

Latinos

Remaking America

EDITED BY

Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco
and Mariela M. Páez

Updated with a New Preface



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21. Linda Chavez, *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 139–59. Chavez's book stands out among accounts by a Latino author in adopting an openly neo-conservative, assimilationist position, and especially in its pathologizing treatment of Puerto Ricans.

22. See Roberto Bustamante, "Controversia por celebración de la Independencia Dominicana," *El Diario/La Prensa*, 26 February 2000, p. 5.

23. *Enterprise of the Indies*, George Lamming, ed. (Port of Spain: Trinidad and Tobago Institute of the West Indies, 1999), vii.

Chapter 3

Power and Identity

Miami Cubans

Alex Stepick and Carol Dutton Stepick

INTRODUCTION

On April 30, 2000, close to one hundred thousand Latinos, overwhelmingly Miami Cubans,¹ marched through the streets of Little Havana. Miami Cubans, along with significant numbers of other Latinos, were united. And they had become united in response to what they perceived as discrimination from the larger society, what has been called "reactive ethnicity" (Portes and Bach 1984). They were protesting the U.S. government's treatment of a six-year-old Cuban rafter boy who had been staying with his Miami Cuban relatives. His Cuban father wanted the boy back, but the Miami Cuban relatives and their supporters refused to give him up, claiming that he would suffer incomparably in Castro's Cuba. The U.S. government forcibly removed the child, much to the horror of Miami Cubans. They could not understand how the United States could side with Castro's government. After the boy was seized, the community was left stunned by the sense that the U.S. government had ignored the claims of Miami Cubans who had so stalwartly opposed communism and had become so successful in the United States.

First-generation Miami Cuban immigrants have achieved economic and political power unprecedented in the entire history of U.S. immigrants. They have come to expect success. Not only are Cubans the most economically successful Latinos in the United States, but for forty years they have evinced an extraordinary solidarity based upon an identity as intransigent anticommunist Cuban patriots.

Up close, however, the vivid picture of Miami Cuban power and success dissolves into multiple conflicting and confusing images. By the end of June 2000, two months after one hundred thousand demonstrated in the streets, cracks in Miami Cuban solidarity slowly, fitfully reemerged—fractures that had developed over the past fifteen years of the twentieth

century but that the Elián González case had temporarily bridged. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Miami's Cuban and Latino communities are undergoing a sluggish transformation in which Miami Cuban power is becoming diffused. Cuban identity and solidarity are eroding under the stress of non-Cuban, Latino demographic diversity and the maturation of second-generation Miami Cubans, who care less about Castro and more about "making it" in America. This chapter examines first the forces that constructed a seemingly monolithic, powerful community and then the processes that have undermined that solidarity.

THE BUILDING OF CUBAN MIAMI

We Cubans made Miami. Before us, Miami was nothing but a decaying winter vacation spot and swamp. Now, it's the capital of Latin America. And, we Cubans did it!

A MIAMI CUBAN BUSINESSMAN

Indeed, Cubans do deserve much of the credit for shifting Miami's economic focus from northern tourists to international southern trade. But their stories of self-congratulation usually fail to acknowledge the critical political context that encouraged them—even permitted their success.

Cubans fleeing Castro's Cuba began arriving in significant numbers in the 1960s, following the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion.² Their arrival reflected both the failure of a U.S.-backed military invasion of Cuba and the failure of a socialist revolution to retain those who had the most skills and resources for reconstructing Cuba. The Cubans' arrival also coincided with the construction of Great Society programs that provided extensive benefits to minority populations and that were quickly expanded to include Cuban refugees. The U.S. government created the Cuban Refugee Program, which spent nearly \$1 billion between 1965 and 1976 (Pedraza-Bailey 1985). Through this program, the federal government paid transportation costs from Cuba and offered financial assistance to needy refugees and to state and local public agencies that provided refugee services. Even in programs not especially designed for them, Cubans seemed to benefit. From 1968 to 1980, Latinos (almost all Cubans) received 46.9 percent of all Small Business Administration loans in Dade County (Porter and Dunn 1984).

Even more important was indirect assistance. Through the 1960s, the private University of Miami had the largest Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) station in the world, outside of the organization's headquarters in Virginia. With perhaps as many as twelve thousand Cubans in Miami on its payroll at one point in the early 1960s, the CIA was one of the largest

employers in the state of Florida. It supported what was described as the third largest navy in the world and over fifty front businesses: CIA boat shops, gun shops, travel agencies, detective agencies, and real estate agencies (Didion 1987). Ultimately, this investment did much more to boost Cubans in Miami economically than it did to destabilize the Castro regime.

