

# TRANSNATIONAL LANDSCAPES AND THE CUBAN DIASPORA

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the multiple meanings of landscape and the creation of place within the Cuban Diaspora. *Landscape* encompasses not only the external physical environment or a particular geographical space, but the concept also represents collections of personal experiences with, and memories linked to, various pieces of the physical environment. *Diaspora* is an association that is not restricted to a geographical place but formed by cultural nationalism shared by members of a transnational community. The research sites in this study are Moultrie, Georgia, and Miami, Florida. These sites were selected to represent some of the diversity (e.g. rural/urban, established/newly arrived) inherent in the Cuban Diaspora. In light of current scholarship on these themes and the issues facing members of the Cuban Diaspora today, the principal questions addressed in this study are: How are landscapes (re)created and given meaning at locations in the Cuban Diaspora? and How does the context of migration or exile affect the (re)creation of landscapes? To address the research questions, an integrated set of mixed ethnographic methods comprised of participant observation, interviews, life history collection, cognitive mapping, and archival research was used.

Results show that the manner in which members of the Cuban Diaspora in the United States left Cuba indeed impacts their relationship with the island and how they experience

*Cubanidad*, or Cubanness. Based on the data collected, many members of the Diaspora who were jailed or otherwise persecuted in Cuba tend to shy away from addressing volatile issues, such as Cuban politics or religion, and choose instead to (re)create a private sense of Cubanidad. Others, who left the island under less weighty circumstances, may more openly express their version of Cubanidad. While the former situation tends to confine Cubanidad to the home and to religious spaces, the latter leads to the (re)creation of a broader, more public Cuban landscape, replete with architecture, businesses, language, food, music, and art that combine to reflect a collective sense of Cubanidad and a more highly visible version of Cuban identity in the U.S.

The goal of the dissertation is to contribute a new element to current anthropological research on the transnational experience by considering people's connections to landscapes. Landscape is a particularly useful concept for studying the ways transnationalism is embodied as it represents a highly personalized version of, and interaction with, one's surroundings, including natural and built environments as well as the memories attached to those. The Cuban diaspora in the U.S. represents an especially interesting setting for research on transnationalism since the U.S. has only recently begun to relax its long-standing travel restrictions that limit the frequency and duration of émigré's return visits to the island, as well as Cuban residents' visits to the U.S. Because of these restrictions, transnationalism, and membership in the Diaspora community more generally, has been enacted without frequent access to the home landscape. Even with intermittent access, many members of the Cuban diaspora refuse to claim contemporary Cuba as a homeplace because the island they remember has ceased to exist under Fidel Castro's control.

INDEX WORDS: Transnationalism, Landscape, Immigration, Exile, Sense of Place, Memory, Nostalgia, Cuba and Cuban Diaspora

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## DEDICATION

To my husband, Chris Swann,  
and to my parents,  
Marge and Vince Andrews,  
for their unending support and love.

In memory of Dr. Bob Rhoades,  
who contributed his immense expertise and insight.  
He remains an inspiration.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

Scholars across the disciplines are increasingly concerned with understanding and explaining the interconnections that are ever more apparent within and across a broad range of social and environmental structures. Social scientists have tended to conceptualize American migration in terms of broad frameworks or by emphasizing cultural and structural assimilation as the key factors in the success of migrants. More recent theoretical perspectives focus on why people decide to migrate, the context of migration, and the ways immigrants function in a host society. Following this trend, this project explores the creation of a transnational landscape within the Cuban diaspora at two distinct sites, Moultrie, Georgia; and Miami, Florida. These sites were selected to represent a range of motivations and experiences that comprise the Cuban diaspora. For instance, the Cuban community in Moultrie is quite new, the first Cuban immigrant having arrived there just twenty years ago, whereas the Cuban influence in Miami predates European presence in the region. Additionally, while the environment in Miami is largely urban and suburban, Moultrie is a much smaller, rural, agriculturally oriented town. Based on the interviews, life histories, observation and archival records collected at these sites between 2006 and 2009, I seek to address the following primary research questions and sub-questions:

1. In what ways are landscapes (re)created and given meaning at these locations in the Cuban diaspora?

- A. Which elements of the Cuban home landscape do immigrants and exiles in the U.S. use to create transnational landscapes?
2. How does the context of migration or exile affect the (re)creation of landscapes?
- A. Do members of exile or immigrant communities share a set of memories of the home country?
- B. Are there particular factors (age, length of stay in a certain location, frequency of contact with persons in Cuba) that influence the meanings of place or the creation of landscapes?
- C. What kinds of place-making mechanisms do members of these communities use to create landscapes?

The primary waves of emigration to the United States have entered the country in a diverse array of sociopolitical contexts. Silvia Pedraza-Bailey (1990) notes that the first Europeans to come to what is now the U.S. experienced a colonial, agrarian society; southern and eastern Europeans, and Black Americans and Central Americans arrived to an urban, industrialized society; and immigrants from Latin America and Asia have experienced an increasingly postindustrial, service-oriented context of migration. Comparative research that has stemmed from this situation has developed into an internal colonialism model, which attempts to explain the differences between racial minority and white European immigrant integration. Recently, theoretical trends have shifted away from focusing on ethnic or racial status and towards conceptualizing immigration as a more holistic and transnational process that rearranges people and cultures across nations in ways that highlight the intersections of race, class, gender, and nationality.

*Transnational* has become somewhat of an academic buzzword, one that connotes the fast pace of global commerce and travel. It is also a theory scholars have used to explain the progressively blurred boundaries between nation states. In the current context of global trade, international migration, and rapid communication, it has become easier than ever (and in many cases more necessary than ever) for persons to leave a given nation state but maintain a strong connection to that nation so as not to depart completely. “Nation” itself is something separate from a geographical space. Indeed, *nation* connotes a shared history and culture, regardless of spatial location. Gone are the characterizations of immigrants as wholly uprooted, placeless people; as scholars recognize the increasingly global and interconnected nature of contemporary migrations, they also highlight the agency of immigrants and their choices to take advantage of modern technologies to continue interacting with home (Castles & Miller 2003; Glick-Schiller & Basch 1995). Indeed, “transmigrants” become “firmly rooted in their new country, but maintain multiple linkages to their homeland” (Glick-Schiller & Basch 1995:48). Transmigrants are not “sojourners”, constantly traveling to and fro, but they do sustain an active connection to people, institutions, and local or national events in the homeland, often in response to the impossibility or undesirability of full incorporation into the adopted homeland (Glick-Schiller & Basch 1995). Transnationalism, then, theorizes the increasingly complex connections between global actors – people, institutions, and capital – and highlights the agency inherent in creating and maintaining those connections.

While these global connections between nation states do not represent a new phenomenon, the speed and frequency with which they are now occurring is unprecedented. International media, business, and politics supersede the nation state in many ways, creating what some have likened to “communities with no sense of place” (Meyrowitz 1985 in Appadurai

1990:271). But in spite of the colonizing power of such institutions as the World Bank, McDonald's, and Disney, national cultural identities remain a strong force against homogenization. To this end, Appadurai notes that "if 'a' global cultural system is emerging, it is filled with ironies and resistances" (1990:3).

*Diaspora* is evidence of such resistance. That diasporas continue to exist amidst the forces of globalization is testament to the significance of maintaining an identity created within a particular spatial and historical context: the homeland. While akin to theories of transnationalism and border straddling, diasporas "usually pre-suppose[s] longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future. Diasporas also connect multiple communities of a dispersed population. Systematic border crossings may be part of this interconnection, but multi-locale diaspora cultures are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary" (Clifford 1994:304). Members of a diaspora routinely share memories, longing, and nostalgia that may focus on a real or imagined homeland (Clifford 1994). Diaspora is, however, a markedly fluid concept; because a diaspora community is not limited by geographical space, it is simultaneously embedded in a diverse array of sociocultural, political, and ecological milieus, and the term's applicability to a particular cultural group may change over time.

The history of Cuban migration to the U.S. is a perplexing example of transnationality and diaspora. Because of the island's political history, most notably the negative repercussions of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the United States' travel and trade restrictions, and the subsequent dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Cubans continue to leave the island in significant numbers. Scholars often focus on the resultant Cuban diaspora (e.g. Ruth Behar 1995, 2008; Jorge Duany 2005) and the effects of economically and politically motivated



migration on the island and on places abroad. These migrants have settled in an array of locations around the world. However, U.S. policies toward Cuban exiles, historic political and economic agreements, and ongoing cultural exchange between the two countries, and Cuba's geographical proximity to the U.S. have meant that a large majority of Cubans who have fled island now consider the U.S. their adopted home. Indeed, the first large-scale migration from Cuba to the U.S. dates back to the Ten Years' War, which was waged in Cuba between 1868 and 1878.

Those Cubans that have arrived in the U.S. (and elsewhere within the diaspora) variously label themselves *exiliados*/exiles or *inmigrantes*/immigrants or *refugiados*/refugees depending in part on the circumstances of their departure and resettlement. The usage, from both an etic and emic standpoint, of each of these labels is undoubtedly political. "Exile" connotes a decision to leave Cuba and withstand a period of absence from the country; it suggests a strong stance against post-Revolutionary policies. The Cuban exile community in Miami is well known for its wealth and "success", but, as Emily H. Skop notes, this community has been forced to incorporate new elements – both in terms of exiles' reasons for leaving and their social class – as subsequent waves of Cubans arrive in Miami (Skop 2001). Of course, Cuban exiles in the U.S. are not unique to Castro's revolutionary government; they first arrived during the latter part of the nineteenth century in response to "Spanish colonial administration" (Pérez 1978: 129).

"Immigrant", on the other hand, does not allude to any particularly political motivations for leaving Cuba, but focuses instead on the movement from one nation state to another, typically for economic reasons<sup>1</sup>. Finally, the term "refugee" invokes a former resident's fear of

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<sup>1</sup> As in, "illegal immigrants" who are unwelcome and deemed a threat to the economic wellbeing of Americans. The title of Felix Roberto Masud-Piloto's book, "From Welcomed Exiles to

persecution should they return to Cuba (see also the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act definition, provided in Chapter 3). This label, like “exile”, is wrought with political sentiment – it implies that human rights and safety in Cuba are not ensured, while rights in the U.S., a wealthy anti-Communism, anti-Castro nation, are<sup>2</sup>. Many Cuban residents in Moultrie arrived to the U.S. after being granted asylum (refugee status) on the basis of religious persecution.

According to United States Census 2000 numbers, the largest contemporary settlements of Cubans in the U.S. are in Miami, Florida, and in New York City and surrounding suburbs, although smaller communities can be found throughout the country (see Figure 1). Many Cubans throughout this diaspora maintain ties with the island, or a version of the island that they remember fondly, by cooking, sharing old photographs and stories, planting gardens, creating social clubs, or building homes, businesses, and parks that echo remembered sights and sounds of a Cuba that once was their home place, the “motherland”, *la Patria*. The (re)creation of such pieces of a Cuban identity is often part of an attempt to remember the good and forget the bad of a homeland with a tumultuous political history and a record of questionable human rights. These (re)created Cuban landscapes play an important role for Cubans in maintaining a connection to the island they remember, and Cubans continue to influence the “American” landscape in interesting ways through this practice. *Landscape* is intended here to encompass not only an external, tangible environment or a geographical space, but also the memories and personal experiences that give meaning to that environment. Landscape in this sense is both culturally

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Illegal Immigrants: Cuban Migration to the U.S., 1959-1995,” echoes this sentiment and an accompanying shift in the politicization of Cuban migration (1996).

