

> Those of us who left after Mariel understand the intentions of the Revolution – to improve the living conditions for the working class in Cuba – and recognize the achievements in health and education. We are more tolerant and respectful of Cubans who choose to remain on the island. Unlike older exiles, we know and understand the conditions under which our families struggle to survive, because we lived them ourselves. We do not feel it appropriate to demand that our families and friends in Cuba make sacrifices (that is, live without dollars) or take actions (against the government) that we were unwilling to make.

Natalio disagrees with those Cuban Americans who say émigrés should not send remittances because the money helps the government. Echoing Orlan-

dina's sentiments, Natalio explained, "My visits give my friends and family hope and make life easier for them. Ninety percent of the passengers on the flights to Cuba are people just like me who only want to help their families. I don't feel that I am doing anything wrong. This isn't a matter of politics. It is a matter of family."

Similarly reflecting the different émigré wave views towards visits, a Cuban-American businessman reports that his gardener, who came around 1990, "simply makes money and goes." The landscaper travels approximately every two months and goes for holidays. Washington's once-a-year cap does not stand in his way. "For him, the trips are a routine part of his life." Likewise, a school director describes how her nail manicurist who emigrated since Mariel goes frequently to see her grandmother in Cuba: "The ties are incredible."

These examples suggest an inverse correlation between socioeconomic status and travel, the opposite of the leisure traveler experience in the United States. The working class proclivity to visit Cuba is also generationally explained. While second-wave émigrés undoubtedly would visit more were travel cheaper (as it is likely to be for Floridians, in particular, after the lifting of the embargo), the costs as such are not an impediment to kin visits. Transnational family commitments make travel a routine part of recent émigré lives.

Cuban Responses to Cuban-American Visits

Viewed from Cuba, visits by family who emigrated tend to be well received, although sometimes with ambivalence. In some instances, visits heal emotional wounds for Cubans who had resented abandonment by loved ones. Increasingly get-togethers are instrumental. Cubans have come to cultivate relations with relatives in the United States they previously rejected on political grounds once they became dependent on dollars for subsistence and other needs and wants.

Lizbeth's experience reflects the impact of family reunification through visits. She was twenty years old when her mother left during Mariel. For the next fourteen years, Lizbeth had little contact with her mother in Miami, mainly only through letters addressed to her aunt and telephone calls at a neighbor's house. A member of the Union of Young Communists (UJC) and a student at Havana University, Lizbeth was very hesitant to have contact with her *gusano* mother. She feared it might cause others, notably her local CDR (Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, the official nationally organized block organization) and potential employers in the state-controlled economy, to question her loyalty to the Revolution. At a personal level, Liz-

beth resented her mother's departure, which she experienced as abandonment. When the economic crisis hit the island in the 1990s, Lizbeth's mother took the opportunity to reestablish a role as the family's matriarch. Aside from "taking care of her children back home" financially, the mother came to have more open, frequent contact with Lizbeth and her siblings on the island. Lizbeth, who had become a divorced, unemployed single mother just as the economy bottomed out, in turn, began to reach out to her mother from whom she had become estranged. For Lizbeth, her mother's more frequent visits in recent years allowed for a rebuilding of their relationship. As she explains, "today, my mother is intrinsically involved in every aspect of my life, and I would like to think that I am likewise an integral part of her life in Miami. We talk constantly on the phone and write frequently. Whereas before the distance between us seemed enormous, we now have a deeper level of trust and understanding of each other's reality."

From Transnational Family to Transnational Organizational Ties

Family visits are beginning to serve as building blocks for change at the group level. They are contributing to changes within Cuba as well as across national borders.

The building blocks are partially cultural. Liliana, whose first return to Cuba stirred a new commitment to the country she left at age one in 1959, decided to build on her professional as well as ethnic background to co-found a nongovernmental organization to support the arts in Cuba. The organization raises material resources in the United States to strengthen cultural development on the island. The group collects donations – dance shoes and outfits, music sheets, painting supplies, and the like. It also raises funds for nonpolitical cultural projects in Cuba. Meanwhile, the school director, Alejandra, who decided to make documentaries portraying life in Cuba, seeks both to make island culture accessible to Americans who do not have the opportunity to go there and to help break down cross-border cultural barriers. Seeking to familiarize people in the United States with island life, the transnational cultural flow she promotes emanates from Cuba.