The state of Florida also passed laws that made it easier for Cuban professionals to recertify themselves to practice in the United States. At the county level, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, 53 percent of minority contracts for Dade County's rapid transit system went to Latino-owned firms. Dade County Schools led the nation in introducing bilingual education for the first wave of Cuban refugees in 1960. The Dade County Commission also designated the county officially bilingual in the mid-1970s. With about 75 percent of Cuban arrivals before 1974 directly taking advantage of some kind of state-provided benefits, and with virtually everyone profiting from indirect aid, the total benefits available to the Cuban community appear to surpass those available to any other U.S. minority group (Pedraza-Bailey 1985).

The first wave of Cubans has been labeled the "Golden Exiles," the top of Cuban society who were most immediately threatened by a socialist revolution (Portes, 1969). These new arrivals were different from other minorities in the United States. They were not only white but also predominantly middle or upper class. The presence of entrepreneurs and professionals in the Cuban refugee flow provided a trained and experienced core who knew how to access and use the extraordinary benefits provided by the U.S. government. Some had already established a footing in the United States and, when the revolution came, abandoned one of their residences for another across the straits of Florida. A Cuban shoe manufacturer, for example, produced footwear for a major U.S. retail chain before the Cuban revolution. He obtained his working capital from New York financial houses. After the revolution, the only change was that the manufacturing was done in Miami rather than Havana. He even was able to keep some of the same employees.

The earlier-arriving, higher-status refugees created the first enterprises in what came to be known as the Cuban enclave and allowed Miami to be the only U.S. city where Latino immigrants created a successful and self-sustained ethnic enclave economy. Miami has proportionally the largest concentration of Latino businesses (over fifty-five thousand) and of large Latino enterprises in the country. Although Miami-Dade County has only 5 percent of the total U.S. Latino population, thirty-one of the top one hundred Latino businesses in the United States are located there. U.S. Cubans' rate of business ownership is more than three times that of Mexicans and nearly six times that of Puerto Ricans.

The Cuban enclave benefits not only Cuban business owners but also the broader Miami Cuban community. Most later-arriving Cuban immigrants from more modest origins than the Golden Exiles are employed by Cuban Miami enclave firms in various entry-level positions, which may offer low wages but can often be apprenticeships rather than dead-end jobs. Miami Cuban employers frequently provide training to their Miami Cuban workers and may even help them establish their own independent businesses. Miami Cuban garment workers become subcontractors, establishing informal workshops in their homes. Miami Cuban construction workers become contractors or subcontractors, also working out of their homes. For financing, workers who have turned entrepreneurs can go to banks (sometimes owned by Miami Cubans and certainly staffed by Miami Cubans) where they are likely to find sympathetic loan officers. For markets, they rely on the Miami Cuban community's loyalty and preference for buying from "their own."

The result has been a most economically successful immigrant community. A comparison of Cubans and Mexicans who came to the United States in the mid-1970s, for example, revealed that the Cubans not only had higher wages than the Mexicans, even Cubans with the same educational level as Mexicans received higher wages (Portes and Bach 1985).³

Miami Cubans also transformed Miami by attracting investment and migration from the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, turning Miami into a diverse, dynamic Latino economic center of the Americas. Only New York has more foreign-owned banks than Miami. Nearly 50 percent of U.S. exports to the Caribbean and Central America and over 30 percent of U.S. exports to South America pass through Miami. Miami's Free Trade Zone is the first and largest privately owned trade zone in the world. With more non-stop cargo flights to Latin America and the Caribbean than Orlando, Houston, New Orleans, Atlanta, Tampa, and New York's Kennedy combined, Miami's airport is the top U.S. airport for international freight. The airport has more airlines than any other in the Western hemisphere; it is frequently easier to get from one Latin American country to another by going through Miami than by going directly. Miami also has the largest cruise port in the world, ironically transporting primarily U.S. passengers on vacations throughout the Caribbean and Latin America while many of the citizens of those countries are immigrating to Miami. Miami may not be a global city equal to New York or London, but it is assuredly the economic capital of Latin America (Nijman 1996a), and its Cuban immigrants made it so.

The economic transformation has also altered much of Miami's culture. For example, at a 1998 event held by the University of Miami and the state of Florida to discuss plans for educating a "multilingual workforce for the 21st Century," the university's newly installed dean of education, an import

from a university up north, spoke of language diversity as a problem that people where he came from would soon be encountering. The faculty member who was moderating the conference gently reminded the dean that in Florida multilingualism is viewed as an asset and promised to continue to educate him.

