

POLITICAL EXILE, TRANSNATIONALITY, AND THE RACIALIZED CUBAN

B. E. Aguirre¹

The intent of this paper is to examine Cuban immigration to the United States in the post-1958 period and to make sense of the collective transformations that have shaped it. In broad terms it is an experience typified by two historical periods, those of political exile, and a transnational community that experiences racialization. The paper has sections on political exile, transnational community (with the example of Hialeah, Florida), and the evidence of racialized Cubans as portrayed in films. It concludes with the implications of the findings for other racialized transnational sub-nationalities and for an understanding of ethnic relations in general.

POLITICAL EXILE

Much has been written about the post-1958 Cuban political exile (Pedraza-Bailey, 1985), but little sociological understanding exists nowadays of the ways in which this historical event relates to political exile as a universal human experience. A purpose of this essay is to situate our collective experience of exile in a larger matrix, and in so doing to indicate the most important substantive dimensions that would have to be considered in such an undertaking. A second purpose is to examine the connections between the post-1958 Cuban political exile and the emergence of a transnational community faced with the reality of a racialized identity. A number of caveats are in order. The length and continuity of the human exodus

from Cuba since 1958 has created communities of Cuban immigrants and at times political exiles in the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Spain, Sweden, as well as in other countries, but they are not considered in this paper at any length. Likewise, throughout the post-1958 period, political prisoners and dissidents who have suffered persecution by the Cuban state and can be considered political exiles have joined the exile, but are not singled out for special consideration in this essay. Instead, its object is a sociological abstraction, the “exilio histórico” as it has come to be known, the massive politically motivated immigration from Cuba to the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, and the subsequent transformations that have occurred to it and to the public collective persona of the Cubans.

Political exile as a collective identity is founded on a widespread experience of political persecution in a national community. First, the nation and the individual identity it creates and sustains; second the collective persecution and often time forced expulsion of refugees which, in specific circumstances rethink their relations to the nation and their national identity, becoming political exiles. From the perspective of the individual, political exile is thus an extraordinary existential break. It forces the exile to rethink who he or she is in relation to the nation of origin, and to learn and adjust to the cognitive structures and the

1. The author would like to thank Dr. Ricardo Puerta and Mr. Vicente Echerri for their excellent criticisms and suggestions which improved the manuscript. All remaining shortcomings are his own.

techniques of social adaptation that are customarily used as the basis for social interaction in a new setting.

One of the main points of differentiation in the genre of political exile is the extent to which it represents a cultural and social creation by people outside these boundaries who learn “en el destierro” that they are members of a group, of a meaningful collectivity, or instead is the continuation of community identities that existed prior to the crisis. Examples of the latter are the many communities of Jews in Spain, all sharing the religious beliefs and practices of the faith which was used by the state as the criterion for expulsion in 1492. The same is true of the expulsion of the Muslims in 1609.

By way of contrast, what interests us is the Cuban political exile of the post-1958 period, which did not involve the expulsion of a well formed pre-existing group sharing religion, region of origin, and a distinct sub-nationality, but of a roughly-formed social class which was persecuted by the state and found various ways to leave the country; a rather socially undeveloped economic category was used for the purpose of differentiation at the basis of the collective discrimination. Many terms were used by the rhetoricians of the Cuban state, from “bitongo” to “vende patria,” “latifundista,” “explotador,” “lacayo del imperialismo,” probably best captured by the inimitable epithet of “gusano” (worm) or agent of capitalist decay, but all of them alluding to an ill defined category of persons in Cuba who were assumed to have similar esthetic prejudices and social, political, and economic interests said to be opposed to the best hopes of the majority of the nation. Resentment against an ill-defined category of “burgueses” was used by the state to provide an overarching rationale to their persecution and eventual removal from Cuba.

In our case, the group, the identity of political exile, is initially formed outside Cuba, as the “desterrados” interact and learn that they have something in common, learn a shared ideology and a reconstructed history, and help create the new institutions of the exile community. The group, the identity of political exile, is initially formed outside Cuba as the refugees interact and learn to emphasize what they have in

common, learn a shared ideology and a reconstructed history, remaking it as they interact and rethink who they are at the same time that they create the new institutions in order to survive in the United States and attempt to sway U.S. foreign policy to help them regain their homeland. The exodus is thus rapidly transformed from its origins in which the Cuban state used an ill defined category of social class to discriminate against and expulse Cubans from the island to a community of sufferers who develop a shared political identity outside Cuba in part with the encouragement of the American state.

The second main point of differentiation of the genre is the type of public policies towards the exile community at places of destination. People who suffer chronic discrimination and exclusion at their places of reception will stay together and nurture the old wounds, partly as a natural reaction to an outside enemy, partly because their options to do otherwise are limited. Many examples of political exile communities come to mind, perhaps one of the most obvious are the Palestinians in Palestine. Discriminated, excluded, segregated, accursed, brutalized, facing injustices on every side, they keep to their collective identity and their hatreds as an exiled community, an identity that persists across generations. They become in effect a people in waiting in unwelcome countries, ironically reproducing the history of the Jews, one of their oppressors.

Very different is the experience of the post-1958 Cuban political exile, for the liberal policies of the American state, and its undeniable largesse towards the exiles, paradoxically ensured that it would become a two-generation phenomenon: the exiled parents and their children who would remember the wounds of departure and their own subsequent existential negotiations, but who would have every opportunity to develop their professions and their interests in the new land. Spurred by the logic of the Cold War, the American state provided unparalleled sympathy and material assistance to these so-called “golden exiles,” so that their incorporation into American life and culture is marked by extraordinary collective achievement and success. Their widespread acceptance renders the post-1958 Cuban political exile a

subtype of Diaspora that does not conform entirely to William Safran's definition of the term (Daynes, 2004, examines another deviating case of Africans in America).

Alexander's (2003, 85–108) social construction perspective on cultural trauma helps clarify the meaning of political exile as cultural trauma. Cultural traumas are neither natural events nor problems of the psyche. Instead, cultural traumas are first of all social crises. He writes: "Events are one thing, representations of those events quite another" (93). Active collective agents, what Alexander calls carrier groups following Max Weber, transform collective events and crises into collective cultural traumas. They create the framework of cultural representations which explain the trauma to their audiences in specific historical, cultural, and institutional environments. To succeed, the carrier groups must explain the nature of the pain; the nature of the victim; the relation of the victim to the wider audience, or those who are not involved and watch from the sidelines; and they must attribute responsibility for what happened and identify an antagonist (95–96). I suggest that these social construction processes can be observed in all instances of political exile and that they are absent in other forms of mass migrations, such as the post WWII immigration to the United States of Uruguayans and Mexicans, in which nations develop traditions of international migration motivated by economic need. The presence of cultural trauma is what differentiates political exiles from refugee flows and other forms of international migrations. Cultural trauma can be observed in the post-1958 Cuban political exile, even though to my knowledge there has been no exhaustive and comprehensive scientific or literary effort to document the master rhetoric and the specific historical actors that created it.

In the Cuban case such a labor of historical reconstruction should be an important undertaking. In the early months of 1959, the exodus from Cuba was dominated by persons who had been active in the government of F. Batista, composed of public officials as well as members of the military, some of them said to be criminals, a "Batistiano" label that was widely discredited among most Cubans, including

the much larger number of people who began arriving in the later part of 1960 and subsequent years, many of whom had just recently participated in the fight against the Batista regime. To this day we do not have a clear sense of how the collective interpretations of the exodus was transformed so as to neutralize its Batista beginnings in the popular imagination of the exile community as it developed a traumatic interpretation focusing on the Castro foe. It is clear even now, however, that the transformation of the meaning of the migration from members of the Batista regime, many of them fleeing Cuban justice, to political exiles and freedom fighters was facilitated by the near-monopoly of ownership of the mass media (printed media, radio, television) in Miami by Cubans which started as early as 1960 and continued until at least 2000.