<sup>2</sup> This is a source of national pride for many residents and citizens of the U.S. – that the United States is a haven for law-abiding individuals in need of protection from other (often “lesser”) nation states, perhaps further undermining many of the policies enacted in Cuba since the revolution.

and historically situated and it represents people's physical and emotional interactions with their surroundings (Ingold 2000).

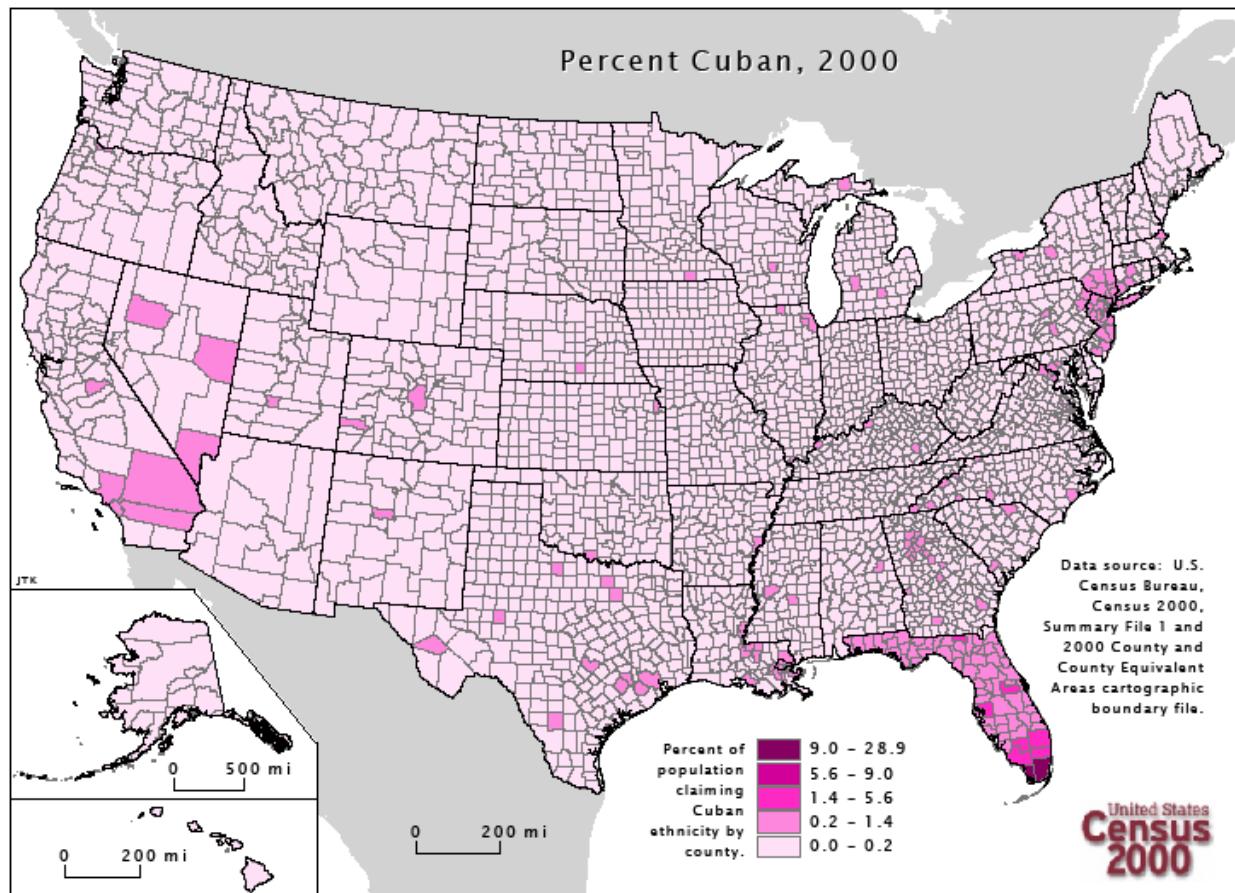


Figure 1. Percent of population claiming Cuban ethnicity by county. U.S. Census 2000.

The following sections of this chapter outline the context – on both sides of the stream of migration – of contemporary Cuban émigrés in the U.S. and further explain the methods used herein to gather information about migration experiences and resettlement from this diverse community.

## A Brief History of the Cuban Diaspora

Cuba's history of interaction with the United States is a long and complex relationship based on trade and cultural exchange, which dates back to the earliest days of settlement. Since Cuban independence, the U.S. has acted as a major (at times, *the* major) trade partner for Cuba. Cuba's economy has long been based on its agricultural exports, especially sugar. During the first two decades of the 1900s, Cuba enjoyed control over a sizeable percentage of the U.S. sugar market, and agreements between the two nations ensured that tariffs remained low (Pérez 1995). Taxes on goods imported from the U.S. also remained low, maintaining Cuba's dependence on its trade agreements with the U.S. The agreements focused primarily on agricultural exports, resulting in a low level of island economic diversification. This, coupled with a series of corrupt administrations, especially during World Wars I and II, contributed to the fragile "boom-bust cycle of the island export economy" (Pérez 1995:286). In 1952, Fulgencio Batista organized a successful coup and the military gained political control of Cuba (General Batista was the island's U.S.-friendly dictatorial leader for much of the 25 years before this revolution), spurring opposition from the margins. Within the year, support for the liberal Ortodoxo party, which presented an alternative to military dictatorship and economic stagnation, began to organize and grow in response to Batista's violent and undemocratic style of governance. In 1953, a young, relatively unknown Ortodoxo party member named Fidel Castro led an attack on a large military base in Santiago de Cuba, thus setting himself up for the position of leader of the opposition.

Not only did the U.S. and Cuba enjoy decades of successful economic interaction, but their cultural and political paths have crossed many times prior to the infamous revolution of 1959, one effect of which has been the American-inspired names bestowed on neighborhoods and businesses that today still attest to a once diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Cuba.

The hulking 1950s Fords and Chevys that still rumble down the streets of Cuba are further evidence of the cultural sharing that occurred prior to the success of the revolution. Batista's government also maintained strong connections with members of the North American mafia, who built lucrative hotels and casinos and used Cuba as a way station for drug transport from South America into the U.S. during the 1940s and '50s (Lee 1997). And before Batista, Cuba's national hero José Martí, while in exile at the end of the nineteenth century, plotted Cuba's fight for independence from a hotel in New York City. Prior to the revolution, an estimated 50,000 Cubans resided in the U.S. (Queralt 1984). Now the numbers hover around 1.5 million, making Cubans the third largest group of Latinos in the U.S. (Pew Hispanic Center 2004).

As a general rule, members of contemporary diasporas frequently maintain a connection to their country of origin through remittances, telecommunications, and increasingly accessible international travel (Gowricharn 2006). Contact with Cuba after the 1960s, however, became particularly difficult. The 1960s marked the start of a politically volatile period in Cuban history. Castro's revolution surprised supporters and dissenters alike as the government began nationalizing private companies and citizens' assets. Many of his supporters fully expected his new government to focus on promoting human welfare and the democratic election of officials. Instead, Castro took over plantations and factories, restricted Cubans' freedom to worship and speak freely, and generally ruled with a stubborn paternalism to maintain his position. Many on the island believed that the U.S. would not stand for Castro's new policies, not to mention a communist country so close to its shores. Those that left for the U.S. just after the revolution expected they would only be gone a short while.

But U.S. policy toward Cuba was ineffectual in overthrowing the new government. Between 1959 and the mid-1980s, Cuba underwent a series of drastic changes that would

eventually demonstrate the unsustainability of Castro's plans. After Castro's rise to power in 1959, sugar plantations and mills, along with oil refineries, banks, and railroads were nationalized, including those owned by foreign (American) investors (Robins 2003:123). The U.S. responded with a trade embargo that effectively ended a long history of trade and "diplomatic relations" between the U.S. government and Cuba. The revolutionary government's development strategy emphasized rural development through agricultural diversification and rapid industrialization. Income from sugar production remained a significant portion of the economy during the latter half of the twentieth century. Between 1949 and 1958, the sugar industry accounted for nearly 30 percent of Cuba's GDP, and though there are no official statistics for the revolutionary period, several indicators suggest that "at least through the early 1990s, the sugar sector continued to be the mainstay of the Cuban economy" (Pérez-López and Alvarez 2005:29).

During the 1980s the U.S.S.R. channeled at least 80% of all of Cuba's imports and exports, filling a void left by the U.S. embargo (Enriquez 2000). But by the late 1980s imports from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had fallen dramatically, driven in no small part by the collapse of the U.S.S.R. The Cuban economy was affected so brutally and so suddenly that it would have been impossible to modify the sugar production model in sufficient time to avoid a crisis. In 1990 there was a 25% deficit of petroleum imports from the former Soviet Union and by 1991 less than half of the agreed upon food imports reached the island (Enriquez 2000). The disintegration of that trade alliance left the newly created modern Cuban agricultural sector severely incapacitated, and almost overnight ruined the economy and brought on food shortages.

Urban Cubans were affected most significantly by the shortages of food, medical supplies, and fuel at this time, which came to be known as the Special Period. Rural Cubans,

many of whom continued to have access to land and have maintained a tradition of farming or gardening, were able to grow their own food during the worst of the shortages. The decline in petroleum and machine imports from the Soviet Union meant that extensive state-run Cuban farms were left without their most important inputs and that food produced in rural Cuba could not be shipped into the cities. A decline in production resulted in the inability to import food from other countries. Between 1990 and 1994 agricultural production dropped by more than 40%; much of what was grown was not harvested or delivered to consumers because of a shortage of gasoline and tractor parts (Sinclair and Thompson 2001). An increase in rural-urban migration, spurred by the relatively poor conditions in the countryside and the employment and education opportunities concentrated in cities, led to labor shortages on the farms and overcrowding in cities. By the early to mid 1990s the black market gained a substantial consumer base because farms simply could not supply enough food to meet demands (Murphy 1999).

Migration has figured prominently in Cuba's ecological and cultural history, but the social instability of the last 50 years spawned several sizeable waves of emigration from the island. Food security issues, shortages of medical and technological supplies on the island, and the perceived lack of opportunity, freedoms and rights prompted people to depart in search of something different. In addition to more widely publicized international migration, there has also been a surge in rural-urban migration within Cuba in the wake of the Revolution, most notably during the Special Period when agricultural inputs all but disappeared and rural communities were left without income and supplies (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas; Day, Dasgupta, Datta, & Nugent 1987).