Antibilingual-education measures such as those that passed in the late 1990s in California no longer have a chance in Miami.⁴ It is easier to find a job, to shop, and just to get things done if one knows Spanish. It is also much easier to advance economically if one knows English. Miami is truly bilingual and multicultural (Garreau 1981; Levine 1985; Portes and Stepick 1993). Miami Dade Community College has more foreign students, mostly Latino, than any other college or university in the nation. One of the three Spanish-language local television newscasts has more viewers than any of the local English-language television stations. The main Spanish-language daily, *El Nuevo Herald*, reprints articles from eleven Latin American newspapers. The 1990 census showed that Spanish had replaced English in Miami-Dade as the language most often spoken at home. Even at work, the language most frequently spoken by Latinos in South Florida is Spanish (42.2 percent).

It is not just the number of Latinos and the pervasive use of Spanish that makes Miami the *de facto* capital of Latin America. Latinos are also the demographic majority in some Texas cities, such as Laredo, El Paso, and San Antonio, and in other border areas such as California's Imperial Valley, but there they lack the political and economic clout exercised by Miami Cubans.

Miami Cubans translated the favorable reception by the U.S. government and the millions of dollars of resettlement assistance not only into a self-sufficient economic enclave and thriving international economic city but also into a "direct line" to the centers of political power in Washington. Despite considerable political diversity among Miami Cubans in the early 1960s, by the 1970s politics and profits had become fused. Anti-Castro, anticommunist Miami Cubans invested locally and also enforced political consensus by harassing, boycotting, and even terrorizing their more liberal political and economic compatriots (Forment 1989), a process referred to as enforceable solidarity (Portes 1987).

The outcome was a profound economic and political solidarity. From the 1960s on, most Miami Cubans, despite their diverse class origins and social views, patronized other Miami Cuban-owned businesses and preferred conationals as business associates at the same time that they shared a coherent anti-Castro, anticommunist ideology. Expelled and despised by the government of their country, abandoned at the Bay of Pigs by a supposedly friendly host government, bartered away during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, and ridiculed by Latin American intellectuals, the exiles had

few to trust but each other. As illustrated in a full-page advertisement in the *Miami Herald* that was paid for by the most powerful Miami Cuban organization, the Cuban American National Foundation, resentment and a sense of persecution had evolved:

All our achievements have been accomplished with a national press coverage that has often portrayed us as extremists. This has been the most unfair and prejudiced perception we have experienced in America. . . . The *Miami Herald* is aggressive in its ignorance of our people. It refuses to understand that Cuban Americans see the struggle between totalitarianism and democracy as a personal, ever-present struggle. We live the struggle daily because our friends and families enslaved in communist Cuba live it daily. (Cuban American National Foundation 1987)

Unlike other minorities, which usually adopt antiestablishment, progressive positions, Miami Cubans have been militant conservatives on foreign policy, specifically on anticommunism issues. As a result, anticommunist policy positions and anticommunist rhetoric are de rigueur for local political candidates. For example, in the mid-1980s the City Commission passed a resolution barring any expenditure of "funds of the City of Miami . . . where representatives of Communist-Marxist countries have either been scheduled to participate or invited to attend." Subsequently, Miami-Dade County passed a similar resolution. In an effort to win Miami Cuban readership, the *Miami Herald* created an entirely new Spanish-language edition run almost exclusively by Cuban exiles who seldom have a favorable word for the Castro government (O'Connor 1992).

The Miami Cubans' solidarity has produced tangible political results. Miami's city and county mayors are foreign-born Cuban immigrants, as are the superintendent of the public schools (the fourth largest district in the nation), the president of the community college (the largest in the nation), and the president of the local state university (one of the country's most rapidly growing). In the wake of the Elián crisis, the Miami Cuban mayor fired the Anglo police chief and the Anglo city manager. They were replaced by Miami Cubans. Also Cuban-born are the Miami-Dade County police chief, the state prosecutor for Miami-Dade County, two congressional representatives, and the majority of the Miami-Dade County state legislative contingent. Nationally, the two Miami Cubans in the U.S. House of Representatives,⁵ along with the Cuban American National Foundation, successfully promoted Radio and T.V. Martí, which broadcasts to Cuba, as well as the Cuban Democracy Act, which tightened U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba. More generally, Miami Cubans have emerged as a group whose support is actively courted by a growing number of officeholders from outside the state—from presidential candidates to members of Congress seeking campaign contributions (Moreno 1996).