While there is much of merit in Alexander's perspective, still it is the case that there is a personal, subjective basis for the cultural trauma he examines. All political exiles carry with them the pain of the rejection they experienced in their homeland. They are, to a greater or lesser extent, psychologically traumatized, incomplete people waiting to return and to figuratively "pick up where they left their lives." They go back in their memory to the land they loved, the relatives they left behind, the friends they lost, the women and men they hoped to marry, the horses they learned to ride and respect and care for, the sand and the clear waters of the beaches of their imagination, the pattern of activities they engaged in prior to their exodus, and they all search for reasons for their stigmatization and exclusion from civil life, for reasons for their fate, for the fact that fellow citizens found them wanting and persecuted them with heretofore unknown ferocity.

Much of the passion and hostility of these political exiles against "traitors" who presumably supported the Castro regime, such as Black people (de la Fuente, 1998)—most of whom had been supporters of the Batista regime and soon became identified by the Castro regime as main beneficiaries of its policies as an element of its increased political radicalization—can be understood as a defense mechanism caused by this collective pain and feeling of rejection. Thus, the

political exile community is a community of silent sufferers, most of them White, who gradually learn to recognize “en el exterior” (outside the country) that they have something in common, and learn to feel pride on the new identity, such as that of political exile and “gusano.” This collective suffering is at the root of the nostalgia for Cuba that is typically felt by members of this group, which explains in part their tendency to return to Miami to retire, to be somehow “close” to their origins.

The aforementioned process captures the modal experience. Side by side with it are exceptions and minority perspectives, such as the “viajes de la comunidad,” in which some Cuban exiles returned to Cuba in 1978 and 1979, and those of the “Grupo Areíto” and the Brigade Antonio Maceo and other groups formed during the 1970s, composed of younger members of the Cuban political exile, who visited Cuba and attempted to create an alternative interpretation of the Cuban revolution which argued for rapprochement with the Castro regime. There are also differences in the social background of the migratory cohorts of the 1960s and 1970s that are not explored in this paper.

The cohesion of the Cuban political exile community was never strong, for at its origins it did not have working for it the weight of tradition and custom that comes from membership in a meaningful pre-existing community that had experienced the need to leave the country, and the liberal policies of the receiving society was such that a number of social alternatives were available that provided different horizons of expectations that divided them. There were among them always grounds for recrimination and distrust, as each relived what others did and found ways in which the others helped their common foe. Early on an important source of political divisions in this political exile community was the policy of the American state; after the Missile Crisis of 1962, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began a policy of harassment of the Castro regime rather than regime change, and part of that policy was the infiltration and neutralization of the organizations and leaders of the political exile community who desired a more drastic approach to the regime in Havana (Smith,

2004). The federal government also instituted a policy of resettlement of Cubans away from South Florida in which thousands of families participated and which sped their adaptation to the United States.

The political meaning of exile for this early migration cohort is largely irrelevant to the dominant meaning attributed to immigration by people leaving Cuba, particularly after the Mariel mass migration of 1980. Still, it is useful to contrast its political marginality to the more widely-shared cultural traditions of the nation that they brought with them to Miami and that they shared with other immigration cohorts from Cuba, which over the course of decades “Cubanized” Miami, from its food and its music and its Caribbean sensuousness to its financial institutions and international connections, making it one of the “capitals” of Latin America.

It is also important to acknowledge that the old dream of return metamorphosed early on into a conservative political stance in the context of the internal politics of the American state due to the actions of the Kennedy Administration in abandoning the Cuban invasion force to its fate during the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. This momentous decision, as well as subsequent actions by the Republican Party dimly understood even to this day, solidified these political traditions and aligned the Cuban vote in Florida in support of the Republican Party. It is a political tradition that while not as important today, continues side by side with the changed material conditions of the Cuban transnational community, a matter we discuss presently.

Another lasting effect that was established during this early period is the association between White race and immigration (Aguirre, 1976), which helped create the foundation to the modal sense of race group position for the Cuban sub-nationality in the United States operating to this day (Blumer, 1958; for an example of race group ordering using the Puerto Rican immigrant experience see Rodríguez, 1994), for together with the acquisition of the minority status of “Cuban American” came the tradition of claiming Whiteness, with important implications, as we will see presently, for subsequent racial claims by Cubans.

At their origins, even as they kept to their mores and folkways, the Cuban exile community as do all other political exile communities, experienced the great hope of return. Even though in the Cuban case its origins are tied to a social class signification, soon it became a political exile, so that return to the island meant above all ending the political domination of the Castro regime, a political tradition that while increasingly marginal, is alive to this day. In this case of political exile, it is also possible to see how the same stories about the impending destruction of their foes were repeated over and over, and the same fruitless efforts were made by exile members, new heroes in the fight that was lost, who began to form their collective history in the new land. As with other political exile experiences, even as the Cubans experienced the bitterness of defeat as the years passed and the world changed, the agonizing pain dimmed. Gradually, these political exile accommodated and acculturated to the new society and culture in the new setting, but always kept in their heart the remembrances of what was lost, the hate and the desire for their a day in court, to bring to justice their tormentors. The institutions of their collectivity, initially imperfect copies of those of the lost society, gradually became less connected to it and more attuned to the realities of the new society, side by side with the comparatively much weaker organizational remnants of the old efforts to facilitate the return and to defeat the by now legendary foe which are present to this day. It is thus the case that the collective construction Alexander describes varies within rather narrow limits that are set by the subjective experiences of the refugees or “desterrados”; there is a correspondence between the range of individual pathos and the substantive elements of the cultural trauma as it unfolds. The psychological trauma is a necessary but insufficient condition to the collective processes he describes, for it is very unlikely that carrier groups could be successful in mobilizing people who are not individually traumatized by a set of historical events.

The Cuban case represents an external-to-the-nation and short-lasting form of political exile, with important implications for the development of a subsequent transnational Cuban sub-nationality, for it was never able to provide a coherent and effective politi-

cal program to the Diaspora community. In this respect it is very different from the political exile of the Cubans in the United States in the closing decades of the 19th Century, in which there eventually emerged a unified revolutionary party under the leadership of José Martí y Pérez. Once coterminous with Cuban immigration, the political exile segment of the post-1958 immigration and the institutions that it created is nowadays a very important economic and professional component of that community, but its politics towards Cuba is a marginal and largely irrelevant part of the contemporary Cuban immigrant experience, as is its solid middle and upper class economic status. This is the case even though, when most outsiders think of the immigrant Cuban community, they often think of the ideology and cultural trauma of the political exile segment of this community, misperceiving the realities of poverty and the stresses of immigrant life in the transnational community of today.