The first large scale migration from Cuba after Castro's rise to power occurred soon after the 1959 revolution. This wave included primarily upper- and middle-class Cubans, who opposed the revolution or feared that their assets would come under state control. Most settled in and around Miami and New York City, drawing on networks of family, friends, and associates that existed prior to the revolution. 1960 also marked the beginning of Operation *Pedro Pan* (Peter Pan), which carried over 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children to Miami. According to Yvonne Conde (1999), Cuban parents so feared the indoctrination that Castro's government promised that they loaded their children onto planes headed to the U.S., toward family, friends, and strangers. More than half of the children that arrived were put in the care of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, and subsequently sent to live with foster families across the U.S. Many parents expected that they would soon join their children in the U.S., but few were able to do so. The Pedro Pan flights continued until 1962 when the Cuban Missile Crisis ended commercial flights between Cuba and the U.S.

The so-called "freedom flights" that began in 1965 were arranged in partnership by the U.S. and Cuban governments, mainly for the purpose of family reunification. These twice-a-day, organized, orderly departures gave middle and working class people a chance to leave the island for the U.S. Priority was given to those who had sent unaccompanied minors to the U.S. during Operation Pedro Pan. Cuba ended the freedom flights in 1974, perhaps because the government had rid the island of political opponents or because too many professionals had fled, by which time 245,805 Cubans had arrived in the U.S. (Pérez 1995; Esteve 1984).

The Mariel boatlift in 1980 was an attempt by Castro to prevent Cuba from internal chaos by allowing Cubans to seek asylum and leave from Cuban ports. In April 1980, Cuban radio began broadcasting news that the Cuban government was opening the doors of the Peruvian



embassy in Havana to those who wished to seek asylum. Shortly thereafter, the government also opened the port of Mariel for anyone that wished to leave, provided they had a permit to do so; permits were granted to persons at the discretion of the Cuban government. Boats of all shapes and sizes began sailing from South Florida, and by October, they had carried nearly 125,000 people from the port of Mariel in Cuba to Miami and Key West with much assistance from the U.S. coast guard. Once refugees arrived, they were processed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and filtered through resettlement camps or INS detention centers. This mass exodus is often considered to have been Castro's attempt to rid Cuba of many of its so-called degenerates, including political dissenters, homosexuals, and criminals. But only about 2% of those arriving in South Florida were determined by the U.S. to have a serious criminal history and, on that basis, were not granted citizenship. The boatlift ended when the U.S. and Cuban governments tired of dealing with overloaded boats and the camps that had built up at Mariel and they mutually agreed to close their ports (Grenier & Pérez 2003).

Even when the ports closed, people continued to take to the sea in an effort to leave Cuba. "Boat people" are those who, for lack of other options, fashion make-shift rafts from scraps of wood and tires on which to attempt the trip from Cuba to Florida. The infamous "wet foot/dry foot policy" of the Clinton era was enacted in response to a sharp increase in rafters from Cuba in the 1990s. This policy constituted an agreement between the U.S. and Castro that would allow the Cuban government to arrest and repatriate only those rafters intercepted at sea; those who made it to dry land were allowed to remain in the U.S. Recent years have also seen an increase in the number of Cubans attempting to cross into the U.S. over the Mexican border. While they brave the same elements as other migrants on this trek, once they are in the U.S., they have legal status, a "luxury" not enjoyed by their fellow travelers.

Other contemporary paths to the U.S. are along more legible, orderly channels. One is the U.S. government-sponsored Diversity Visa Lottery, which randomly grants 55,000 qualified “natives” entry to the U.S. from a limited number of countries each year. The Cuban Family Reunification Parole program is another U.S.-based program, which allows Cuban American U.S. citizens to sponsor a family member in Cuba and apply for their “lawful permanent resident status”, or a green card. This is a long and expensive process, often involving legal fees, extensive telephone communication, and long periods of waiting. Those who are lucky enough to be granted parole from the U.S. Interests Section in Havana are then subject to U.S.-based administrative processing, which can further delay the process, often for months more. The program granting Family-Based Immigrant Visas works in a similar fashion. The Cuban Lottery (Special Program for Cuban Migration, known in Cuba as *el sorteo* – the drawing – or *el bombo* – the lottery) was intended to allow Cubans entry to the U.S. in accordance with the U.S.-Cuba Migration Accords of 1994<sup>3</sup>. That is, to allow Cubans to apply for legal status in the U.S. when they might not otherwise qualify for refugee status or a family-based visa. This program has not accepted applications since 1998.

Of course, Cubans reside the world over, and many prefer to avoid the political “extremes” of Havana and Miami in favor of places that afford more freedom and anonymity. In Spain, for instance, is a sizeable Cuban exile community, many of whom are successful artists and intellectuals, often incorporating elements of the exile experience in their work (Ojito 2007). Some of these exiles fled to Spain after the revolution intending it as a way station before completing their journey to the U.S. The relationship between Spain and Cuba is strained by

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<sup>3</sup> In this accord, the U.S. agreed to process a minimum of 20,000 Cuban migrants annually and to intercept any Cubans found at sea and return them to the island if they cannot demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution upon return to Cuba. In turn, Cuba agreed to discourage unsafe and irregular departures from its ports (U.S. Department of State).

their colonial past, but Spanish investors now fund projects in Cuba, and since the fall of the U.S.S.R. Spain is quickly becoming one of the leading suppliers of goods to Cuba. San Juan, Puerto Rico is home to what José A. Cobas and Jorge Duany (1997) call a “middleman group” of professional Cubans that migrated to the island after the revolution at the behest of then governor Luis Muñoz Marín. Puerto Rico was appealing to Cubans because of its proximity, the shared language, and its close ties to the U.S., which were considered by many to be strong enough to prevent Puerto Rico from succumbing to a socialist revolution.

Since the revolution, thousands of Cubans have left the island for the U.S. and their chances for return remain uncertain. The island is a mere 90 miles from the U.S., but worlds away from the Cuba that many immigrants remember as home. Cubans, along with other immigrant and exiled groups, have developed coping mechanisms for living abroad that include the establishment of ethnic enclaves, volunteer associations, and religious groups that sustain their transmigrant status (Brettell 2003). Transmigrant social networks may also provide valuable channels for the exchange of knowledge, cultural memory, and material goods, which are likely to further contribute to the coping process. In spite of U.S.-Cuba travel restrictions and a multitude of negative experiences, including imprisonment and severe food shortages on the island, many Cubans in the U.S. (re)create select elements of their homeland. These elements comprise a landscape that often represents an idealized, nostalgic Cubanness, or *Cubanidad*, worthy of national pride that takes shape in a unique context of U.S. histories and cultures.

## Description of the Research Sites

“Welcome to Moultrie, Georgia, ‘The City of Southern Living’.”

(Moultrie-Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce)

“Miami: The Gateway to Latin America” (The City of Miami).

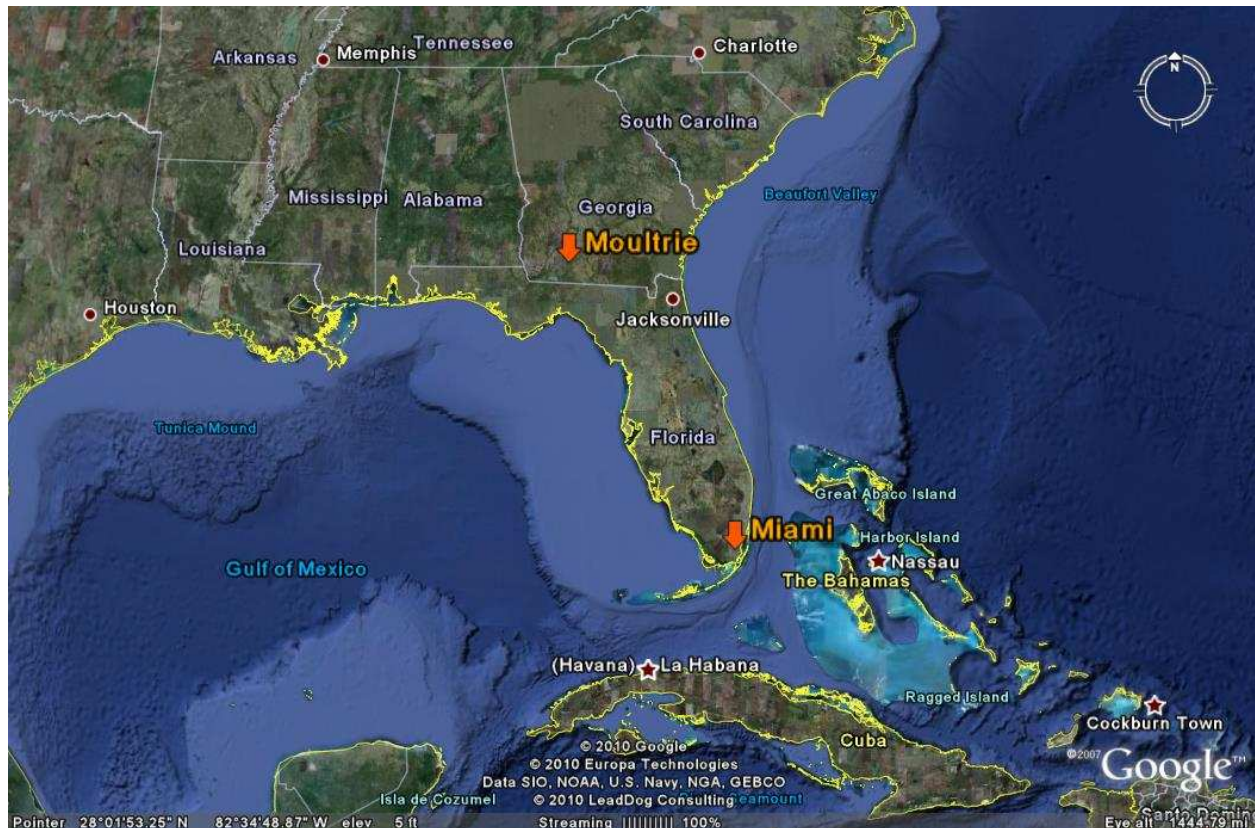


Figure 2. Map of Southeast United States indicating location of Moultrie, Georgia, and Miami, Florida. Google Earth.

Moultrie, incorporated as a city in 1859, is the county seat of rural Colquitt County, whose economy is based primarily on its strong agricultural industry. Many of Moultrie’s 15,000 residents work at Sanderson Farms poultry processing plant or the National Beef processing plant, or at Riverside Manufacturing Company, a uniform factory. Still others work in the fields helping farmers grow and harvest cotton and a variety of fresh produce. Since 1978,

Moultrie has been host to the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition, which highlights the town's "unique emphasis on agriculture and innovation" (Moultrie-Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce). In addition to the region's emphasis on its agricultural industry, Moultrie has a thriving service industry, a hospital, several public schools, Moultrie Technical College, a jail, and a small downtown business district.



Figure 3. City Hall, Moultrie, Georgia. Photograph by author.