These victories have not been without costs to the image of Miami Cubans and the well-being of the overall community. In response to an intolerance concerning political opinions about Cuba, the Inter-American Press Association and the human rights group Americas Watch in 1992 condemned the Miami exile community for violations of civil liberties (Garcia 1996; Rohter 1992). There have been many other lost opportunities. The most recent examples: An international music market conference that focused on the Americas had met in Miami Beach for several years, but in 1998 the county blocked the conference because Cuban musicians were scheduled to attend. Also in 1998, the Miami Light Project, a leading local arts group, had to forgo presenting a Cuban musical group in order not to lose \$60,000 in county funding. The July 1999 Junior Pan American Games track and field meet was moved to Tampa after Miami-Dade refused to support it because Cuba would be represented in the games. The Latin Grammys scheduled for September 2000 pulled out of Miami. For similar reasons, a local group bidding to hold the 2007 Pan Am Games in Miami-Dade pulled out after realizing that the county would not support the games because Cuban athletes would participate.

Achieving both economic and political success as a Miami Cuban did not necessarily shield individuals from prejudice and discrimination. Certainly during the early stages of Cuban settlement in the 1960s, Cubans confronted significant prejudice when apartment owners, for example, posted signs declaiming, "No Pets, No Kids, No Cubans." Moreover, in an effort to prevent the political empowerment of Cubans, local Anglo politicians in the 1960s and 1970s successfully urged federal officials to relocate new Cuban refugees outside of Dade County. Public resentment against Cuban Americans mounted, especially in the wake of the 1980 Mariel boatlift when the *Miami Herald* editorialized repeatedly against Cubans and when national polls listed Cubans as the least desirable immigrants. This was largely a reaction to Castro's propaganda about those leaving Cuba in the boatlift. As late as 1993, a USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll found that only 19 percent of the respondents believed that immigration from Cuba has benefited the United States (Moreno 1996). Dade County was also the birthplace of the English-only movement in the United States during the 1980s (Castro, Haun, and Roca 1990; Castro 1992).

By the late 1980s, after the election of a Cuban-born mayor, a majority on the city council, numerous state representatives, and a congressional representative, and recognizing the business elite's inability to advance their agenda without the support of the Cuban business community, Miami's old-line, non-Hispanic white political and business elite switched to a policy of incorporation. In the meantime, the Cuban enclave had been forging itself into the staging ground for a profound Latinoization of Miami.

EROSION OF MIAMI CUBAN SOLIDARITY *Demographic Dilution of Cuban Hegemony*

Undoubtedly, Miami is an immigrant city. By 1990 Miami had the highest proportion of foreign-born residents of any U.S. metropolitan area. Over 70 percent of Miami's population is either a first-generation (48.6 percent) or a second-generation (22.9 percent) immigrant (Rumbaut 1998a).

Cubans are the largest of Miami's immigrant groups, but perhaps not by quite so great a margin as one might expect. Although over 25,000 Cuban immigrants settle in Miami yearly, Cubans constitute only 35 percent of the county's total population and 60 percent of the area's Latino population (Miami-Dade County, 1999). The Cuban percentage has been declining since the mid-1980s. Fleeing first the Sandinista regime and then the Contra war against the Sandinistas, Nicaraguan immigrants form the second largest Miami Latino population. By the late 1980s, they made Miami the largest Nicaraguan settlement in the United States, at an estimated 105,000 in 2000. Every Latin American and Caribbean country has a presence in Miami, which is also home to nearly 100,000 Puerto Ricans (Boswell 1994).

Whereas rifts between Cubans and non-Hispanic whites dominated during the 1980s, since then, divisions between Cubans and other Latinos have begun to emerge. One Miami Nicaraguan insists that "Cubans get more opportunities. Cubans think they are better than Nicas. Cubans are able to move up in the work place easier. We Nicas get treated differently at work. They think we are less competent. They make rude remarks about us, call us indios and tira flechas, make us feel unwelcome in public places" (Konczal 1999).

The impetus for Nicaraguans coming to Miami paralleled that of the original Cuban migration. Like Cubans, Nicaraguans were fleeing a radical, left-wing revolution. Accordingly, Miami Cubans first welcomed them as fellow anticommunists, and many Nicaraguans consciously attempted to replicate the Cuban economic enclave and political solidarity.

However, they found their way impeded by obstacles that Cubans had not confronted. First, in a general national atmosphere that was more restrictive toward immigrants, the U.S. government was far less welcoming toward Nicaraguans than it had been toward Cubans. Only after prolonged political battle did selected Nicaraguans qualify for a legal immigration status, and in their struggles for immigration benefits, Nicaraguans have been treated much more similarly to Salvadorans and Haitians than to Cubans.⁶ The compressed time frame of Nicaraguan immigration (less than ten years compared to the forty years for Cuban immigrants) also contributed to the more negative reaction to their arrival. The U.S. hostility toward permanent Nicaraguan resettlement diverted Nicaraguans' resources and focus, thus weakening their voice in local affairs.