To this day there is an overwhelmingly publicly expressed desire and symbolism in the immigrant community that argues on behalf of the end of the political domination of the state by Mr. Castro’s government, but it is an extraordinarily ineffective and weakly organized and represented collective hope. Rather, the immigrant community reproduces the patterns which typified the Cuban Republic from its beginnings in 1902 to its end in 1958, in which there was an extraordinary flowering of culture in conjunction with an impoverished political system (Benitez-Rojo, 2000). Historically, if we were to put the end of the phase of political exile from Cuba to the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s, it is possible to observe subsequent immigration flows from the island—particularly of young people born and raised in Cuba and highly detached from politics, that increasingly do not partake of the exile’s *weltanschauung*, for the original social class categorization and persecution in Cuba, the collective experience of a nation waiting to return, and the cultural trauma associated with this frustrated collective impulse are absent in these other people. Increasingly they are not political exiles but immigrants, with very important behavioral implications.²

During the Mariel episode in the spring of 1980, when more than 120,000 Cubans left the island, there was no collective hope of return and no effort to challenge the continued control of the Cuban state by the Castro regime. The widely shared goal was to get away from Cuba. Mariel is a useful marker for the start of the transnational community among Cubans which to this date exists side by side with the remnants of an earlier stratum of political refugees. The transnational community that emerges with Mariel and the transformation in the collective identity of the sub nationality that takes place afterwards is brought about by the active involvement of the state. The long-term interests (Ben-Yehuda, 1990) of the U.S. and Cuban states decisively shaped the development of the deviant label given to the Marielitos, which served as preamble to the continued stigmatization of Cubans now taking the form of racialized identities (see below).

Mariel was an appositional serial surge marked by the creation of collective deviance identity for the Cubans (Aguirre, 1994). It was a moral passage brought about by the bureaucracies of the Cuban and U.S. governments that transformed the collective identity of Cuban immigrants to the U.S. and the migratory collective memories of the Cuban nation; their public administrative acts to deal with the crisis facilitated and encouraged the enactment of deviant acts among the Cubans (for another example of the impact of international politics on Chinese origin people in the United States see Chang, 2003).

The Cuban government “contaminated” the migration with a small number of convicted criminals and mentally-ill people. The U.S. government’s mismanagement of the crisis also helped create conditions for their stigmatization; and citizens of both nations cooperated in the creation of the aliens’ collective devi-

ant identity. The official and mass media bureaucracies by their regulations and acts encouraged mistrust, deviance and crime among the aliens, so that Marielitos accused themselves and each other. The U.S. public’s awareness and opinion of what was happening was shaped by a successful mass media propaganda campaign which blamed the victims.

In the aftermath of Mariel, Cubans had a new collective identity, emblematically portrayed by the film *Scarface*. The Mariel mass migration also started a significant counter migratory flow to the island, as the newly arrived Cubans visited and helped their relatives. This pattern of return is the most important marker to differentiate them from the majority of political exiles who are still true to the old dogma, the “gusanos” who will never return to Cuba while Mr. Castro is in power. They refuse to be tourists in their idealized homeland, where their alternative histories and political interpretations would be persecuted by the state. Mariel ushered the reality of two communities in the Cuban Diaspora.

While numerically a minority that is increasingly detached from the material reality of the transnational community and its links to present-day Cuba, elements of the political exile stratum manages to have undue political power during Republican administrations, as shown in the recent policy of the U.S. government, originally known as the “Powell doctrine,” which limits the visits and other forms of assistance to relatives in Cuba of Cubans in the United States. For transnationals, this policy is a direct attack on their interest to help their relatives in the island. Yet, some “gusanos” consider it as an appropriate extension of their unwillingness to visit the island.

A socio-psychological distance that finds expression in myriad ways exists between the political exile community and the nation that was lost to them, and be-

2. It has been argued that the distinction between immigrant and political exile is irrelevant for societies like Cuba, where the totalitarian-like state overwhelms civil society and attempts to be the sole arbiter of all human destinies. While such argument may have value in other contexts, it does not apply to the present argument in which political exile is used to connote a category of people who were persecuted and emigrated as part of their opposition to the control of the state by the Castro regime and who initially attempted to end it. That many Cuban immigrants who left Cuba in the hope of improvement of their economic well being, or in some cases because of political opposition to the regime, are later on re-socialized and learn the ideology of the exile group, does not deny the value of this distinction.

tween this political exile community and the newcomers that claim their national identity but do not have the same political sentiments. It is a distance that is only partly due to the cultural trauma of exile; it is also a natural effect of ubiquitous social and cultural change. How else to interpret the quandaries that many “gusanos” face when interacting with a “red worm” (immigrants that left Cuba in the post-1989 period, many of them residing in Europe and Mexico, who had been professionals, officials, and employees of the Castro government), or her inability to imagine what it would be like to form part of a society that she has not seen in 45 years?

The strangeness of the homeland for the political exile has thus two sources. The first is the renegotiation of personal identity forced upon the person by their emigration and the experience of cultural trauma. The second is the secular trend that is common to all immigrants, in which place of origin and the self are constantly changing and adjusting often in diametrically opposite ways. The political exile self under the constraints of a new life paradoxically benefits from a process of intellectual and spiritual liberation that forms part of a personality marked by self-estrangement. The new social and cultural context encourages the abandonment of old beliefs and practices that once were accepted as the verities of class and religious identifications, centered on racism, homophobia, ethno-phobias, and nationalisms.

The process of globalization starting in the 1980s has meant that many professionals among the “gusanos” have traveled extensively, helping them acquire an international outlook. They find that the old “truths” no longer apply in the new settings as the unquestioned guides to social action. The experience also renders these Cubans strangers outsiders in George Simmel’s sense, who are able to be objective and analytical when faced with the prevailing beliefs and social actions in the new society but who can seldom be in-members of the new clans. Socio-psychologically, they are marginal in the sociological meaning of the term. This is recognized by others; in Puerto Rico, during the height of the anti-Cuban campaigns in that island, Cubans were said to be the new despised Jews, “los Judíos de Latino América.”

The social distance between self and place of origin is also very much linked to the aforementioned process of a changing self, for with the passing of time the country of origin changes and the political exile is less and less cognizant of these changes. Nor only is she ignorant of the law and the institutions and the rules governing social behavior, but she is also ignorant of the life experiences people have, and their typical interpretations of events. Language systems change too, particularly among different generational cohorts, so that the new vernacular becomes a near impenetrable linguistic code for the person that is no longer a member of the national community. Perhaps one of the most important factors increasing this distance is the very effective social engineering of cultural forms and practices that has taken place in Cuba for more than 45 years, which are at the very center of socialization processes in the island that are not completely absent from the transnational community, and which create in the minds of people in Cuba and of immigrants from Cuba who have been exposed to this system of social and cultural domination government-produced explanations of how the world operates, who are the good and the bad guys, and what are the proper ways to act (Aguirre, 2002). The political exiles, opposed to these state-derived efforts, resist and deny their validity when they are exposed to them, but in this very denial affirm the profound social psychological distances and divisions that characterize the Cuban community today.

The Rev. Martín N. Añorga, in a recent essay entitled “Los tiempos cambian” (“Times Change,” <http://www.cubademocraciayvida.org/web/article.asp?artID=3076>), captures these matters admirably, as the following excerpts show:

Los tiempos cambian; pero el recuerdo de las cosas que han pasado es inmutable. Hoy peinamos canas, nos molestan las dolencias, nuestros hijos han alcanzado la meta de la adultez y nuestros nietos adolescentes se desplazan en una sociedad y en una cultura que me los hace diferentes. En efecto, han cambiado los panoramas; pero me queda invulnerable e intocable el espacioso ámbito de los recuerdos. Yo llegué al exilio joven, lleno de ilusiones y compromisos. Desde nuestros primeros días nos afiliamos a los que luchan por la reconquista de la

libertad. ... Es inspirador el hecho, no obstante, de que todavía quedemos muchos que no hemos abandonado el compromiso; aunque hayan surgido nuevas generaciones que optan por métodos y metas que no nos son afines. ... Un problema, más de índole psicológica que social, es el que muchos exiliados afrontamos cuando creemos que en el futuro puede insertarse la Cuba del pasado. ... Cuba no vuelve a ser lo que fue. Y no que le toque esa suerte por excepción, sino que esa es la ley universal del desarrollo humano. Me duele confesarlo; pero a riesgo de ser mal entendido, para mí, hoy día, Cuba es la que dejé no la que nos han deformado... *¿Es qué he dejado de ser cubano? Pues sí, soy cubano de una patria que no existe, y extranjero de la que hoy padece bajo el poder destructivo del comunismo* (emphasis added). Y no crean que estoy solo. Cansado estoy de oír a compatriotas que explican a otros su identidad: “Yo soy cubano; pero de los de antes, no de los de ahora.” Ser “cubano de los de antes” es una deificación del pasado y una abdicación justificada de los horrores del presente. Lo que queremos decir es que somos dueños de una patria que mantenemos intacta en el corazón, no siervos de una que nos han inventado a fuerza de paredones y atropellos. Los tiempos habrán cambiado ... pero lo que no ha cambiado es la Cuba en la que mecimos nuestra niñez y disfrutamos nuestra juventud. A esa le hemos fabricado un santuario en el corazón y cada día la adoramos con el fervor de un devoto creyente. ... Para mí, mi Cuba es la de mis recuerdos.

This testimonial is repeated in the writings of many other members of Rev. Añorga’s political exile (see for example Navarrete, 2006). It captures the essence of political exile as cultural trauma, expressed despite of and through the pain of the writer who recognizes that the initial hope of return is lost and that the world has not turned out as he had wished. Here is the distance between him and not only the real Cuba of today but also the new generations and immigrants, as he so gently expresses it, who do not care about the things he cares so deeply about. Here is also the longing and the nostalgia for the idealized country and his defiant recourse to the sacred past, to use the celebrated phrase of Sir Bertrand Russell, as the shelter of his great love, for nothing else has worked. And here is also the pride of much accomplished under unexpected circumstances.

CUBAN TRANSNATIONALITY

Due to the association of social class and race in pre-1959 Cuba, the majority of the political exiles, members of this class category, were also White in their phenotype. This had important implications for their experience in the United States, for they could pass for Whites and escape to some extent the continued racism practiced in the country. Their identity as White became an important element in their group position in the system of racial stratification, for it allowed them to feel superior over other racial and ethnic groups and to make claims to rights and privileges, as well as to justify their discriminatory practices and hostilities by attributing immorality and evil intent to these other groups (Blumer, 1958). This racial tradition or claim to Whiteness became a normative expectation; immigrant Cubans expected other Cuban immigrants to be White. The preference to Whiteness pre dates the minority community experience in the United States, for in Cuba—probably more so in the Republican (1902–1959) than in the Revolutionary period—racism was prevalent and it was common for Blacks and mulattoes to try to pass as Whites. It is unsurprising then that this shift to Whiteness continues among the newer arrivals even as it is challenged both from inside and outside the group. Inside it, there is the increased presence of mixed race phenotypes among post-Mariel Cuban immigrants. Side by side with it there is the presence of mass cultural images racializing and devaluing them.

In contrast to the political exiles, the present day transnational community is darker and is faced with increasing unfavorable treatment by the federal government. It is subjected to the deterioration of living standards that all working class people have experienced in the United States at least during the last two decades, increasing levels of participation in the informal economy, precarious economic situation, the reality of drugs in their daily lives, and the increasingly caste-like nature of the stratification system of the country. This structural transformation of the place of immigrants in the U.S. economy is associated with the racialization of the Cuban, to include changes in the collective persona of Cubans in their perceptions of the “other” from White to mulatto or

black, from professional to “chulo” (pimp), from sober to drug crazed, as in the Scareface imagery, from decent woman and man worth marrying to the “jinetera (o)” or whore, a sexual object of fantasy and desire, from solid middle class family life to a happy, pleasure seeking, not-too-trustful “picaresco” social characters that appear in a number of recent Spanish movies. This is the change in perception of the Cuban that has taken place not just in the United States but in Europe as well.

The racial transformation of the image of the collective persona of the Cuban in the minds of the “other” has some limited empirical basis, as we show below. It has brought about countermeasures, as post-Mariel Cubans, borrowing from the racial tradition of the Cuban political exile, claim a Whiteness that they probably do not have, for the demographics of Cuba’s population shows that pheno-typically it is increasingly composed of lesser percents of Whites and greater percents of mulattos and other mixed races (see below; on the advantages of Whiteness see Shapiro, 2005; Bobo and Fox, 2003 and literature cited therein; Hunter, 2002). It is a counterclaim fueled by the transformation of the meaning of race in advanced capitalist societies and the function of the immigrant transnational communities in this system of racial signification. Increasingly, the Latin American immigrants, Cubans included, are relegated to the lower rungs of these societies and as such are stigmatized with the symbols that have traditionally been used to characterize black people in the Western world.

It is in this broader context that the transnational Cuban community (on the concept of transnationalism see Guarnizo and Smith; Alba and Nee, 2003; Pedraza, 2000; Foner, 1997; Laguerre, 1998), as do Dominicans and other transnational communities, practice “reverse racialization” or “de-racialization” (Torres-Saillant, 1998) in an attempt to enhance their social prestige by creating social distance between themselves and Blacks, native American people, Asians, and other lower ranked categories of mythical persons in the contemporary pantheon of racial prestige categories which are symbolically available to them. Little is known of this process in which

reverse racialization becomes a means to status claims to acceptance and prestige in the immigrant community. It often involves learning new expressions of racism such as hurtful words and attributions of personality characteristics to Black and other categories of people that were uncommon or even unknown by the immigrants prior to their arrival. Hialeah, Florida, part of the Miami Metropolitan area, illustrates some of these processes, for it is perhaps the best example of the Cuban transnational community at this time.

Hialeah was incorporated in 1925. It has experienced explosive demographic growth since the early 1960s with the arrival of the Cuban migration to the area. It is the fifth largest city in Florida, with a population in 2003 of approximately 227,000 persons. According to the 2000 U.S. Census of Population, Hialeah has a 19 square-mile land area, with a population density of 11,767 persons per square mile (compared to 296 persons per square mile for the state). In 2000, 88 percent of the population of the city was White (compared to 78 percent for the state); 90.3 percent was Latin American (16.8 percent for the state); 72.1 percent was foreign born, mostly Cuban (compared to 16.7 percent for the state); and 92.6 percent spoke a language other than English at home, primarily Spanish (compared to 23.1 percent for the state). Only 10.4 percent of persons 25 years old and older in Hialeah in 2000 had a bachelor’s degree or higher (compared to 23.1 percent for the state). The per capita money income in 1999 was \$12,402 (compared to a per capita money income of \$21,557 for the state).

Poverty is a chronic condition for sizeable proportions of the population of Hialeah (for an analysis of poverty among Cubans see Pérez, 1986; among Latino groups see Massey, 1993). In 2000, 18.6 percent of Hialeah’s population was below the poverty level (compared to 12.6 percent for the state), while 16 percent of all families were poor, and 28 percent of families with female householder, no husband present, were poor. If they had related children under 18 years old, the poverty rate was 38.3 percent; when children under 5 years were present, the poverty rate was a staggering 49.1 percent. Furthermore, 22.4

percent of persons 65 years of age and older were also below the poverty level in 2000.