According to its members, the Cuban community in Moultrie consists of about 200 families, the first of whom settled in the area 20 years ago. The total population count is continually shifting as people move into and out of the city, following employment opportunities

or family around the country<sup>4</sup>. Many members of the Cuban community initially find low-skill work in Moultrie's fields and factories. Because of its economy, Moultrie hosts hundreds of migrant workers each season. Workers come primarily from Mexico and Guatemala to fill a range of low-skill positions, though these groups often find themselves at a decided disadvantage compared to Cubans in terms of legal status and education. More established disadvantaged segments of the population, most notably African Americans, previously held many of these positions. At times, inter-ethnic tensions run high.

Within the last decade, Cuban-run businesses have sprung up in town and several Cuban families have shifted from renting to owning their own homes with the assistance of University of Georgia Cooperative Extension workers, who have a strong presence in the county. Agents work to improve both the agricultural well-being of Colquitt County and to assist marginalized members of the community through programs that cover everything from healthcare and nutrition to mortgage lending. Because migrant workers comprise a substantial portion of the work force in Moultrie and surrounding communities, much of the assistance Cooperative Extension provides is in Spanish, and tailored to suit the needs of this population.

Moultrie's Cuban community represents an interesting subgroup of exiles. Nearly all are practicing Jehovah's Witnesses. Castro's history of prohibiting the public practice of religion and the fact that proselytizing is a central tenet of Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs, has meant that many have spent time in Cuban prisons before seeking asylum in the U.S. The Hall is the center of cultural activity for most Cubans in Moultrie, and Cuban services are offered several times a week, supplemented by bible study in members' homes. Separate services are performed for the Hall's Mexican and "American" members. The relatively small size of the community,

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, a primary informant's mother just received permission to move to the United States after years of waiting, piles of paperwork, and hefty legal fees.

combined with the rules of Jehovah's Witnesses and a recognized lack of public spaces to gather in has meant that, aside from Hall meetings, baby showers are a primary reason for Cubans to come together to celebrate. Drinking and birthday celebrations are frowned upon for Jehovah's Witnesses, and other ethnic groups in Moultrie have generally not been receptive to including Cubans in informal community sporting events such as soccer. Additionally, very few members of the Cuban community speak English well, so their access to and interaction with the rest of the residents is quite limited.

Miami, Florida, and Miami-Dade County as a whole, is notably more urban than Moultrie and has a long-standing, politically powerful Cuban population numbering nearly 800,000 (U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008). Many members of Miami's Cuban community arrived in Miami shortly after the Cuban Revolution in the early 1960s; the bulk of this wave of migration consisted of those upper-middle class, highly educated Cubans that had assets to lose, and today Miami Cubans represent a considerable economic force in South Florida. But it is a varied group that continues to grow and change with each subsequent wave of migration from the island; recent emigrants to Miami often enter the region under relatively unstable circumstances, which has led to conflicts with previously established emigrants. Miami is often the first U.S. city to which Cubans arrive, though dissatisfaction with the fast pace and high cost of living in Miami is increasingly triggering subsequent migration to other locations.

The history of Miami is closely tied to Cuba and Cuban immigrants and exiles. And the built environment of the city reflects this. *La Ermita de la Virgen de la Caridad de El Cobre* (the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity from El Cobre, Cuba; the patron Saint of Cuba) is a particularly striking example. It was founded in 1967 and consecrated in 1973 to serve as a place of worship for the growing Cuban émigré community. The shrine holds a replica of la Virgen

that was originally housed in a Havana chapel and a vessel containing soil from each of the six original Cuban provinces and water from the Florida straits. “La Virgen de la Caridad is the most profound symbol of the Cuban nation. The British have their queen, the Cubans have la Caridad. Even before Jamestown, El Cobre kept this gracious statue” (Auxiliary Bishop Felipe de Jesús Estévez of Miami, a member of Padre Felix Varela Council 7420 in Hialeah, *in* Ruíz n.d.). The exterior wall of the shrine reflects this sentiment: “*Mulier, ecce filius tuus – filius, ecce mater tua*” (Woman, behold your son – son, behold your mother). Murals within the shrine and on surrounding buildings depict scenes of historical and folkloric importance for Cubans. And perhaps most significant is the sprawling manicured lawn that touches the sea and draws one’s gaze out over the water toward Cuba. This has become a popular place for the bereaved to throw the ashes of their loved ones back towards Cuba or to sit and remember.





Figure 4. *La Ermita*. Miami, Florida. Photograph by author.

Little Havana remains the cultural center of Cuban Miami. Each month, the neighborhood is host to *Viernes Cultural*, or Cultural Friday, an evening event that combines Cuban music, food, crafts, fine art, and cigars. The gathering is free of charge, and it attracts Cubans from all over the city. The storefronts in Little Havana suggest the area's Cuban heritage as well. *Guayaberas* (the ubiquitous linen dress shirt popular among Cuban men), social clubs, restaurants and cafeterias, *cafecito* stands, and cigar shops are among the offerings on Calle Ocho, the main thoroughfare in Little Havana. Most signage is in Spanish, and proprietors rarely speak English to customers. Long-time Cuban Miami residents have tended to move away from Little Havana and into more up-scale surrounding neighborhoods in Coconut Grove or even as far as suburbs in Hialeah and Kendall, but the shops, restaurants and cultural events that take place in Little Havana always bring them back.

### Research Methodology

The data presented herein were collected between 2006 and 2009 during several periods of fieldwork in both research locations. To address the research questions, use of an integrated set of ethnographic methods was considered most appropriate. This collection of methods is comprised of participant observation, semi-structured interviews of key informants, life history collection, and cognitive mapping. Scholars addressing similar issues of transnationalism and place-making have used various versions of this set of methods to gather first-person narrative accounts that illustrate key elements of people's lived experience (e.g. Horst 2007; Nazarea 1998, 2005; Glick Schiller 2003; Goldman 2003; Basso 1996). The primary means of data collection was semi-structured interviewing. The semi-structured interview "combines the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the

survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data at the factor level” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte 1999:149). This technique is aimed at uncovering immigrants’ stories of migration and resettlement; the interviews emphasized questions about the decision to leave Cuba, the circumstances of arrival, the maintenance of connections with people still on the island, and the choice to uphold particular elements of Cubanidad in the U.S. (along with questions about what that looks like). Interviews were tape-recorded whenever possible. An overwhelming majority of respondents in Moultrie elected to give the interview in Spanish, while English was most often the language of choice in Miami. Interviews with local leaders and social aid workers, and attendance at community functions and meetings contribute to the study as well.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, more informal guided tours of various landscapes often elicited more specific place-based information (e.g. gardens and yards, restaurants and kitchens, public and community spaces). Indeed, it is well-documented that sensory stimuli such as the smells of familiar foods or the feel of earth and plants often evoke memories – memories that may not surface in the neutral, detached space created by more formal interviewing (e.g. Nazarea 2005, Sutton 2001, Seremetakis 1996). Participants often shared recipes or meals, or offered to provide a tour of their home, yard, or business by way of explaining how they experience Cubanidad in the U.S.

Several key informants were also asked to share longer stories of important events in their life; inevitably, these life histories provided context for more pointed narratives about migration and resettlement. Life history elicitation is considered a strong method for accessing the narrator’s own perspective on events that are meaningful and important in order to capture emergent categories of analysis (Atkinson 1998; Peacock & Holland 1993). Indeed, this kind of

interview serves to highlight those aspects of the narrator's life deemed important not by the researcher, but by the narrator herself with minimal prompting or interference from the interviewer<sup>5</sup>. Life histories are not generalizable narratives, but they provide a voice that is vital to the research.

Cognitive mapping, a method that is particularly suited to eliciting information from an emic perspective (see, for instance, Nazarea 1995, 2005), was included in the research but was remarkably ill-received by interviewees. Here, cognitive mapping involved inviting informants to sketch a place of importance to them in Cuba and in the U.S.; it was intended as another technique to gather information about landscapes by way of drawing and discussing the differences and similarities in Cuban landscapes here and on the island. Only a very small portion of respondents was brave enough to demonstrate their artistic abilities for the sake of the research. Others shrugged off the request in favor of continuing with the interview or sharing food or some other piece of memorabilia. A discussion of the limited results is included in Chapter 5.

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling that was then expanded by snowball sampling. This method is one often used among difficult-to-find populations, such as immigrants or otherwise marginalized groups, and it proved useful in both research sites (Bernard 2002, Pedraza-Bailey 1990). In Moultrie, where social networks are difficult to penetrate and the population is relatively small and guarded, having a trusted friend vouch for the researcher's good intentions was vital to gaining access to members of the Cuban community. In Miami, members of an initial convenience sample contributed contact information for other

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<sup>5</sup> Though, of course, the interaction of interviewer and interviewee necessarily shapes the nature and the content of the life history to some degree, and it is important to recognize this bias in the analysis of such narratives (Crapanzano 1984).

respondents that would be willing to participate. Rigorous, statistically meaningful sampling was not possible (nor particularly desirable) due to the shifting populations in both research sites and because stories and personal experiences were more important to addressing the research questions than was precise quantitative or statistical information. Despite this relatively informal sampling method, the research includes interviews with key informants representing a range of demographic variables and experiences and thus should be considered a valid representation of events (Bernard 2002). No sampling method can account for all the variability within a population, and the results of this work should not be taken to mean that all Cuban émigrés in the U.S. or elsewhere have had the same experiences as those included here. Rather, this work provides a glimpse into the lives of certain members of this community and, in so doing, contributes a new perspective to the study of migration and resettlement in our contemporary sociopolitical climate. A list of key research participants at each site is included in the Appendix.

Print-based data was gathered to augment and, in some cases, corroborate the narratives collected from respondents. The University of Miami's Cuban Heritage Collection is host to thousands of periodicals, personal journals, and published volumes that document the stories of countless Cuban émigrés, and the librarians graciously allowed me access to these resources. *El Nuevo Herald* and the *Moultrie Observer* have been particularly useful as well, as have other local publications (fliers, newsletters, etc.) and online sources that cater to the Cuban community in the U.S., as they provided timely information about locally significant activities. Online sources are particularly noteworthy because they often enable readers around the world to comment or otherwise contribute and create a shared space (Wittel 2000). Additionally, Cuban émigré perspectives included in literature, film, and art are valuable to consider in light of the

research questions. These are used in addition to the varied perspectives gathered in person from interviews and observations.

Processing and analyzing this information together, in the context of historical and political events, is key to addressing the research questions. Text analysis begins with the relatively simple task of reading through the material and noting key phrases or ideas that stand apart. Searching and coding (mentally, manually, or electronically) data is, of course, a necessary precursor to uncovering themes and their interrelationships, and a number of themes surfaced during the analysis of transcribed interviews and data from other sources collected for this project. Gery and Bernard (2003) define “theme” loosely as the fundamental concept/s a researcher is trying to describe. Themes may come from the data itself or from theoretical ideas about the phenomenon in question; in this case, a set of broad themes based on theory and hypotheses about the relationship between landscapes and migration was tested and amended based on the data collected. Participants’ voices factor heavily in this process; their stories and experiences follow.