Building blocks are also social, including at the community level. Natalio, the Miami small businessman who emigrated in 1981, for example, started an annual informal softball tournament in his old Havana neighborhood in which local players compete against a visiting émigré team. Now in its fourth year, the program has added youth teams to the original neighborhood tournament schedule. Since the Miami émigré teams get together dur-

ing the course of the year to practice and to raise funds for equipment and uniforms they bring their Havana counterparts, the sports exchange strengthens community on both sides of the Florida Straits.

Émigrés also build connections through religious activity. This is true of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. Several Catholic Cuban Americans report visits to their former island parishes. Some participated in religious celebrations, meetings, and church reconstruction. A small but growing number of Miami priests also have begun to engage their more open-minded parishioners in informal "adopt a parish" projects. They encourage visits and raise funds for Cuban churches in disrepair. Illustrative of the new transnational religious ties, a Hialeah resident who left Cuba in the early 1980s first returned to the island as a representative of a Catholic group during the Pope's visit to Cuba. Since then, she has continued to communicate with Cuban Catholic counterparts and contemplates returning to Cuba for missionary work. Similarly, Elisa, as previously noted of a well-to-do first-wave family, has become active in Catholic charities newly involved in Cuba.

In New Jersey, Catholics also are engaged in activity to revitalize religious life in Cuba. The elderly Union City woman, Josefina, who had emigrated in the mid-1960s and visited for the first time in 1998 to see her 81 year old island sister, for example, participates in an émigré-led initiative to raise funds to rebuild a church in her hometown. Although members of her family suffered torture and imprisonment, her religious commitment has led her to put political hostilities aside and help rebuild the spiritual life in the Cuba she once enjoyed. Josefina illustrates how religious commitments are inducing transnational institution-building, even among first-wavers who for decades refused to engage Castro's Cuba. The Pope's visit laid the groundwork for such cross-border bridging.

There are far fewer Protestant and Jewish Cubans either in the United States or in Cuba, although Protestant evangelical groups are increasingly attracting converts on both sides of the Florida Straits. Reflecting the energies of new converts, Baptist Cuban Americans in Union City, in a congregation comprised mainly of second-wavers, routinely raise funds to help support their Cuban counterparts. Meanwhile, Roberto, a retired Miami-based computer programmer who travels frequently to Cuba and has been in the United States for nearly 40 years, participates in a Jewish organization that collects clothing, medicines, and eyeglasses for the small remaining Jewish community there.

Transnational ties are also of a political nature. Aside from first-wave anti-Castro émigrés who are cultivating ties with island dissidents and politi-

cal prisoners, some Cuban Americans are promoting political engagement through "above ground" channels. An economically successful Miami businessman, moved by an early 1990s visit, seeks to promote interchange between political institutions on the two sides of the Florida Straits. On trips he has spoken with middle level Cuban officials "who understand the need for change," and in the United States he works with a Cuban-American partisan political group. Elisa, the first waver Catholic charities activist, also became involved in groups cultivating cross-border ties along with a loosening of the embargo.

Efforts to rebuild civil society that follow on the heels of visits first undertaken to see family remain in a nascent stage. But transborder ties, in part, are fueling a buildup of organizational activity independent of the state.

Macro-Level Effects of Visits: Social, Cultural, Economic, and Governmental

While the cumulative long-term impact of the surging transnational people-to-people ties remains to be seen, the new bonds are serving to remake Cuba in ways that visiting family, motivated by kinship loyalty, had not intended and in ways the Cuban government can no longer control. Transnational kinship bonds are increasing émigré presence within Cuban society, challenging the state's ideological hegemony, reducing Cubans' dependence on the state, undermining the statist economy, and inducing state institutional reforms.

The step-up in the number and frequency of émigré visits is increasing immigrant presence in Cuban society. The Cuban government has redefined Cuban Americans who initially were pejoratively portrayed as counter-revolutionary *gusanos* (worms) as the Cuban community abroad. Accordingly, in stark contrast to the 1960s and 1970s, when they were ostracized, émigrés increasingly are being integrated into daily life. Émigré visitors, unlike leisure tourists, have extensive and intensive contact with ordinary Cubans. They stay in relatives' homes and partake in everyday neighborhood routines and conversations. The everyday interaction is serving not only to break down barriers between the two groups of Cubans but also to make cultural life spanning the Florida Straits partially transnational.