For Cubans, Hialeah is part of an internal migratory process associated with their incorporation experiences in the United States. Its function has changed over time. Initially it was a place where families could find inexpensive housing and blue collar work and from which they would eventually move to other higher social class neighborhoods in metropolitan Miami. Nowadays its lower social class characteristics are more well-defined. Hialeah, while initially peopled by Cuban political refugees in the 1960s and 1970s, has gradually become through the differential net migration of Cuban social classes what it is today: a blue collar, working class community. While some Cuban political exiles reside in Hialeah and not all recently arrived Cubans reside in it, the city has become arguably the most important Cuban transnational community in the U.S., a predominantly working class community very far removed from the professional, middle-class respectability of the aptly labeled golden Cuban refugee. Unfortunately, to this day, there are no ethnographies of Hialeah that would identify its institutional life and trace the economic and cultural changes it has experienced.

Hialeah's population is reportedly overwhelmingly White, and it is one of the most conservative cities in the country. While Hialeah's political conservatism fits into the ongoing national voting patterns in the United States (see below), its Whiteness is open to doubt. Race is a social construction made up of observable and arbitrarily employed racial phenotypes, and in terms of these phenotypes my hypothesis is that if we were to conduct a representative random sample of the Cuban population in Hialeah, which nowadays receives a disproportionate numbers of new arrivals from Cuba, and assign them racial identities on the basis of pre-established bundles of phenotypical traits, its racial make up would reflect

much more closely than present statistics indicate the racial make up of the population of the island, namely many more people with mixed phenotypical traits in its population.³ The question is why this shift in racial self assignment.

Limited empirical evidence is available. A recent study by the Bay Area Center for Voting Research (Alderman et al., 2005) of 50 cities with more than 100,000 population in the United States (divided equally into 25 most liberal and 25 most conservative cities) places Hialeah as the fourth most conservative city in the country, with 70.97 percent of the vote going to conservative presidential candidates in 2004.⁴ While Alderman et al. (2005) discuss the electoral results for the entire country, I use their data to estimate the conservative vote of Hialeah, using the coefficients from a multivariate linear least square regression model of political conservatism in these cities. Hialeah's level of political conservatism can be predicted by this model of voting behavior. In the model, the dependent variable (y) is the percent voting conservative in the 2004 presidential elections. The predictors are: percent White of the population (x1), percent high school graduates (x2), percent with bachelors degree and higher (x3), percent of males married (x4), percent of population speaking a foreign language at home (x5), median household income (x6), percent of population below the poverty line (x7), and the size of the population rounded to the nearest thousand (x8). The model fits the data quite well (adjusted R-square= .875, standard error of estimate 9.9, p<.0001). The un-standardized B coefficients in the model are:

$$-142.951 + [.511x1 + .886x2 + (-.443x3) + 1.50x4 + .129x5 + .0000291x6 + 1.132x7 + (-000001.51x8)]$$

The predicted value for Hialeah on the dependent variable (percent voting conservative in the 2004

3. For a review of the literature on skin color and economic advantages see Hunter, 2003; for a similar racial/ethnic identity shift from "Indians" to "Latinos" among Dominicans, see Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral, 2000; Duany, 1998; for the case of the neo-Mulatto among African Americans see Horton and Sykes, 2004.

4. The top three most conservative cities in descending order, based on the percent of the population voting for conservative candidates in 2004, are Provo, Utah (86 percent), Lubbock, Texas (74.81 percent), and Abilene, Texas.

election) is 83.3. Hialeah's actual conservative vote is 70.90, within one standard deviation (23.86) of this predicted value.

Explanations for Hialeah's political conservatism must be found in broader models of voting behavior of working class cities in the United States rather than primarily on the history of immigration from Cuba and the presumed lingering effect of the conservative political values of the political exile phase of this immigration. The foundational conservative political bias of the exile phase and its race-linked underpinning continue to have relevance among the transnationals since it so neatly fits into the cultural domination of working class people in the United States which makes them support political candidates and parties that consistently act against their material and cultural interests. As shown, the percent of conservative votes increases (significant at the $p < .05$ or less) with increases in the percent of the population below the poverty line, high school education, and males married, and with higher percent of Whites. That poverty and low levels of education are positively correlated to conservative political vote shows that substantive rationality and passion are alive and well in contemporary transnational politics (Simon, 1985; see also Edelman, 1964).

The overwhelming Whiteness of Hialeah's population (88 percent) is also difficult to explain. Only three cities in the sample have higher percents of Whites (Cape Coral, Florida, 93; Overland Park, Kansas, 90.6; Provo, Utah, 88.5). There is no information available on the distribution of phenol-typical traits in Hialeah's population which would allow us to clarify matters. Using the information collected by Alderman et al. (2005), we can predict the percent White of Hialeah's population. In this "Race" model, the dependent variable (y) is the percent White. The predictors are: percent high school graduates (x_1), percent with bachelors degree and higher (x_2), percent of males married (x_3), percent of population speaking a foreign language at home (x_4), median household income (x_5), percent of population below the poverty line (x_6), percent vote conservative (x_7), and the size of the population rounded to the nearest thousand (x_8). The model fits the data quite well

(adjusted R-square= .792, standard error of estimate 10.26, $p < .0001$). The unstandardized B coefficients in the model are:

$$-13.807 + [.898x_1 + .119x_2 + (-.095x_3) + .283x_4 + .000x_5 + (-.674x_6) + .549x_7 + (-.000000284x_8)]$$

Compared to the observed value of 88, the predicted value for Hialeah on the dependent variable is 67.4, for a residual of 20.635 or about two standard deviations above the line of regression. The percent White in Hialeah's population is thus quite a bit higher than would be predicted for a city of its type in the sample. My guess is that many people in Hialeah are changing their "race" to White.

International comparisons examining the racial make-up of the population in Cuba and the United States also support the hypothesized shift to Whiteness. Using information from the most recent 2002 population census in Cuba and the U.S. Bureau of the Census' American Community Survey for the same year, Perez-Lopez (2006) reports the following racial proportions in Cuba assigned to respondents by census enumerators: .65 White, .10 Black, .25 Mulatto or Mestizo. The corresponding percents of self-chosen racial identities by self-identified Cuban-born residents in the U.S. are .863 White, .018 Black, and .119 all other races, including mixed races. Since initially the Cuban immigration of Cubans to the U.S. was overwhelmingly made up by Whites, whose extended family practices and economic circumstances facilitated the predominance of Whites in subsequent immigration cohorts (Aguirre, 1976), it is necessary to disaggregate the U.S. Census information on the foreign born by year of entry. Data on foreign born Cubans from the 2000 U.S. Census shows the following proportions of Whites by year of entry: 1979 and earlier years=.902; 1980–1989=.870; 1990–1994=.865; and 1995–2000=.919. Amazingly, there are no self-designated blacks in the estimated 123,371 Cubans in this last immigration time period, and only 8.1 percent mixed races! These numbers (other details available from the author upon request) and the very large differences documented by Perez-Lopez in the proportions of racial identities of Cubans in Cuba and the

U.S., support the hypothesized assumption of a shift in Cubans' racial identity to Whiteness taking place in the U.S., although the percents can only be taken as approximate point estimates due to the unknown effects of the differences in the measurement of race in the two countries, the lack of true longitudinal information, and other potential unknown measurement errors.