Unlike the many Cuban entrepreneurs who had firm ties to the U.S. economy, Nicaragua's economy had been less linked to the United States, so Nicaraguan entrepreneurs could not so easily reestablish themselves (Rodríguez 1999). The Nicaraguan exodus also lacked the finality of the Cubans' migration. The electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in the late 1980s made the Nicaraguan community far more transnational than settled in Miami.

Our ethnographic work⁷ among immigrant youths has revealed that the local dominance of Cubans dramatically affects Nicaraguan youths. When Nicaraguans first arrive, they confront the prejudice and discrimination thrown at all *refies* ("refugees") or new arrivals. They learn the epithets of *indio* (Indian) and *tira flecha* (spear thrower). They realize that not only can they not speak English but they also dress wrong and are barred from hanging out with the "in" people. They also take education too seriously.

Being young, however, they quickly adapt. They learn and come to prefer English, or at least Miami's Spanglish, within a couple of years. They change their manner of dress in an effort to merge with their new Cuban-dominated peer culture. Many refer to themselves as Hispanics (and a few as Latinos), instead of Nicaraguans. And many suppress their interest in and respect for education. A few years later, however, most evolve further still. They come to realize their specific, peculiar role of being Nicaraguans in Miami. As reflected in both our own ethnographic work and the survey research of Portes and Rumbaut (2000), many resurrect a Nicaraguan identity label. Overall, this survey found, the number of individuals who self-identify simply as "American" declines dramatically for all immigrant youths as they grow older.

In short, the increased diversity of Latino immigrants in Miami has not promoted the adoption of a Latino identity; rather, it reinforces national identities. The dominance of Cubans, for example, prompts Nicaraguan youth first to shed or camouflage their culture and then to readopt a national identity label.

Nicaraguans also recognize that being a Latino in Latino-dominated Miami can be better than being Latino elsewhere in the United States. As one high school senior in our study stated, "*I think here in Miami we're not going to have a problem, but I think if we move probably to Colorado, Michigan and stuff, they'll discriminate against any Hispanics. Okay, if you go up north in Orlando, they do discriminate; the white guy [does].*"

Increased immigration diversity, then, has diluted Cuban demographic dominance, but it has had a mixed effect on identity. Non-Cuban Latinos in Miami learn to assert their national identities locally at the same time that they realize that being Latino in Miami, even if Cubans dominate, is better than being Latino outside of Miami.

Generational Dissolution of Solidarity

Miami Cubans in the aggregate are becoming increasingly dissimilar. Cubans have one of the highest naturalization rates of all immigrant groups, and they vote frequently. They have voted as an ethnic block in local elections and have consistently supported Republicans in state and national elections (Moreno and Warren 1992). Moreover, according to a 1997 survey, 70 percent say that in local political elections, a candidate's position on Cuba is important in determining whether they vote for that candidate (Grenier and Gladwin 1997). The Elián González affair at the beginning of 2000 demonstrated Miami Cubans' solidarity and force. Tens of thousands demonstrated in the streets. Media attention was unceasing. Numerous commentators labeled the event a watershed for the community. We argue, however, that the attention surrounding Elián and the solidarity displayed were transitory experiences that veiled a longer-term, more fundamental generational dissolution of solidarity among Cubans.

Through the 1990s, fissures began to emerge, especially along generational lines. In the early 1990s, for example, I [Alex] taught a freshman honors course on ethnicity in Miami, and the students read Joan Didion's *Miami* (1987), which focuses on the extreme Cuban right wing. The book details the case of Orlando Bosch, a former medical doctor accused of numerous terrorist activities, including the bombing of a Cuban airliner over Venezuela. About half of the students were of Cuban descent, almost all born in the United States of parents who were born in Cuba. Nearly all had close-knit families, including grandparents with whom the students discussed the readings. Almost unanimously, the Cuban grandparents celebrated Bosch's terrorism as the work of a *freedom fighter*. The parents, referred to as the 1½ generation because most migrated to the United States when they were children, were ambivalent. They were strongly anti-Castro, but they did not endorse the murder of innocent human beings. The children, who were overwhelmingly second-generation immigrants, had never even heard of Orlando Bosch. They viewed his acts as terrorism and were shocked by them. These generational differences have been reinforced repeatedly in our five-year ethnographic project.

In many respects, the children of Cuban immigrants have been assimilated in characteristic American fashion. They have abandoned the self-identity label of American, but neither do they identify as Cuban. Instead, they strongly prefer the hyphenated label Cuban-American. Our ethnographic work reveals Miami Cuban high school students to be the most Americanized in terms of teenage celebration of drinking, drugs, sex, car culture, and the disparagement of education (Konczal 1997), and they have the highest dropout rate among immigrant students attending public

schools (Portes and Rumbaut 2000). Miami Cubans also are the least likely of all immigrant youths to report experiencing discrimination (Rumbaut 1997b; Rumbaut 1998b).