### Organization of the Dissertation

This work seeks to document and address the narratives of Cubans in the diaspora and, in so doing, to contribute to a more fluid scholarly interpretation of transnationality. By infusing nostalgia, memory, and a sense of place into their lived landscapes, members of the Cuban diaspora in the U.S. have creatively circumvented the laws that minimize their ability to interact with the homeland. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical basis for the questions to be addressed herein. I have drawn from literature on transnationalism and migration, diaspora studies, feminist anthropology, cultural geography, landscape theory, place-based memory, the

anthropology of food and eating, and environmental anthropology. Fusing work from these fields into something that elucidates the complex experience that results from migration, especially when return is difficult or impossible. Nostalgia factors heavily in people's rationale for (re)creating a sense of place, and it is this (re)creation that becomes a kind of landscape, linking important places of the past and present.

Chapter 3 begins with an examination of the reasons for migration from Cuba. Dozens of scholars have documented the primary waves of migration from Cuba to the U.S., Canada, and Europe; fewer have taken the trouble to gather personal stories about this experience. This section combines scholarly literature on the history of migration from Cuba with stories of migration from the perspective of people that have undertaken this journey themselves. Their experiences and the circumstances under which they chose (or did not choose) to leave the island play a pivotal role in how they remember Cuba and express elements of a Cuban identity. The second part of this chapter begins to consider the ways resettlement in the U.S. has contributed to the creation of various kinds of landscapes that connect Cuba, both "real" and "imagined" versions, with everyday life in Moultrie and Miami.

The next two chapters focus on the particular elements of Cuban landscapes that appear, both literally and figuratively, in Miami and Moultrie. The Cuban influence on Miami is, not surprisingly, much more visible than in Moultrie, but one encounters a sense of nostalgia at both sites. For instance, while Miami boasts Domino Park, the famous Versailles Restaurant and Bakery, and statues and names borrowed from Cuban historical figures, Moultrie quietly shares a *cafecito* or *puerco asado* and some old photographs. Members of the Cuban community in both places keep apprised of Cuban political events, frequently talk with family and friends who remain in Cuba, and, at times, visit with those faraway family members. These varied

connective elements comprise transnational landscapes that combine a sense of what was and what is – a sense of shared cultural or national identity across the diaspora.

The final chapter is an analysis of these landscapes; in spite of travel restrictions, both government- and self-imposed, members of the Cuban diaspora do in fact exhibit transnationalism in their (re)creation of familiar Cuban elements while living off the island. Other scholarly work highlighting theories of transnationalism, nostalgia, and sense of place link the data analyzed here with the broader anthropological literature. This chapter also includes a summary of the findings of this study and describes the utility of a theory of transnational landscapes. Place-based studies have contributed greatly to research on migration, and a theory of transnational landscapes fits neatly into this rubric. By accounting for both the physical and cultural or emotional environments that migrants experience, transnational landscapes can help us better understand the complex process of migration and resettlement.



## CHAPTER 2

### CREATING TRANSNATIONAL LANDSCAPES: A COLLECTION OF THEORIES

“Immigrants are defined by their mobility. They are always and forever distinguishable from those born in the host country. On a day-to-day basis they negotiate ways around experiences and memories of homeland and experiences and realities in the host country.” (Mariastella Pulvirenti 2002:219)

#### Introduction

To most thoroughly address the research questions, it is important to situate this project within a collection of theoretical conceptions of migration and resettlement, especially those that lend credence to notions of landscape, place, and transnationality. The primary research questions ask: In what ways are landscapes (re)created and given meaning in the Cuban diaspora? and How does the context of migration or exile affect the (re)creation of landscapes? Landscape and place, informed by memory and nostalgia, are symbolic and physical formations that are made in the context of increasingly transnational networks of people and ideas. The following subsections of this chapter outline a set of foundational and contemporary theories that illuminate this process.

## Transnationalism and the Creation of Diaspora

Anthropological literature that deals with contemporary migration patterns evolved out of the need to better understand the forces influencing the migration experience as people began to move about the globe more swiftly than ever before. Immigration scholars have long been interested in the ways that migrants adjust to a new space and whether they maintain connections with people or institutions in the home country (Portes et al. 1999; Portes 1997; Lee 1966; Park 1928). A trend toward recognizing this link, between migrants and their descendents abroad and the homeland, has spawned several waves of research on transnational migration. The geographical proximity of homeland and host land has become less important to the migration experience in general because of increasingly fast, accessible, and global connections.

Transnationalism is a valuable theoretical perspective for explaining contemporary outcomes of migration in the context of globalization (Glick-Schiller & Fouron 2001; Kearney 1995; Appadurai 1990). According to Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo, and Patricia Landolt, “transnationalism involves individuals, their networks of social relations, their communities, and broader institutionalized structures such as local and national governments” (1999:220). Rather than viewing nations as bounded, fixed entities, transnationalism instead considers the increasing flexibility of ‘nationhood’; national borders are no longer indicative of a homogenous people (Smith & Guarnizo 1998). Instead they are figurative lines to be crossed in an effort to, say, earn more income or gain a new experience. Border crossing does not rule out returning home or traveling on to another place; in fact, transnationalism facilitates this back and forth movement of people and ideas through porous boundaries. Indeed, borders are crossed even in everyday activities like watching television or consuming “ethnic” foods. The vast array of literature on transnationalism is one indication “that the nation-state container view of society does not

capture, adequately or automatically, the complex interconnectedness of contemporary reality” (Levitt & Glick-Schiller 2004:6). As testament to the popularity of this theory, there is an entire interdisciplinary academic journal devoted to the transnationalism, initiated in 1992 (*Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*).

Thus, transnationalism is often presented as an alternative to strictly bounded connections to a nation-state, or “methodological nationalism” which has categorized much of the early research on migration in the social sciences (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2003). Methodological nationalism, it is argued, “is the naturalization of the nation-state by the social sciences. Scholars who share this intellectual orientation assume that countries are the natural units for comparative studies, equate society with the nation-state, and conflate national interests with the purposes of social science” (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2003:576). By focusing instead on the “interconnected realm of cross-border relationships”, social scientists can better understand the processes of migration and integration as they interact with the structure of the nation-state (and their own role in explaining these processes) (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2003:586). Smith and Guarnizo (1998) propose a theory of transnationalism from below, which comes from the destabilizing effects of local resistances like the informal economy or grassroots activism. Portes (1997) notes that immigration research has a history of focusing on individual cases. He argues that the field would benefit now from distilling this work into a broader theory of migration, a perspective generated from the idea that contemporary migrants are becoming increasingly, and nearly uniformly, transnational (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Blanc 1995).

The concept of transnationalism has not been without its critics. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick-Schiller (2003) note that transnationalism itself has proven problematic in the attempt to divorce migration research from the nation-state. To some extent, the term, *transnational*,

risks recreating methodological nationalism with its focus on ‘othering’ those that do not fit the “nationalist image of normal life” (a.k.a. immigrants from other nation-states) (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2003:599). Wimmer and Glick-Schiller advise that scholars be wary of the potential to revert to the nation-state as the focus of migration studies, especially as more attention is being paid to how transnational processes may be shaped by the nation-state. One way to do this is to use networks of individuals as the foci of migration research. This change would de-center the nation-state and focus instead on broader political relationships between migrants and non-migrants.

Bearing these critiques in mind, transnationalism continues to be a useful paradigm for migration research, demonstrating that traits largely shared by members of a nation are not limited by the geopolitical boundaries of their home nation-state. According to Glick-Schiller, transnationalism “is fully developed only when people establish transnational relationships and interact with persons other than kin, but kin ties are often the foundation for myriad types of non-kin social relationships” (Glick-Schiller 2003:105). Transnationalism in its many forms may in fact be a mechanism that helps to ameliorate the marginalization that immigrants often experience upon moving to a new place (Nagel 2002). The environment facing new immigrants is often unfamiliar and inhospitable, forcing them to either make significant adjustments to their lives or return to their countries of origin. The transnational framework highlights the simultaneity of change and continuity, and of rootedness and mobility that immigrants encounter, which, paradoxically, may have the effect of reducing the influence of the host nation-state on a given individual (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992). Social capital is also often conferred by membership in transnational networks (Palloni et al. 2001; Vertovec 1997). One technique that immigrants’ senior family members have developed is to travel back and forth across the globe

to care for grandchildren and help in the businesses of their children living abroad (Treas & Mazumdar 2004). In effect, these older adults who are transient or seasonal migrants serve as a link between their children living abroad and the home country, while also helping to ensure their children's success abroad by raising both their material and social capital.

Transnationalism in these terms can thus be understood as an economically rational practice, one that is undertaken because it best suits the needs of immigrants (Carruthers 2001). In other contexts, transnationality also evokes nostalgia and political capital; this is especially evident among Cuban immigrants, who have a substantial political voice in the U.S. due in part to the relatively warm reception they received for fleeing communism (Grenier & Pérez 2003).

Immigrants and non-immigrants alike are embedded in, and confronted with, a global system and their decisions, be they political, economic, or sociocultural, are informed by their position in it (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993). Economic models of migration focus on this global interconnectedness whereby core and periphery societies are linked (Appadurai 1996; Mahler 2000). Indeed, one of Marx's central tenets that links successful capitalism to the collapse of geographical space over time reflects this tendency<sup>6</sup>. Immigrants have a hand in shaping transnational interactions through their economic and political activities (Smart 2003; Zimmer and Aldrich 1987). Remittances often comprise a significant proportion of the money earned by immigrants abroad, and by sending their earnings home to family members or contributing to political interests, immigrants create a financial connection between home and host countries. This connection has very real consequences for the sending and receiving

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<sup>6</sup> While capital [...] must strive to tear down every barrier [...] to exchange and conquer the whole earth for its markets, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time." – Marx 1857: 538-539.

societies involved in labor migration (Hatton and Williamson 1998) and in family-based chain migration (Sana and Massey 2005).

Kearney and Beserra (2004) approach this issue by discussing the impact economic class has on immigrants. Transnational social networks are often at the heart of immigrant “enclaves” that tend to involve economic interactions between people of the same cultural or ethnic background. Enclaves represent a collective immigrant or ethnic identity in opposition to a mainstream society that offers little in the way of social or economic support. Not only are enclaves considered sources of economic resources, but various authors (e.g. Mahler 1995; Nagel 2002) note that they may provide a forum of sorts for immigrants to voice collective political concerns as well. Miami is often used as a case study to discuss the phenomenon of urban ethnic enclaves (Cobas & Duany 1997; Logan, Alba, & McNulty 1994; Portes 1987). “Groups such as Cubans in Miami have adapted [...] through an “ethnic enclave,” that is, a concentration of interrelated businesses that occupy a distinct territory and serve primarily the in-group (Light et al. 1994; Portes and Bach 1985)” (Cobas & Duany 1997:2). Others note that there are important limits to the strength of the enclave, notably that immigrant workers who are successful wage earners tend to integrate into the mainstream prior to immigrant entrepreneurs (Sanders & Nee 1987).