An important topic for future research should be to determine with greater certainty how and why, and to what extent and effect, this shift to Whiteness as used in Hialeah and other transnational communities are status claims of people who are themselves discriminated and who use the racial identity valued by their oppressors to counter the prevailing racism and improve their self worth or "amor propio." There are good grounds to assume that this line of investigation will be useful to understand the experience of immigrants today and the racial dynamics in the country. Not unrelated, in Miami, the television comedy show "El Mikinbin de Miami," is one of the most popular programs among Cubans. It is a thinly disguised diatribe based on racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Castro rhetoric, and conservative politics, with beautiful young women parading, dancing, and carousing around almost naked. The cast of characters includes a middle aged, overweight, bald Black man who is perplexedly the object of adoration of a statuesque, gorgeous, White, blond, actress-like woman presumed to be from Argentina; the unspoken pun is that she loves him because of his large animal-like penis. This show's overwhelming vulgarity, clothed in a contemporary version of Cuban "cho-teo" (Pérez Firmat, 1984), is unperceived by most, a taken-for-granted humor that is a reflection of the existential violence perpetrated against working class, blue collar, often informal economy people, and of the larger racial dynamics impacting immigrant communities, for its unstated message is that to be Cuban is to be White.

THE RACIALIZED CUBAN

Assuming that many Cubans, continuing the racial tradition of the sub-nationality, claim to be White even when they do not fit this phenotype, it is necessary to examine the racialized attributes they are re-

jecting in their affirmation of Whiteness (for a review of the literature on race and ethnicity among Latinos in the U.S. see Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral, 2000). What is it that they are distancing themselves from as they make this hypothesized racial claim? What are the moral judgments that are incorporated in the gaze of the "other" that they try to neutralize when they claim to be White? Unfortunately I have not found the means to examine these racial negotiations among the Cubans themselves, but it is possible to examine their presence in the larger society.

Little attention has been put on the racial transformation of the collective persona of the Cuban from White to Dark and from someone who could be "like us" to someone exotic, at the edge, dangerous. We use films as the medium to document this more recent collective representation. Films are a form of cultural representation and expression that thrives in the vagueness of art and are thus an excellent vehicle to express the new indirect forms of racism (Bonilla Silva, 2003). Films are social objects which manifest, even as they facilitate, the adoption of mass tastes and mass conceptions of places, events, and people (Bogle, 2001). As Vera and Gordon (2003, 9–13) recognize, they help us understand the differential effects of social class, race, and gender, describing not only social situations but also incorporating their audiences into their plots, teaching them about the distribution of power in society and their relative place in it, as well as propagating stereotypes about categories of people which are usually powerless to provide alternative interpretations. Films are very significant socialization mechanisms teaching people about what is important in their lives. Referring to Latinos, Vera and Gordon write that "(t)he Hollywood film industry does not portray all segments of society ... with the same frequency, accuracy, or with the same respect." This is the starting point for the examination of Cubans in contemporary films presented next.

Films as social objects (Griswold, 1987) have embedded in them the purpose of their creators. As Griswold argues, creators have instructions or horizons that incorporate their understanding of the social class, economic, political, religious, and aesthetic sensitivities and desires of the consumers of their cre-

ations. The creators of social objects work within ongoing traditions which guide them, what Griswold calls the constitutive genres of social objects. It is possible to use contemporary films to show how Cubans are represented in the minds of the creators of films and presumably in the preferences and understandings of their audiences, and thus to identify the various genres of films that include Cubans in them (for studies using film to analyze race relations see Vera and Gordon, 2003; Bogle, 2001). Despite the limitations of this methodology—other means for the expression of culture, such as newspapers and television, would have to be examined in a more complete examination of these matters, and other methods, such as opinion surveys, would need to be used to determine the extent to which these characterizations of the Cuban are believed in the population—it allows us to identify the various genres of films in which Cuba and Cubans are mentioned, to select for examination the genre of films showing Cubans living outside Cuba and the archetypes of the Cubans in them, and to indicate the moral messages that are embedded in these archetypes that fuel the collective racial mentalities of people.

The source of information used is Internet Movie Data Base (www.imdb.com). The Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB) is a popular, well-documented, all-purpose encyclopedia of film information, including title of a movie, background information, cast and crew lists, amateur and professional reviews, release dates, and box office information. It allowed us to search the film archive by year of release as well as by the use of the term “Cuban” in the description of the plots and characters. Since the objective was to identify all films showing Cubans living outside Cuba during the post 1980 period, the films had to include actors representing Cubans (most of the actors were not Cuban) and its time horizon had to be post 1980. Thus, films such as the *Mambo Kings* (1992), showing life in the 1950s, are excluded. Other genres of films were also excluded, such as films on the Spanish American War of 1898; documentaries and travel accounts depicting Cuba and the revolution (e.g., *Guerrilla*, 2006); life in Cuba (e.g., *Gay Cuba*, 1996; *The Emerald Cut*, 1998; *The Lost City*, 2005; *Dirty Dancing, Havana Nights*, 2004—an ab-

surd representation of life in pre-1959 Havana fitting the Western obsession with Cuba as the obscure and prohibited object of desire, with people continuously playing music and dancing in street corners, rooms full of mulattos drinking rum and gyrating their hips, suggesting carefree sexual wantonness and dissipation); baseball and other sports; the life and times of political leaders such as J. F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon (e.g., *Nixon*, 1995), Fidel Castro, and Ernesto Guevara (e.g., *Guerrilla*, 2006); the Elian Gonzalez story; the Cuban missile crisis; Cubans as enemies in armed struggles in Africa, South Asia, South America (e.g., *Blood, Sweat and Bullets*, 1990) and elsewhere (e.g., *Full Fathom Five*, 1993; *Deadly Spy Games*, 1989); plots to kill Fidel Castro (e.g., *Company Man*, 2000; *Buddy Joe*, 1999); invasions of the U.S. mainland; political struggles in Cuba; and the history and power of Cuban music and musicians (e.g. *Cuban Fire*, 2001; *The Cuban Hip Hop All Stars*, 2004). A more exhaustive analysis of the presence of Cubans in these films would also include these other genres. This is particularly true of the plots representing Cubans as the “enemy,” which were excluded (see below) because they did not represent Cubans in the United States in the post-1980 period, but which is a very important theme in contemporary films.

At the time we accessed the IMDB on 8–22–2006, there were 201 male and 64 female Cuban characters in IMDB. “Cuban” is the most frequently found male character in IMDB. Various versions of “enemy” is the second most frequently found male character, to include soldier, guard, military, and Cuban government officials. Various “blue collar” workers is the third most frequent type of male character, to include driver, cop, clerk, jewelry salesman, servant, mailman, fisherman, sailor, boxer, cook, waiter, bartender; an important subcategory has to do with “music,” to include singers, dancers, rappers, and musicians. “Criminal” is the fourth most frequent type of Cuban male character, to include goon, thug, gang leader, drug boss. There is also a remnant category of misfits which includes transvestites, slaves, fat Cubans, as well as other miscellaneous characters such as gymnast, coach, café man, restaurant patron, and husband. In the entire 201 Cuban male charac-

ters there was only one priest, a doctor, a pilot, a journalist, a lawyer, and a businessman.

The most frequently used female Cuban character is woman, followed in frequency by an occupational grouping composed of maid, matron, waitress, singer, dancer, guide, vendor, soldier, stenographer, interpreter. A third less frequent explicitly sexual category includes hot Cuban babe and prostitute. Finally, a very infrequent category includes wife, mother, and lady. Despite Cuban women's significant presence in white collar professions in the United States, no white collar occupational category such as doctors, journalists, lawyers, and engineers are used to represent Cuban women in these films.