The new transnational culture, together with family encounters, are so much part of contemporary Cuba that they have become a major theme of films, literature, and music on both sides of the Florida Straits, including with Cuban government approval. Two of the ten songs, for example, on the 1999 Grammy award-winning album by Cuba's *Los Van Van*, popular among both

Cuban Americans and Cubans, speak to migration themes. Similarly, several films produced in the last decade, including *Lejania* and *Mujer Transparente,* deal with transnational family and friendship reencounters. Meanwhile, émigrés are being incorporated into Cuba's artistic and cultural life. *Casa de las Américas*, the Cuban government's prestigious cultural institution, granted a special Literature Award in 1997, for example, to Sonia Rivera-Valdés, a Cuban who emigrated in 1966, for her short story compilation *Las Historias Prohibidas de Marta Veneranda.*

Aware of these changes, Cuban officials have redefined the immigrant experience, modified policies, reformed the state apparatus to accommodate émigrés, and sponsored programs to improve relations with the Cuban diaspora. Cuban functionaries as well as intellectuals today define national identity in terms of "shared culture," rather than narrowly in terms of state allegiance. And in 1994 the government institutionalized émigré relations through the formation of a special office within the Ministry of Foreign Relations. This same Ministry sponsored conferences on the Nation and Migration. The 400-large second meeting addressed ways to normalize relations between émigrés, their island families, and the Cuban government. It resulted in the previously mentioned multiple entry permit for visiting émigrés.

The increased flow of people, goods, information, and ideas, in turn, is challenging the Cuban government's ideological hegemony and stirring new ferment. In an authoritarian society, simple interactions between people can challenge a state's monopoly over knowledge and viewpoints. As a Cuban doctor related:

> My aunt's visit to Cuba really challenged my basic assumptions about capitalism and life in the United States. Through conversations with her, I was exposed to an alternate viewpoint. For example, I remember that we spoke extensively about the widespread availability of food in the United States, compared to the scarcity we are experiencing in Havana. This led me to question my life in Cuba more critically.

Returning émigrés provide evidence of how life might improve with an economic opening. Islanders are faced with the fact that their U.S. kin earn more money than they at socially inferior jobs and that even those islanders who are professionals depend financially on family abroad. The differential in transnational earning capacity comes quickly after Cubans emigrate. A retired couple in their mid-60s, whose son, daughter-in-law, and grandchild left in 1998 after winning the U.S. emigration lottery, for example, were struck by the fact that their son began sending remittances almost immediately upon settling in Miami. And despite tremendous difficulties in adapting, an

island-trained non-English speaking engineer who worked in a Florida factory impressed his island family with the range of Christmas gifts he brought on a visit to Cuba.

The case of Pepe, a well-connected, educated professional in Cuba, in turn, illustrates how visiting families are causing Cubans to question the system under which they live. Pepe, together with his wife, also a professional, earn a combined monthly peso income equivalent to $30 from their professional public sector jobs. Members of his maternal and paternal families, who emigrated to New Jersey and Miami in the late 1960s, visited in the late 1990s and left him $200 dollars. This one-time inflow came to more than 50 percent of his yearly household earnings and was essential for buying such basic foods as cooking oil and milk for his children. Yet, he expressed mixed feelings about the assistance from family in the United States. "It's ironic. I'm better educated and I have a better career than my visiting relatives, yet I have to recognize that I couldn't survive without them. They are perceived by Cuban society and by my family as being members of a superior class, and we treat them accordingly." Misgivings aside, Pepe would never refuse help from U.S. relatives. His peso salary is insufficient to meet the most fundamental of family needs.

Meanwhile, remittances, transmitted by émigrés on visits (as well as through official transfer agencies and other means), have become a key source of hard currency for the Cuban government. While the Cuban-American leadership core opposes remittance-sending precisely because the money pumps up a bankrupt economy that might otherwise collapse, the generous informal transnational family dollar-giving is economically and socially destabilizing. It is causing new inequalities, especially but not only race-based, as well as resentments among islanders without remittance-giving relatives abroad. It is also distorting and undermining the official economy. Indeed, the influx of money sent to starving island relatives in the years following the collapse of Soviet aid and trade created such a dollar black market that the government, in its effort to rein it in, decriminalized possession of the U.S. currency in 1993.

The very legalization of the dollar, in turn, made law-abiding Cuban Americans more likely to send money to their Cuban kin. Anxious to capture the hard currency, the Cuban government instituted state-owned and controlled dollar stores, currency exchange facilities, and dollar bank accounts. State structures and state policies, accordingly, also changed as remittance flows picked up (for a discussion of other reforms as well, *see* Mesa-Lago, 1998; Eckstein, 1994; Pérez-López, 1995).