Social networks, in addition to their function as social support mechanisms, can also act to discourage interaction with those outside of the network. This has significant consequences for immigrant social and political integration, employment opportunity, language acquisition, and even personal safety and mental well-being. Cultural and phenotypic traits, such as language or skin color, may act as markers signifying difference or otherness. This can result in “exclusionary nationalism” wherein a minority culture (i.e. an immigrant or her community) is

considered a threat to the nation-state and therefore relegated to the margins (Castles & Miller 2003). Xenophobia and racial discrimination can contribute to the instability of immigrant communities, which can potentially strengthen ties to the homeland and thus perpetuate a cycle of exclusion.

Transnationalism has been proposed as a mechanism to explain the flow of people between the Hispanic Caribbean and various migration destinations, primarily the U.S., as a process embedded in the increasingly globalized, capitalist world economy (Duany 2005). Since the 1950s, migration within and from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic has increased dramatically due to the intersection of a range of political and economic forces that have been tempered by transnational social networks. Migration is certainly not a new phenomenon for the Caribbean, however, since there remains some debate about whether the Caribbean can be considered to have a distinct cultural tradition, numerous scholars recognize the region's shared historical circumstances, including voluntary and involuntary migration, colonialism, plantation economies, and sociocultural patterns (e.g. Goldman 2003; Slocum and Thomas 2003).

Nations with a colonial history, for instance, have been affected by movements of large numbers of people for hundreds of years (Basch et al. 1994). This is particularly apparent in the Caribbean, which has been a locus of world trade for centuries, and scholars have attempted to understand the workings of migration here from a variety of social and political economic perspectives (e.g. Byron and Condon 1996; Gmelch 1992; Itzigshon, Giorguli, and Vazquez 2005; McHugh, Miyares, and Skop 1997; Pessar 1997; Stepick and Swartz 1998; Waterston 2005). Migration in this region has reconfigured national, ethnic, and racial identities so as to create communities that are geographically independent of the nation-state.

Jorge Duany's (2005) middle-ground version of transnationalism portrays a set of dense social fields that reach beyond national borders through the circulation of people, ideas, practices, goods, money, and information. Duany is among the very few contemporary scholars to consider how the Cuban diaspora, with its idiosyncrasies and limited access, also exemplifies transnationalism (2009). He is critical of the tendency to isolate Cuba from the global context, and argues that "the Cuban diaspora constitutes a special case (though not unique) of transnationalism" (Duany 2009:3) because its members practice all the same features of a transnational lifestyle that other immigrants do, albeit sometimes with more constraints. Indeed, the persistence and perseverance that characterize the economic and social connections between people in Cuba and the U.S. is testament to the strength of transnational bonds.

Transnationalism is by no means a uniform state; because it is closely linked to the processes of global capitalism, differences in class, race, and gender status cause people to experience transnationalism differently (Ho 1999; Sana and Massey 2005). A striking example of transnationalism is the Puerto Rican term "*el vaivén*" (or, "*va y ven*" – back and forth) that describes the fluctuation of people between the island and the mainland. The sense of nationhood is fluid – a "postcolonial colony" that is not restricted to a geographical place but formed by cultural nationalism shared throughout the diaspora (Duany 2002). Glick-Schiller also provides a useful distinction between the *transmigrant* and *long-distance nationalism*: the transmigrant is simultaneously embedded in the political and social landscapes of two distinct nation-states, while long-distance nationalism involves an ideological and nostalgic interaction with the homeland that informs migrants' identity and political actions (Glick-Schiller 2003).

The concept of the "social field," or the broader context of migration from both ends of the process, promotes a holistic approach to migration research (Hendricks 1974). Migration



studies continue to play a large role in the development of Caribbean anthropology and research regularly occurs in both the sending and receiving societies (e.g. Cobas and Duany 1997). The bulk of this work focuses on urban settings despite the fact that many migrants (international and intranational) are originally from rural areas. Following this holistic approach, *diaspora* has come to encompass a far-reaching community of people claiming common ancestry or a common homeland.

Diaspora is a term often used, or perhaps even overused, of late in cultural studies and the social sciences. In its original construction, diaspora was intended to describe traumatic, forceful exile and dispersal, like that experienced by Jews from the holy land (Vertovec 1997; Cohen 1997). Now, however, it is a concept used more generally to describe a population that is considered deterritorialized or displaced from an original home land, undoing the notion that “a people” correspond to a nation-state. This latter usage makes it is a useful companion theory to transnationalism – diaspora evokes border zones, interstices, and an ‘in-between-ness’ that reference not nation-states, but a “third time-space” or an imagined homeland (Lavie & Swedenburg 1996; Rushdie 1991). Steven Vertovec (1997) outlines the three primary meanings of diaspora in contemporary usage: diaspora as social form; as type of consciousness; and as mode of cultural production. The most common of these, and the primary usage intended herein, is diaspora as social form. This interpretation of the term entails dispersal and the dream of return, along with the active creation and maintenance of a collective identity that is “sustained by reference to an ‘ethnic myth’ of common origin, historical experience, and some kind of tie to a geographic place” (Vertovec 1997:3).

In light of this shift to a broader definition and application of *diaspora*, some scholars have argued the need for a stricter, more limited definition and use of the term to avoid further

dilution of the terms original meaning (e.g. Cohen 1997). Others have embraced the new, wider usage of 'diaspora' while encouraging scholars to move beyond the "solar system model" of diaspora, which implies that homeland and diaspora exist as a sun and its dependent satellite (Weingrod & Levy 2006). Rather than conceive of diaspora in this simplistic manner, a number of scholars suggest re-thinking this relationship in a way that recognizes the fluidity and messiness of homeland-diaspora relations and moves away from conceptions of this relationship as one that can be described as a simple center-periphery interaction (Weingold and Levy 2006; Levy 2005; Clifford 1997). In fact, many diaspora communities exhibit extraordinary effects on the homeland, rather than the other way around. Remittances to Dominican Republic, for instance, now comprise over 10% of the country's gross national product (World Bank) and goods and ideas sent to the homeland can have an extraordinary impact (e.g. Levitt 2003). On the other hand, John Armstrong (1976) "uses the term "mobilized diasporas" to refer to groups that enjoy material and cultural advantages when compared to other members of the society. Mobilized diasporas frequently adapt to the receiving society by playing the role of middleman group" (cited in Cobas & Duany 1997:2).

The boundaries of a single nation-state, both literal and figurative, thus have little place in the realm of the transnational; to make matters more confusing, assimilation and transnationality are "neither incompatible nor binary opposites" (Levitt & Glick-Schiller 2004). Rather than conceptualize transnationality and diaspora as global economic forces, these fuzzier perspectives remind scholars to recognize the role of human agency in (re)creating culture across different spaces (Ong 1999). This condition is reminiscent of Vertovec's "diaspora as a type of consciousness", wherein a rather paradoxical set of experiences with the homeland determine one's sense of identity (Vertovec 1997). This consciousness is simultaneously informed by

negative exclusionary experiences, positive experiences of a shared cultural heritage, and a desire to connect oneself with others. Thomas Tweed echoes this notion of diaspora in his discussion of “diasporic nationalism” and an accompanying sense of “geopieté, or an attachment to the natal landscape” that, for Cuban Americans, reflects the “utopia of memory and desire, not to the dystopia of the contemporary socialist state” (Tweed 1999: 132).

The process of deterritorialization (and subsequent reterritorialization of some cultural traditions (e.g. Brown 2003)) that creates diaspora communities may also affect political perspectives. Appadurai (1990) suggests that diaspora communities may develop an overly critical perspective on politics in the home country. This may reflect, in part, the circumstances under which people leave the homeland. Many Cubans in the U.S., for example, have an uncompromising conservative approach to the Cuban island politics that have resulted in the dispersal of Cubans into an ever-growing diaspora. Some are very outspoken, others outright refuse to discuss politics. Support for fellow members of the diaspora is strong, and criticism of the island’s leaders and their policies is quite common. Similar patterns of “identification with the nation but not its government” emerge from other groups whose members describe themselves as refugees or exiles (Kunz 1981:43).

### Social and Environmental Landscapes

Landscapes exist as collections of *places*, created through sensory experiences and characterized by their ability to gather and hold memory (Casey 1998; Abercrombie 1998).

Charles Tilley notes that “geographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscapes or regions for human existence” (1994:15 cited in Escobar 2001).

A place is not simply marked by a set of coordinates, rather, it is imbued with specific meaning

for the people that occupy it and thus is a potential source of identity and resistance (Basso 1996; Casey 1997). Places are not bounded areas, but open, with porous boundaries that allow a place to intermingle with its surroundings so that places and their identifying features are constantly reconstituted (Escobar 2001; Massey 1994). The contemporary prevalence of migration and global communication has challenged our traditional attachment to place and the landscape: “for some [scholars], placelessness has become the essential feature of the modern condition” (Escobar 2001:140).

The term “landscape” comes from the Dutch-derived German *Landschaft*, which refers both to a piece of land or a territory, and the accompanying political, cultural, and historical layers that exist upon that land, including both a sense of community and the appearance of the land (Olwig 1996; Hartshorne 1939). “What came to be seen as landscape was recognized as such because it reminded the viewer of a painted landscape, often of European origin” (Hirsch 1995:2). The ideal, picturesque landscape factored prominently in eighteenth century English consciousness, and soon was linked to its apparent opposite – the town – thereby providing both a livelihood and idyllic scenery to those that experience it (Hirsch 1995). “Described in this way, then, ‘landscape’ entails a relationship between the ‘foreground’ and ‘background’ of social life” (Hirsch 1995:3). The foreground represents the present, lived-in place as it is experienced by locals, whereas the background provides a setting, or space, a perspective from which an outsider may view the scene.

Carl Sauer’s influential essay, “The Morphology of Landscape” (1925) made the notion of landscape central to the field of geography: “The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (Sauer 1925). The power and complexity of so-called cultural

landscapes are created by people through their experience and engagement with the world, and thus landscapes are highly contextualized entities (Abercrombie 1998; Hirsch 1995; Tilley 1994; Cronon 1991, 1996). This engagement may be day-to-day lived interaction or a “distant and half-fantasied” relationship with a landscape, a conscious claiming of a place or nearly unconscious routine (Bender 1993:1). Some have criticized the increasingly metaphorical use of ‘landscape’ in anthropology and cultural geography, however, as too sharply ignoring the physicality of the “natural” landscape (Demeritt 1994).