These patterns are repeated when movie plots are examined. The following collective representations or Cuban persona were found in films in IMDB showing Cubans living outside Cuba during the post-1980 period:

- **The tortured homosexual:** Cuban poet and novelist Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990) in *Before Night Falls* (2000). The film includes episodes describing his life and homosexual relations and lovers and his two years prison experience, as well as his poverty in Manhattan after leaving Cuba in the Mariel boat-lift. It shows the self-destructive behavior of a gifted writer, a tragic victim of an homophobic culture, obsessed with the mechanics of sex in all its varieties and forms, to include in his writings descriptions of fornicating with a plantain tree (*mata de plátano*); lonely in his genius, poor, without family, living amidst drugs.
- **The lost woman:** Isabella in *Miami Vice* (2006) is the Chinese-Cuban wife of a Miami arms and drugs trafficker and an important mafia boss and drug dealer on her own right; a highly sexed and lethal user of men.
- **The dangerous drug addict:** The “Cuban” in *Death Wish 3* (1985), a cocaine-crazed, homicidal criminal young Black male who is announced gleefully by the leader of the gang that is terrorizing the neighborhood: “The Cuban will have a kill tonight.”
- **The musician:** *Buena Vista Social Club* (1996), showing a group of old men reminiscing about their lives in songs reflecting the charms of a country that no longer exists, a retrofit music that can only speak obliquely of the personal and collective losses embedded in the memories. They embody a nostalgia for the past that proved hugely successful throughout the world, for most people do not have the knowledge of the original performers of the music nor the sensitivity to appreciate the collective tragedy.
- **The black singer:** Celia Cruz in *Celia Cruz: Azúcar!* (2003), a gifted, colorful and somewhat grotesque—at the end of her life a hybrid Cuban-Latina persona fabulously successful in the U.S. “Latin Market,” always too much color in her face, donning an exotic hairstyle, and other mannerisms and expressions... “azúcar!!.”
- **The gangster-mafioso type:** This is a very popular type of plot. Tony Montana and his understudy Manny Ray in *Scarface*, (1983) are perhaps the best known “Cuban mafia” characters in a parody involving Marielitos in the *Promised Land*, showing Cuban refugees obsessed with pure materialism and the endless search for sensate pleasures who are willing participants in unspeakable acts of violence and cruelty. Yet other examples are Roberto Largo (Ironsides), an evil Cuban crime boss in Miami in the film *Point of Impact* (1993), and the Cuban drug kingpin Héctor Juan Carlos “Johnny” Tapia in *Bad Boys II* (2003). Tapia, like his counterparts in these films, operates from Miami and wants to control the entire ecstasy trade in the United States using a mortuary to send drug money to Cuba stuffed inside dead corpses!
- **The hitman.** The Cuban in *Loose Ends* (2006), a most dangerous hitman and killer for hire, who is seeking revenge for a double crossing.

There is also a very small and unobjectionable category of plots showing family life of Cubans and their difficulties of adapting to the U.S. Some of the best are “*Cosas que olvidé recordar*” (1999), the history of a family—Robertico, the son, and Carmela and Roberto, his parents—and the difficulties experienced by Robertico as he finds his way in the new

culture; *The Perez Family* (1995), a romantic entanglement pitting a political prisoner and sugarcane cutter; and *Beautiful Ohio* (2006), an account of a Cuban family in the United States in the 1970s, are two other films in this category.

In summary, most of the films available to date showing Cubans in the United States in the post-1980 period show them as gangsters, drug crazed, and dangerous people; moral degenerates; or as happy go lucky folks, good singers and dancers. I suggest that these stereotypes of the Cuban reproduce the historic prejudices against African American people that existed in the country during most of its history. It would be interesting to extend this line of research to Moroccan, Saudi Arabian, Colombian, Argentine, Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, Mexican and Guatemalan communities in the United States to determine if these findings are replicated in the context of the migratory histories of these sub-nationalities.

While this paper does not explore the many sources for these stereotypes, Cuba keeps sending throngs of people that must adjust not just to the inhuman worlds that receive them, but originate from “un mundo de lo real maravilloso” full of decay and ruin which create peculiar mixtures of personal vulnerabilities (for stark assessments of the current situation in Cuba see Espinosa Chepe, 2006; Rivero, 2006). This situation is best portrayed in the film “*Cosas que dejé en la Habana*” (Things that I left in Cuba) (1997) that explores the other side of sex tourism in Cuba, for it inverts it, so that the sexual effluence immerses Madrid. It alludes to Cuba’s corroding social and cultural decline without making a fuss about it; that is the way it is. The hope is not to return but to escape it. The film humanizes the racialized stereotypes, showing for those who will see how macro dynamics impact contemporary Cuban immigrants and the function of sex and racialization in their lives. Igor (Jorge Perugorría), the young, attractive, and talented Cuban gigolo, in Spain with false immigration documents, hunting for a wealthy Spanish woman in a nightclub, meets Nena, a compatriot, also recently arrived, also without money and in need of false documents. Even though they are deeply attracted to each other, he advises her to find a Span-

iard, for he also must attend to business. Their relationship is emblematic of the economic inferiority at the basis of the current situation in which two likeable human beings engage in a parody of morals forced on them by circumstances of their immigration they cannot or will not change.

In sum then, the drift to Whiteness made by many Cuban immigrants—shown for example in the absence of Blacks among the estimated 123,371 Cubans arriving in the 1996–2000 period—is in part a function of the “race” traditions of the sub-nationality and its placement into the stratified system of group race-standings in the United States initially theorized by H. Blumer, as well as the stereotyped labeling of Cubans in contemporary films that had its emblematic initial representation in *Scarface* and began in the larger societal reactions to the Mariel mass migration of 1980.

CONCLUSION

The various post-1958 immigration cohorts from Cuba to the United States have had different incorporation experiences. This paper has highlighted the experiences of the political exile and the transnational phases of this immigration, examining the case of Hialeah, Florida as the most important Cuban transnational community in the country. Today, these two cohorts—the political exile, the transnational migrants—by and large constitute two different ways of life and social classes with distinct institutional expressions despite their shared sub-national identity and common culture. The trauma of political exile serves as backdrop to the reality of life in the United States for newcomers that often have a superficial understanding of this earlier collective experience. Similarly, the political exile continues to interpret Cuba from the perspective of memory, ignoring the meanings of socialization and internalization of values associated with living in present-day Cuba. It is in this context that race plays an important symbolic function in negotiating and often erasing these intra ethnic differences in moments of social interaction, when the “other”—the person who is an outsider to the group with specific non-shared phenotypes—becomes the subject of scorn and discrimination. Further, racism, widespread in Cuba

and the United States as well as among significant segments of the Cuban sub-nationality in this country, invites counter racism in the form of moves by the transnationals to negate parts of their racial identity by adopting the identity of White.

In the sociological abstraction presented in this paper there are two Cuban communities, one White and one Black—or “Honorary White” (Bonilla Silva, 2004; see also Howard, 2000, 374–378), both practicing racism and simultaneously subjected to the shifting racism of the “other,” with their White image fading. Unfortunately, we know very little of the nature and causes of this type of social exchange in which collective racial mentalities are created, stay a while, and are supplanted by other mentalities. They represent the outcome of dimly understood symbolic constructions and negotiations which incorporate historical events, political leadership and rhetoric, myths, image creators and their creations and which have the effect of typifying people to themselves and to others. They are part of the hyper reality of modern culture.

The racialized archetype of the Cubans and their racial self-assignment of White are elements of a dynamic process involving both aggressive and diffuse pejorative stereotypes operating inside as well as outside the ethnic sub-nationality and equally aggressive and diffuse mechanisms of counterattack and symbolic adjustments used against and by the sub-nationality. Both are part of the transnational experience. They are mass behavior: under conceptualized, without formal organization, opinion leaders, ideology, and a program for social change, ambiguous, diffuse, with multiple interpretations, opaque, without rhetorical development and defense. They are the miasma of power and racial domination—these Cuban archetypes navigating in a sea of racial assignments, from island’s White exiles to transnational Black laborers and reconstructed Whites.