With peso earnings becoming worthless in the dollarized economy, islander motivation to work, in turn, plunged. As a consequence, the government came to have difficulty delivering the very services, education and healthcare, on which its legitimacy hinged.

The macroeconomic effects of remittances differ markedly from the familial motivations for dollar-giving. Intended to help families in need, the hard currency infusion is serving to transform the economy. Paradoxically, the macroeconomic effects are consonant with the destabilizing goals of the Cuban-American leadership core who oppose transnational financial transfers as well as visits.

In essence, informal transnational ties are generating a range of unintended consequences. Family visits are serving to remake Cuba and to build up a new transnational social and cultural field.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Our in-depth if small survey of Cuban-American community leaders, rank-and-file émigrés, and a range of Cubans, together with data from published sources, suggest the following conclusions:

1. Cuban Americans have a strong sense of family. However, depending on when Cubans emigrated, they differ in the amount of close family they still have on the island. The sooner after Castro took power that islanders left, the fewer close kin émigrés currently have in Cuba.
2. Attitudes toward travel to Cuba vary by emigration cohort. Earlier émigrés, who left principally for political reasons, are most apt to oppose transnational visits. For them, family ties rarely stand in the way of their politics. Most of their close kin now live in the United States. In contrast, post-1980 émigrés, who constitute approximately half of all Cuban Americans, have come primarily for economic reasons. They want to help, not break with, island kin. From their moral viewpoint, politics does not stand in the way of family.
3. The leadership of the Cuban-American community comes almost exclusively from the first-wave cohort and their now grown children. Politically powerful, economically successful, and organizationally skilled, they dominate the public arena and public discourse about U.S.-Cuba policy. However, with the growth in second-wave emigration, leadership views are increasingly unrepresentative of the Cuban-American community-at-large. Meanwhile, second-waver views go unvoiced. More recent émigrés lack the human and social capital, and

the material resources and political clout, of the first-wave leadership core.

4. Second wave émigrés have contributed to changes both in Cuba and in the Cuban-American community in the United States. They are creating a transnational, increasingly borderless social, cultural, and economic field and, in so doing, generating unintended consequences at the family, community, and macro levels. Cubans who do not emigrate, as well as those who do, are changing in the process.
5. The Cuban government has come to have its own reasons for facilitating cross-border family visits. Here, both state exigencies and ordinary Cuban-American/Cuban wants symbiotically play off each other. From the state's vantage point, visiting Cuban Americans bring dollars and help subsidize the subsistence of islanders. The visits also strengthen cross-border family ties that may encourage remittance-sending in the interim between visits. The Cuban government wants the dollars for its own institutional needs, including to finance imports and pay off its accumulating hard currency debt. Although beyond the scope of this article, the government has initiated a number of means to absorb dollars from Cuban Americans. Yet, in permitting a liberalization of visitation rights, the government set in motion dynamics generating unintended and undesired consequences and dynamics authorities can no longer control.
6. Washington's travel policy is both politically and pragmatically driven. Its stance toward Cuban-American Cuba visits is Cold War in origin and consistent with the interests of the conservative Cuban-American leadership core. However morally grounded are the travel restrictions from Washington's and the émigré leadership's perspectives, the regulations prove unenforceable. Cuban Americans violate the travel embargo, and the spirit of the embargo, when it stands in the way of family values. They travel via third countries, which do not support Washington's visitation restrictions. Meanwhile, family get-togethers in the United States are not an alternative for many. Fearful that visiting Cubans would opt to stay, Washington sparingly gives out visas for visits. It does not want to foster immigration pressures.
7. Émigré visits to Cuba, which have increased dramatically in recent years even when prohibited by Washington, are contributing to island social, cultural, and economic changes consistent, paradoxically, with the transforming goals of both Washington and the Cuban-American lead-

ership corps opposed to visits. Cuban state control over the economy and society is eroding in the process.

Our findings, in turn, have policy implications. Because ever more Cuban Americans want to visit island family, because current travel policy is unenforceable, and because visits are serving to bring about changes consistent with U.S. foreign policy interests, Washington would do best to eliminate barriers to travel. Elimination of such barriers, moreover, is consistent with humanitarian people-to-people family values.

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