Younger Miami Cubans truly are living on the hyphen (Perez Firmat 1994). They prefer to speak English, watch English-language television, listen to English-language radio, dress in American styles, and adopt the attitudes of typical mainstream American adolescents. At the same time, they understand and speak Spanish, often have close extended-family ties, and are at least aware of why their parents and grandparents are so passionate about Cuba. Their grandparents remain fixated on recapturing their lost status and property in Cuba. Their parents have focused on establishing new lives in a new country. The younger generation cares little about lost status and property. For Miami Cuban youth, Cuba is primarily a memory constructed through the stories their grandparents repeat at every family gathering. They often take for granted the accomplishments of their parents. For Miami Cuban youth, economic security is often something assumed, rather than something to be recovered or created again. Miami Cuban youth know that they belong to the locally dominant group, and they act on this knowledge.

Miami Cuban youth may agree with their parents' and grandparents' assessment that Fidel Castro is a dictator who has ruined Cuba. They also will respond to what they perceive as violence against their community. But they are unlikely to be as profoundly passionate in their anti-Castro sentiments as their parents and grandparents.

LOSING POWER

Fissures within Miami Cuban unity are also visible in politics, both in public discussions and governmental policies. *El Nuevo Herald* was created by the *Miami Herald* largely to appeal to the political sensitivity of anticommunist Cubans (Portes and Stepick 1993), but this newspaper now has a Cuban-born columnist, who consistently supports more dialogue and closer relations with the Castro government and condemns Miami Cuban right-wing fanaticism. Although this columnist has received numerous death threats, he and his column persist, a condition that probably would not have existed fifteen years ago.

Survey results confirm emerging divisions among Miami Cubans. The Latino National Political Survey in the early 1990s revealed that 45.5 percent of naturalized Cubans identified themselves as "moderate" or "liberal." Furthermore, even those who favor a hard line against Castro are often liberal on domestic issues (Garcia 1996:122). A 1997 survey of Miami Cubans found that over 51 percent would support a dialogue with

the Cuban government, a significant increase over a 1991 poll. Seventy-one percent felt that all points of view on how to deal with Castro were not being heard in Miami. And, younger residents were more likely to oppose military action and instead favor opening up relations (Grenier and Gladwin 1997).

Even large-scale public events reflect a diminution of right-wing Miami Cuban power and influence. Throughout the 1980s, university-sponsored debates and public forums to discuss foreign policy relative to Cuba or Nicaragua routinely elicited large protests, threats, and sometimes acts of violence. In March 2000, however, the Latin American Studies Association held their meetings in Miami. *El Nuevo Herald* trumpeted the expected arrival of over 120 Cuban scholars from Cuba, the largest contingent ever to visit in the United States. Conference organizers from the local state university (Florida International University) feared massive public demonstrations and disruptions of the meetings, but fewer than five protesters carried placards across the street from the hotel, and not a single conference event was disrupted.

The case of Elián González reflects both the inertia of right-wing Miami Cuban power and its dissolution. Miami Cubans mounted an impressive effort to keep Elián in the United States, including the introduction of legislation by Cuban American members of Congress to offer Elián instant U.S. citizenship, a move supported by Florida's Republican and Democratic non-Miami Cuban senators. On the other hand, whereas demonstrations in favor of Cuban rafters in 1994 garnered tens of thousands of supporters, before federal authorities snatched Elián, the vigil outside his relatives' Miami house seldom numbered more than twenty, and most of the stalwarts were over 60 years old. The broader Miami Cuban community did not coalesce until the U.S. government threatened to, and then eventually did, forcibly remove Elián from the custody of his extended family in Miami and restore him to his father, who had come from Cuba to retrieve him. Many of the Cubans and other Latinos who then came out into the streets were motivated less by anticommunism than by the U.S. government's powerful show of force.

Although extreme right-wing Cuban hegemony is declining, the political and media structures of power created by that hegemony were able to catapult Elián into our daily consciousness, while only occasionally mentioning those Miami Cubans and other Latinos whose views reflect emerging generational and demographic changes. The anti-Castro, anti-communist Miami Cuban faction clearly remains the most visible and the most vocal. It still has the greatest influence on local politics, and the national media seem not yet to have recognized the slow decline in its constituent base.

THE FUTURE

Miami Cubans have always been an exceptional case, both among Latinos in the United States and among minorities in general. They are a first-generation immigrant minority that has vaulted past native minorities to attain both economic and political power based upon exceptional community solidarity.