Ecologists, under the rubric of new ecology, increasingly favor the notion that the environment is both the setting for and product of human interactions, linking human agency with other, more structural analyses of environmental processes into a landscape (Scoones 1999). Understanding the complexity and unpredictability that result from these interactions is an important move away from functionalism and previous, more linear characterizations of ecology. Human intervention has thus come to be recognized as shaping much of the physical landscape (e.g. Fairhead & Leach 1996; Balee 1987). This disciplinary recognition of the messiness and “surprise” that ecological dynamics encompass creates an important connection with the social sciences (Holling 1993). Political ecologists recognize the utility of ‘landscape’ in this sense because it provides a politicized and dialectical context for the cultural, economic, and ecological practices of various communities to unfold, especially in this era of globalization (Walker & Fortmann 2003; Escobar 2001; Brosius 1997). That is, as previously distinct communities increasingly share the same space, and thus transform it into a new place, both the literal and metaphorical landscape is changed by these new interactions. Following Tilley’s logic (1994), a new landscape emerges, which simultaneously reflects and influences the actions of its inhabitants.

Social and natural scientists now increasingly refer to the environment as made up of landscapes ranging from ecosystems to “invisible”, “interior”, or “wish” landscapes (Van Noy 2003; Ingold 1993; Ryden 1993; Bloch 1988 in Nazarea 2005). A growing subset of social scholars also recognize that the landscape is “qualitative and heterogeneous” and experience-based; that is, landscape exists as people dwell in it (Tweed 2006; Ingold 1993:154, 1995, 2000; Heidegger 1954). These landscapes represent the “layers of significance with which human beings blanket the environment” (Basso 1984:49 in Ingold 1993). Social memory is thus embedded in – and created through – landscapes. Cultural anthropology has similarly shifted the way it considers the environment, from a systems approach to one that highlights both individual responses to environmental stimuli (e.g. Vayda & McCay 1975) and the situated and partial nature of our knowledge about the environment (e.g. Haraway 1991; Peet & Watts 1996). Anthropologists have used the notion of landscape to explain people’s cultural attachment to place and to understand how human communities and “nature” coexist (e.g. Feld & Basso 1996; Crumley 1994). Landscape has gone from something only visible to the outsider (often the ethnographer) to a concept which now addresses the interchangeability of insider/outsider in the context of national or international political events; landscape is often linked to the nation-state, but not altogether dependent upon it (Selwyn 1995).

The current era of globalization, however, has seen a marked increase in theories that disassociate culture from place or landscapes, in which “new metaphors of mobility (diaspora, displacement, traveling, deterritorialization, border crossing, hybridity, nomadology) are privileged in explanations of culture and identity” (Escobar 2001:146; Appadurai 1991). While it is indeed important to recognize that patterns of global capitalism and corresponding changes in the roles of nation-states and governments have had a very real effect on people’s lives, these

theories do not necessarily recognize that place-based (and hence landscape-based) constructions of culture still exist. In fact, while geographer Doreen Massey (1997) has put forth the notion of a “global sense of place”, some anthropologists (e.g. Ong 1999; Trouillot 2001) have distinguished between the broad effects of globalization on the nation-state and the more nuanced, localized ways that globalization impacts individuals and communities. Traditional boundaries of landscapes and cultures become somewhat irrelevant, but people still “dig in” – now sometimes in several places at once (Moran-Taylor 2008; Itzigsohn 2000; Jones-Correa 1998; Gmelch 1992).

Some archaeologists also find particular use for the concept of landscape as they uncover patterns of human dwelling. These different forms of dwelling are linked to the politics of the past and varied levels of empowerment that create a dominant way of seeing (Forbes 2007; Escobar 2001; Hirsch & Hanlon 1995; Ingold 1993). Landscapes emerge from archaeological sites as living, changing things that reflect these politics and their resultant connectedness to a past landscape. “To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mid, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past” (Ingold 1993:152-3).

The layered landscapes that archaeologists uncover and reconstruct reflect the lived, experiential nature of place and landscape; these are, of course, constructed in the context of historical patterns of settlement, which are in turn informed by relations of power, i.e. accommodation and resistance (McNiven & Russel 2002). Contemporary landscapes exhibit a similar set of structures based on the arrangement of people and ideas that occupy and influence a particular space. There is a physical element, encompassing both the “natural” environment –

plants, landforms, bodies of water – and the built environment: architecture, parks or yards, monuments, streets. There is also a human element, including politics, foods, memories, religion, and language, that shapes and gives meaning to the physical or built landscape.

A sense of place, then, based on real or imagined interaction with the landscape and all it encompasses, reflects attachment to a space and its accompanying smells, tastes, or feeling. Marginalized peoples often express a remembered sense of place in opposition to mainstream society (Gordillo 2004; Dusselier 2002; Feld and Basso 1996). Cultural memory is embedded in the landscape, continually reconstituted in and through specific places (Connerton 1989; Rappaport 1998; Rigney 2005). Landscapes like the kitchen or the garden represent important sites of cultural construction, which can become more deliberate or palpable in the face of distressing events such as the recent food shortages in Cuba or the process of migration itself (Christie 2004; McDowell 2004; Sutton 1998). Thus *place* and *displacement* become interrelated states of being, wherein (re)creating place becomes a site of power and resistance for those who have been displaced.

Marginality, most often construed in opposition to a mainstream or majority perspective and connoting a position of lesser power, may come from the process of migration, one's ethnicity or gender or class or religion, or even an identity selected to intentionally defy mainstream politics. The margins can be a space of greater freedom, however, from which a variety of empowering tasks can be accomplished with minimal interference from "the center" (Nazarea 2006; hooks 2000; Tweed 1999; Scott 1998). Many of these tasks are not only empowering, but enacted in response to the mainstream as a form of resistance to various institutions of the powerful. Place-making is a form of such resistance – a way to assert identity without directly challenging the mainstream – that can cleverly manipulate the overall landscape.



A significant recent shift in the study of marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities and poor communities, has been the movement away from the view of these people as passive victims who “were stripped of their culture and who subsequently derived their identity solely from the white world” (Ruppel et al. 2003). Instead, various forms of creative cultural resistance, like the re-creation of African traditions in slave gardens and yards with makeshift materials, have come to the fore (e.g. Westmacott 1992). Resistance also occurs in response to economic shifts that affect the way people view themselves and choose to express their identity to others: Kathleen Stewart documents the effects of coal mining on a community in southern West Virginia, noting the way people amass a place around themselves, by saving things like old cars and toys, and actively “dig in” despite severe economic hardship in the region (Stewart 1996). Religion is yet another source of comfort and strength that takes on new, often highly politicized, meanings in the context of marginalization or displacement (e.g. Brown 2003, 1997; Tweed 1997) – one which is often made manifest in the physical landscape.

The appropriation of space for use as an expression, both public and private, of one’s identity continues to occur as people claim and re-claim pieces of traditions in an increasingly global context that is systematically devaluing many of those traditions. For instance, “through their yards, enslaved African Americans spoke to many audiences: ancestors, family members, neighbors, overseers, planters, and outsiders” (Heath & Bennett 2000:38). A kitchen garden at the side of the house, a neatly swept dirt yard, chickens and ducks, brightly colored bottle trees, and collections of old-timey plants can still be seen throughout the South as marginalized people continue to exert an influence on the overall landscape (Westmacott 1992; Ware 1997; Gundaker 1993; Thompson 1990). Communities across the globe are waging wars of all kinds based on (or in defense of) a collective identity and its interactions with the landscape. Identity politics play a

key role in environmental struggles (Brosius 1999), agricultural decision making and agrobiodiversity (Nazarea 2005; Rhoades & Nazarea 1999; Nazarea 1995), even architecture and other built “place” markers (Keith & Pile 1993).

For instance, seed savers represent a group on the margins, resisting mainstream agriculture in favor of tracking down and conserving obscure heirloom varieties of plants and livestock (Nazarea 2005). For many, this is a sensual pursuit; seed savers are often motivated to resist cultural changes (e.g. homogenization) in food traditions (Sachs, Gajurel, & Bianco 1997). Seed savers the world over have been invaluable sources of germplasm for agricultural scientists; one recent project collected over 90 varieties of collards (a type of *Brassica oleracea*) from North and South Carolina seed savers (Farnham, Davis, Morgan, & Smith 2007). Another notable example of resistance to globalized and homogenized foodways is the *Parque de Papas* (Potato Park) in Peru (Nazarea). The industrial agricultural complex that provides a majority of foods for the western world is contrasted by the recent surge in popularity of heirloom fruits, vegetables, and livestock (Veteto 2008; Jordan 2007; Hamilton 1996), and more traditional foodways (Hess & Hess 2000; Southern Foodway Alliance), which all represent sites of resistance and create a place distinct from the center, the majority, or the mainstream. While much of this tradition is romanticized for wealthy urbanites, who might purchase an overpriced heirloom tomato at a farmer’s market, it is a lifestyle for those who choose to locate themselves on the margins.

For much of the twentieth century, the Southern U.S. has been considered a region on the margins of mainstream U.S. culture and economy, and further still from the globalizing center of the rest of the planet (Peacock, Watson, & Matthews 2005). But the common misperception of the South as an isolated segment of the country is quickly vanishing as the region becomes one

of the fastest growing immigrant receiving areas in the nation, adding to the diverse collection of people who have lived there for generations (Peacock, et al. 2005; Castles & Miller 2003). The task of adjusting to a new locale, along with a new language or new customs, is one that requires much strength and patience, especially for refugees (Eisenhruch 1991). Challenges and accomplishments arising from this adjustment process are due in large part to the ways people make and re-make a place of their own and fit into the existing landscape. James Clifford (1994) and Sarah Phillips Casteel (2003) refer to a connection between “roots and routes”, highlighting an important relationship between the process of migration – routes – and the re-creation of a familiar landscape in a new place – roots.

These landscapes take many forms, often interacting with and influenced by a pre-existing landscape. The give-and-take between the place-making of new arrivals and that which existed previously necessarily changes both sets of places. For instance, the presence of Cubans in Miami over the past fifty or so years has shaped the landscape of the city into something of a hybrid. Whereas the first Cubans to arrive found themselves among the minority in the region, and often without many resources, those arriving today find that Spanish is spoken throughout much of the city, familiar foods and architectural styles abound, and numerous social organizations cater to the needs and preferences of Cubans. While its simple “strength in numbers” may contribute to the current power and ubiquity of the Cuban community in Miami, it is also the case that Cuban landscapes created in the last 50 years<sup>7</sup> have altered the overall, or

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<sup>7</sup> Interaction between Cuba and South Florida (as well as New York) is certainly not limited to the past 50 years of migration from the island. Pronounced political, economic, and cultural exchange have shaped the landscapes at both locations for at least the last 200 years. For instance, just after the completion of the North Atlantic telegraph line, a submarine cable was installed, which linked Havana and Key West in 1867 (Pérez 1999). Scheduled steamship service linked the U.S. and Cuba as early as 1836 (ibid.). At the turn of the nineteenth century Cuba fought for independence from Spain, its relationship with the U.S. was a source of pride,

majority, landscape of the city in such a way as to boost Cuban American culture out of marginal status.