Historically, these present day collective representations, while partaking of the new racist practice of dissimulation, are the current version of previous cul-

tural attacks on the Spanish character, first in the Black Legend practiced by the American colonists competing with Spain for control of the continent that made the Spaniards rapacious, cruel, and fanatical followers of the Pope, then in the 19th Century’s generalized view that Latin Americans were a mongrel race, degenerate, barbaric, indulgent, and lazy, which justified the war of conquest in the South West and the establishment of the American empire in the aftermath of the Spanish American War. Research is needed to assess if the increasing economic marginalization of other Latin American transnational sub-nationalities in the United States is also paired with their racialization in films and other cultural expressions, and how it impacts their adjustment to the society and culture of the United States. Is a new Black legend being created to justify their exploitation?

Recognition of the ethnics’ agency provides a needed corrective to the theoretical implications Duany (1998) derives from the analysis of Dominicans’ racial identity, in which he points out that: transnational migrants experience conflicting definitions of racial identity; the socially constructed nature of such identities; that racial identity has practical implications for the adjustment and incorporation experience of the migrants; and that racial assignments of the migrants in the U.S. is paired with their lower class standing. These conclusions are sound but incomplete, since they do not emphasize sufficiently, in my view, our need to develop a more complete conflict-oriented social science understanding of the racism and the counter-racism of the transnational communities, their self hatred as they deny parts of themselves, and what it implies for racial dynamics in 21st Century United States. This needed adjustment in our theoretical focus would force us to acknowledge and study the complex and variegated social settings in which the interplay of power, social domination and advantage, and racist prejudice and discrimination takes place today and their impact on ethnic identity.

REFERENCES

- Alba, R. and Victor Nee. 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Aguirre, B. E. 2002. "Social Control in Cuba." *Latin American Politics and Society*, 44 (2): 67–98
- Aguirre, B. E. 1994. "Cuban Mass Migration and the Social Construction of Deviants." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 13(2):155–183.
- Aguirre, B. E. 1976. "Differential Migration of Cuban Social Races." *Latin American Research Review* 12:103–124.
- Alderman, Jason and others. 2005. *The Most Conservative and Liberal Cities in the United States*. Berkeley: The Bay Area Center for Voting Research (<http://votingresearch.org/USAstudy.pdf>).
- Alexander, Jeffrey. 2003. *The Meaning of Social Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Benitez-Rojo, Antonio. 2000. "Las paradójicas consecuencias de la guerra hispano-cubano-americana: desastres políticos y logros culturales." Pp. 63–72 in B. E. Aguirre and E. Espina, compilers. *Los últimos días del comienzo*. Chile: Editorial Ril.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1958. "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position." *The Pacific Sociological Review*, 1, 1: 3–7.
- Bobo, Lawrence D. and Cybelle Fox. 2003. "Race, Racism, and Discrimination: Bridging Problems, Methods, and Theory in Social Psychological Research." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 66, 4, 319–332.
- Bogle, D. 2001. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*. New York: Continuum.
- Bonilla Silva, Eduardo. 2004. "From Bi-Racial to Tri-Racial: The Emergence of a New Racial Stratification System in the United States." Pp. 224–239 in C. Herring, V. Keith, H. D. Horton, editors, *Skin Deep, How Race and Complexion Matter in the 'Color-Blind' Era*. Illinois: University of Illinois at Chicago.
- Bonilla Silva, Eduardo. 2003. *Racism Without Racists: Color Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Chang, Iris. 2003. *The Chinese in America. A Narrative History*. New York: Viking.
- Daynes, Sarah. 2004. "The Musical Construction of the Diaspora: The Case of Reggae and Rastafari." In Sheila A. Whiteley, Andy Bennett, and Stan Hawkins, editors. *Music, Space and Place. Popular Music and Cultural Identity*. Burlington, Vt: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- de la Fuente, Alejandro. 1998. "Race, National Discourse, and Politics in Cuba: An Overview." *Latin American Perspectives*, 25, 3, 43–69.
- Duany, Jorge. 1998. "Reconstructing Racial Identity: Ethnicity, Color, and Class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico." *Latin American Perspectives*, 25, 3, 147–172.
- Edelman, Murray J. 1964. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press.
- Espinosa Chepe, Oscar. 2006. "En el alma y en la mente. Cuba. Situación actual y perspectivas para el futuro." Paper prepared for a session sponsored by the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy at the 2005 Annual Meetings of the Latin American Studies Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- Foner, Nancy. 1997. "What is New about Transnationalism? New York Immigrants Today and at the Turn of the Century." *Diaspora* 6, 355–376.
- Griswold, Wendy. 1987. "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture." *Sociological Methodology* 17: 1–35.
- Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo and Michael Peter Smith. "The Locations of Transnationalism." <http://>

- hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/smith/articles/Locations_of_transnationalism.pdf.
- Itzigsohn, Jose and Carlos Dorc-Cabral. 2000. "Competing Identities? Race, Ethnicity and Pan-ethnicity among Dominicans in the United States." *Sociological Forum*, 15, 2, 225–247.
- Horton, H. D. and L. L. Sykes. 2004. "Towards a Critical Demography of Neo-Mulattoes." Pp. 159–173 in C. Herring, V. Keith, H. D. Horton, editors. *Skin Deep, How Race and Complexion Matter in the 'Color-Blind' Era*. Illinois: University of Illinois at Chicago.
- Howard, J. A. 2000. "Social Psychology of Identities." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 367–393.
- Hunter, Margaret L. 2002. "If You're Light You're Alright: Light Skin Color as Social Capital for Women of Color." *Gender and Society*, 16, 2, 175–193,
- Laguerre, Michael S. 1998. *Diasporic Citizenship: Haitian Americans in Transnational America*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Massey, Douglas S. 1993. "Latino Poverty Research: An Agenda for the 1990s." *Social Science Research Council Items*, 47, 7–11.
- Navarrette, William. 2006. *Catalejo en Lontananza*. Valencia, España: Editorial Aduana Vieja.
- Pedraza, Silvia. 2000. "Beyond Black and White." *Social Science History* 24, 4, 697–726.
- Pedraza-Bailey, Silvia. 1984. *Political and Economic Migrants in America: Cubans and Mexicans*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Pérez, Lisandro. 1986. "Immigrant Economic Adjustment and Family Organization: The Cuban Success Story Reexamined." *International Migration Review*, January, 4–20.
- Pérez Firmat, Gustavo. 1984. "Riddles of the Sphinx: Another Look at Cuban Choteo." *Diacritics*, Winter, 67–77.
- Perez-Lopez, Daniel J. 2006. "Cubans in the Island and in the U.S. Diaspora: Selected Demographic and Social Comparisons." *Cuba in Transition—Volume 16*. Washington: Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy
- Rivero, Raúl. 2006. *Lesiones de Historia*. Valencia: Aduana Vieja Editorial.
- Rodríguez, Clara. 1994. "Challenging Racial Hegemony: Puerto Ricans in the United States." Pp. 131–145 in S. Gregory and R. Sanjek, editors. *Race*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Torres-Saillant, Silvio. 1998. "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity." *Latin American Perspectives*, 25, 3, 126–146.
- Shapiro, Thomas M. 2005. *The Hidden Cost of Being African American*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Simon, Herbert A. 1985. "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science." *The American Political Science Review*, 79, 2, 293–304.
- Smith, M. 2004. "The United States Uses of Exiles in Promoting Regime Change in Cuba, 1961 and Irak." *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 15, 1: 38–53.
- Vera, H. and A. Gordon. 2003. *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.