A few academics and many Miami Cubans themselves attribute Miami Cuban success to hard work and intelligence (Moncarz 1978; Botifol 1985), maintaining that "We Cubans made Miami!" A similar explanation at the other end of the political scale is the Cuban government's and its academics' assertion that Miami Cubans are mafia, scum, worms, and traitors to the revolution (Hernandez and Gomis 1986). Political scientists (such as Moreno 1996) point out that Cubans do not fit the standard profile for minority politics—they have no legacy of internal colonialism (García 1988), nor did they have to engage in coalition building in order to attain power (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984). Sociological explanations tend to emphasize the immigrants' upwardly skewed social background (Portes 1969), their European, non-African, nonindigenous racial status (Stepick and Grenier, 1993), their intact, extended families with many workers (Perez 1986), and especially the positive reception offered them by the U.S. government (Pedraza-Bailey 1985; Masud-Piloto 1996; Stepick and Grenier, 1993; Portes and Manning 1986; Portes and Rumbaut 1990).

The tremendous community solidarity that propelled Miami's Cuban community, however, is slowly and fitfully eroding. Cubans are no longer Miami's only visible immigrants. Non-Cuban Latinos have diluted Cubans' demographic majority. Miami Cuban voices have begun to challenge the hegemonic anti-Castro obsession, and the formerly hegemonic anti-Castroites have not been able to terrorize them into silence as they intimidated dissidents in the 1960s and 1970s.

The power established by the older Miami Cubans, however, exhibits an inertia that will probably mask the community's evolution for some time to come. Although the younger Miami Cubans have different agendas than the older Miami Cubans, the defining issue of older Cubans, anti-Castroism, still remains the primary political issue of the broader Miami Cuban community, as the Elián González case demonstrates. In hopes of maintaining the momentum generated by the Elián affair, the most important Miami Cuban lobby, the Cuban American National Foundation, appointed a new, younger executive director. The media continue to concentrate disproportionately on the visible, contentious issues surrounding Miami Cubans' interest in their homeland, rather than on the more mundane, mainstream domestic issues of concern to the emerging second generation. Like any group, whenever Miami Cubans feel threatened and

believe that issues important to them are ignored, they are likely to demonstrate solidarity across all generations. But apart from these episodic occasions, solidarity will be more elusive.

The second generation, the ones who define themselves as Cuban Americans and whose attitudes and concerns are easily as much American as Cuban, will eventually shift political attention away from Cuba to domestic issues. They are likely to replicate the political attitudes and behaviors of the second- and third-generation European immigrants of the twentieth century. The meaning of their Cuban roots will be more nostalgic than activist as they come to see Miami, not Cuba, as their homeland. Miami has become the center of immigrant Cuban life for all generations of Cubans. Even if Cuba does one day welcome back the exiles who have politically opposed the current regime for so long, few of the second generation are likely to consider relocating in Cuba. Some grandparents will return to die in their homeland. Many parents, those of the 1½ generation, will return to visit family and explore economic opportunities. But even if they do establish businesses in Cuba, these are likely to be transnational businesses with their base in Miami and a branch in Cuba.

The increased demographic diversity of Miami's immigrants will further challenge Miami Cubans' hegemony. Nicaraguans have been clamoring for a social and political voice for more than a decade. Haitians, who are identified as black Caribbean immigrants and not Latinos, are beginning to field local political candidates. African Americans openly voice their resentment of Miami Cubans' economic and political success. The voices of other Latino communities are also likely to emerge. There are nearly as many Puerto Ricans in Miami as Nicaraguans. Political instability in Colombia has generated a strong immigrant flow into Miami. And other Latin immigrants also continue to arrive daily.

The key will be how Miami Cuban leaders react. Some Miami Cuban politicians and opinion leaders have responded by broadening their agenda to incorporate the concerns of other groups. Other Miami Cubans, especially radio talk show hosts, however, remain preoccupied with anti-Castro sentiments. In the process, they alienate both other Latinos and non-Latinos. The anti-Castro fixation in the Elián González affair created a backlash both locally and nationally. The U.S. Congress refused to grant a legal immigration status to Elián, and Congress voted to end the U.S. medicine and food embargo on Cuba.⁸ Soon after Elián returned with his father to Cuba, a Miami federal district judge ruled unconstitutional Miami-Dade County's ordinance that prohibited the county from officially dealing with any firm that does business with anyone in Cuba.

In the wake of Elián's brief sojourn and departure, public discourse in Miami has concentrated on how to improve relations between Miami Cubans and the rest of the community. Because Miami Cubans are locally

dominant, whether Miami remains marked by Cuban conflict with the broader community or comes together across its ethnic components will largely depend on the course chosen by Miami Cuban leaders—whether, that is, they remain absorbed by homeland politics or refocus on Miami.

NOTES

1. Most narrowly, *Miami* refers to the City of Miami, which has over 365,000 residents and is the largest of thirty municipalities in Miami-Dade County. The county, which changed its name from Dade County to Miami-Dade County in 1997, has slightly over 2 million residents and is the eighth largest county in the United States. Although not all of the county is urban, it is frequently referred to as Metropolitan Miami. This paper uses the term *Miami* to refer to the broader area of Miami-Dade County. We refer to Miami Cubans specifically to avoid the confusing *Cuban* or *Cuban American* or the more wordy *people of Cuban descent*. Miami's Cuban population is a mix of first- and second-generation immigrants, along with a few third-generation ones. We use *Miami Cubans* to refer to people of Cuban descent, regardless of generation, who reside in Miami.

2. Numerous accounts detail the history of Cuban immigration to the United States, inter alia, see Masud-Piloto 1996; Pedraza 1996; and Portes and Bach 1984.

3. The most severe challenge to the absorptive capacity of the Cuban enclave came with the 1980 Mariel boatlift that brought 125,000 new arrivals within a few months. In spite of having educational and occupational characteristics similar to earlier-arriving Cuban refugees of the 1970s, the Mariel refugees were severely stigmatized by Fidel Castro's characterization of them as the dregs of Cuban society. As a result, 27 percent were unemployed three years after their arrival, twice as many as among Cuban refugees arriving in the 1970s (Portes and Clark 1985). Two years later, however, their unemployment rate had declined by half. More significantly, 18 percent of those who were gainfully employed had managed to establish their own private practice or small business, and 45 percent of those employed were working in Cuban-owned firms (Portes and Clark 1987).

4. Miami-Dade County did pass an antimulticultural ordinance in 1980 when non-Latinos were still the majority. In the early 1990s, that ordinance was reversed.

5. There is also a Cuban American representative in Congress who represents New Jersey.

6. Admittedly, U.S. policy toward Cuban undocumented immigrants became increasingly restrictive following the Guantánamo rafters crisis of 1994, after which the United States claimed the right to return to Cuba those who had not made it to U.S. shores (referred to as the wet feet versus dry feet policy). Still, those Cubans who make it to U.S. shores are allowed to remain, although U.S. law grants no special privileges to Cubans just because they make it to U.S. soil. The Cuban Adjustment Act, nevertheless, does grant permanent residency to Cubans once they have been in the United States for one year, regardless of how they arrived—a legal benefit denied to all other immigrants. The United States also admits approximately 25,000 Cubans legally to the United States via the U.S. Interests Section in Havana.

7. With funding from NSF (SBR-9511515), the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Spencer Foundation, we began following cohorts of immigrant and native minority youths in the fall of 1995 when these individuals entered high school. We have remained in contact with them ever since. Lisa Konczal (1997, 1999) has worked most closely with the Nicaraguan youth.

8. Miami Cuban congressional representatives, however, did manage to maintain significant restrictions on U.S. corporate and individual involvement with Cuba that would enhance European trade relations with Cuba.

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Commentary

John H. Coatsworth

The interesting and provocative essays by George Sanchez, Juan Flores, and Alex Stepick and Carol Stepick raise significant issues that confront Latino historiography in the twenty-first century. They are also wonderfully self-conscious examples of the current interpretive and analytic preoccupations of the best scholars in this field. I will first comment on the issues that their essays address. Then I will point out five areas of potentially fruitful historical research that these essays suggest but do not touch on explicitly.

These authors are representative of one of the major strengths of Latino history and of Latino studies more generally. They are important "public intellectuals," whose words are read and carry weight well beyond the academy. Their work combines analysis and advocacy, scientific detachment in research and a constant awareness of how history is communicated and how it can affect Latino culture identity as well as large U.S. (and even international) political processes. In Latino studies, as in other fields, taking this posture has yielded great creativity and insight, though it can also entail both personal and intellectual risks.

Juan Flores and the Stepicks focus on Caribbean-Latinos. Flores restores the hyphen to a term invented precisely to escape hyphenation. He cites evidence of collaboration among Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican immigrants in music, occasional appeals to unity in their national and diasporic literatures, the cultural and historical ties of all three groups to a common Afro-Caribbean past, the domination of their former homelands by the same U.S. government and private corporations, and their shared experience of immigration and of racism in the United States.

Flores concludes in his paper, as he does in his important new book,¹ that the three immigrant "enclaves," as he calls them, "have taken such discrepant shape" in the twentieth century that they have become isolated