Other groups of immigrants or refugees to the U.S. have followed similar patterns of incorporation despite their creation and maintenance of a landscape that links them to their homeland (e.g. Weingold & Levy 2006; Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002). Access to resources such as social and political capital necessarily contributes to increasing the status of these communities; socioeconomic status upon arrival and/or a long period in residence that allows time for acculturation to occur are other underlying factors. It may be argued that the more power a group obtains, perhaps through incorporation into the American mainstream through language or capital, the less likely they are to use place- and landscape-making as a form of resistance and remembrance. Generational approaches to immigration and cultural retention or integration have often reflected this trend. However, contemporary immigrants to the U.S. and their children face a different set of circumstances than that experienced by European immigrants in the first half of the twentieth century (Portes & Zhou 1993). Status or cultural tradition may dictate the desire for return migration – now easily accomplished with the aid of inexpensive high speed communications and transportation – to the homeland, thus reducing the effect of U.S. enculturation on second or third generation immigrants (e.g. Plaza 2008; Reynolds 2008; Gans 1992).

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contributing to a new identity as a nation distinct from Spanish roots and rule. Place names in Miami and in Cuba are perhaps one of the most ubiquitous and obvious results of this closeness (e.g. Vedado and Prado Streets in Miami, the Havana “Yacht Club” in Havana, Cayo Hueso (Key West) neighborhood in Havana).

## Memory and Nostalgia

Memory studies in anthropology, the humanities, and other social sciences have taken center stage of late. In the 1960s and 70s, “the word verged on extinction” in the social sciences (Klein 2000 in Berliner 2005:199). According to Berliner (2005:199) however, this “memory boom” has resulted in the overutilization and a corresponding loss of meaning of the term. Some have argued that the overuse or vague usages of ‘memory’ conflate the concept with identity or culture (e.g. Fabian 1999; Boyarin 1994). Others argue that the newest wave of memory scholarship has brought to the fore important local or folk representations of events, but that these are often not accompanied by adequate attention to the reception of such representations (Kansteiner 2002). Memory, either collective or individual, spurs so much interest because it is simultaneously academically challenging and personally relatable (Berliner 2005). Anthropologists have recently focused on relating memory to the ways people perceive and interpret the past.

Contemporary sensory anthropology perspectives highlight the significance of embodied memory and emotional experiences in the creation of place (Stoller 1995; Sutton 2001). Accordingly, some scholars have argued for relationships between memory and landscape: there exist landscapes *of* memory and landscapes *as* memory (Küchler 1993). Remembrance involves a degree of performance and ritual; the past is remembered, “conveyed and sustained” by ritual performances, which may occur more strongly in and through familiar landscapes than foreign ones (Connerton 1989:40). Thus the impetus for (re)creating a landscape based on memories of home. Pierre Nora argues for locating “sites of memory”, models whose “images and representations which have been revised throughout the ages and which still influence us as

archetypes of social memory” (1996:x). These “*lieux*” (sites) represent elements of rites or rituals that are, in some way, unique to a particular nation or culture.

Collective or social memory, however, is not always neat and homogenous. “More and more diasporic groups have memories whose archaeology is fractured. ... Even for apparently well-settled diasporic groups, the macro-politics of reproduction translates into the micro-politics of memory, among friends, relatives and generations” (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1988 in Vertovec 1997:9). In his discussion of Our Lady of Charity shrine in Miami, Tweed notes that collective ritual around The Virgin has important implications for exiles’ shared national identity: common ritual bridges the diaspora with Cubans on the island “creating an imagined moral community and generating feelings of nostalgia, hopefulness, and commonality” (Tweed 1999:148). That is, at some level and in spite of disagreements over the meanings attributed to a particular symbol, the Cuban community abroad shares some sense of collective identity that shapes the way they engage the new landscape.

Lucía Suárez (2006) notes that there also exists an important tension between memory and forgetting. In light of the violent, tumultuous history of the Caribbean, affirmative, hopeful memory is necessarily thrust into stark contrast with the impossibility of bringing back the dead, in both a literal and figurative sense. The relationship between memory and forgetting, however, is not dichotomous; rather, the two exist as a continuum moderated by people whom re-member, re-claim, and re-imagine history. Re-membering, whether through text, film, poetry or daydreaming, recontextualizes the past by its very nature. That is, the past – reshaped and reclaimed – becomes rooted in the present as it is integrated into a living, breathing person once more.

Nadia Seremetakis (1996) describes nostalgia as a particular longing for something that once was, or something that may have been. Arjun Appadurai contributes to the concept by noting that this longing may also apply to something that one never directly, personally experienced (1996). Nostalgia is a uniquely western idea (“from the Greek *nostos*, ‘to return home,’ and *algia*, ‘a painful condition’”) that referenced a “pathological homesickness” first felt by Swedish mercenaries fighting far from home (Rosaldo 1989:108-9).

It is an interesting concept for analyzing the roles that memory plays in the context of migration because nostalgia is not limited to firsthand experiences. Rather, it is associated with a sense of longing for the past, whether one experienced it or not. The concept of nostalgia thus highlights the flexible and confounding nature of memory: one can remember something that one did not experience. For example, contemporary Afra-Cuban writers live and work in a time when slavery is no longer legally sanctioned, but many continue to conjure images of slavery in order to situate their contemporary existence (e.g. Nancy Morejón, Excilia Saldaña). Cuban American artists often present images of barely-sea-worthy boats jostled by waves, though many made the trip in airplanes or were born in the U.S. But this quality of nostalgia, the ability to remember something without ever experiencing it, also has the effect of creating community around shared memories, potentially contributing to “diasporic nationalism” – a sense of nationalism abroad (Tweed 1999).

Food-centered nostalgia is a common theme in migration literature (Choo 2004; Armstrong 1999), and food often serves as a gateway for immigrants to engage with collective representations of homeland or national identity (Ray 2004; Mankekar 2002). Food is a particularly important element by virtue of its everyday presence, and sensory memories related to food become especially apparent when particular foods are no longer available (Seremetakis

1996). The kitchen, for instance, is often considered a place of particularly feminine memory (DeSilva 1996; Christensen 2001; Nazarea 1998, 2006). Embodied memory and emotional experiences play a significant role in the way sensory images are recreated (Stoller 1995; Sutton 2001).

Immigrant landscapes represent a confluence of nostalgia, cultural tradition, and active place-making that often occur in the context of migration. For instance, Sonia Graham and John Connell (2006) found that among Greek and Vietnamese immigrants in Sydney, Australia, the environment created by a garden, along with the garden produce itself, helped immigrant gardeners emphasize and maintain cultural relationships and social networks, provide a space for nostalgia, and give immigrant gardeners a sense of ownership and control. Gardens and yards become physical manifestations of memory that embody family and community traditions (Ruppel et al. 2003). Immigrant gardens may also serve as sources of income, as locals and other immigrants take advantage of exotic and familiar produce grown by members of their community. For example, Southeast Asian immigrants in Homestead, Florida, have created a niche for themselves by focusing on growing specialty Southeast Asian herbs, fruits, and vegetables (Imbruce 2007). In effect, gardens such as these represent a “trans situ” form of agrobiodiversity conservation through use since seeds and other plant matter are often brought to the U.S. from a multitude of homelands (Nazarea 2005).

Within immigrant communities, common language, food preferences, religion, and various other shared cultural traditions reinforce a sense of belonging, all of which may reduce the affects of acculturation (Graham & Connell 2006; Airriess & Clawson 1994). For immigrants (and, it may be argued, for other marginalized groups), the traditions maintained



through social networks may in turn contribute to a shared nostalgic representation of an idealized homeland or history (Dawdy 2002).

The notion of an “out of place sense of place” points to the tendency of displaced or otherwise marginalized people to re-make or re-imagine elements of a sovereign home place (Nazarea 2005). Much of this re-imagining shapes the physical landscape and reflects the symbolic or cultural meanings of place, produced and experienced through sensory impressions. For example, Christopher Airriess describes the ethnic Vietnamese landscape and place, “Versailles” in New Orleans, as an “expression of the refugee adaptation process” that embodies the needs, wants, and desires of the refugee community that has created it in a context of forced migration (Airriess 2002:228). The process of acculturation changes perceptions of place and the attachment to re-created or re-membered places over time and from one generation to the next. Ines M. Miyares finds that among Hmong refugees, the 1.5 generation only minimally recreates the spatial patterns of their parents and grandparents, though they maintain their underlying cultural values (Miyares 2004).

In the same vein, Head, Muir, and Hampel (2004) find that immigrants to Sydney, Australia’s suburbs take advantage of the sovereign space that is their yard or garden and utilize it in distinct ways, depending on their country of origin. Backyard gardens exist as both product and expression of the immigrant experience, and provide “havens of privacy and freedom” for expression of that experience amidst a potentially critical public space (Head, Muir, & Hampel 2004:327). David Brown (2003) and Thomas Tweed (1999, 1997) have documented the ways that religious belief and belonging create similar sovereign spaces among Cuban exiles in South Florida. In each case, the meanings of and purpose for these re-created elements of home reflect a confluence of new and old, real and invented.

Such “havens” are made in other instances of loss or marginalization or deterritorialization as well. Cuban exiles have created (or re-created) elements of Cuban identity in the U.S. that take the shape of transnational landscapes, despite the political and ideological barriers that exist between those places. Nostalgia and memory often fill in the gaps left by infrequent or impersonal contact with the island, resulting in a diverse array of individualized landscapes made by people who have experienced migration and exile in distinct ways. The case of Cuban migration to the U.S. is informed by the connections people maintain with the island. Mechanisms for easing feelings of loss are also often the basis for establishing and maintaining transnational networks, which in turn inform the ways that émigrés experience Cubanness throughout the diaspora. The dialectic nature of contemporary migration and resettlement cannot be understood without adequate attention to the ways that this kind of connection is established and experienced by individuals, communities, or government entities.

The following chapter delves into the context of Cuban migration to the U.S., both pre- and post-revolution. The historical perspective included therein, though not an exhaustive account, is vital to understanding the contemporary relationship between these two nations, especially from the standpoint of exiles and their families as they contend with layer upon layer of political complexity and ideological dissent. The various waves of post-revolution migration to the U.S. loosely correspond to political changes in migration policy, but diverse individual experiences at both ends of the migration stream continue to complicate these neatly divided segments of time and people.

## CHAPTER 3

### CUBAN EXILES IN THE UNITED STATES: AN OVERVIEW

“You’re “cubanglo,” a word that has the advantage of imprecision, since one can’t tell where the “Cuban” ends and the “Anglo” begins. Having two cultures, you belong wholly to neither. You are both, you are neither: *cuba-no/america-no*.”

(Gustavo Firmat 1994:9)

#### Introduction

There is something unique about Cuba, and Cuban Americans by extension, the exile community so close to home but unable (or unwilling) to return. It is a tragic tale made even more romantic and appealing to mainstream America by the vibrant Caribbean culture, boisterous language and music, and mass-produced pictures of that handsome, mysterious fallen hero of the revolution, Che Guevara. “Many Americans love Cuban music and the fact that Desi loves Lucy, but they also recognize that there is something different about Cubans that does not fit cleanly into the Latinos-in-the-U.S.A. guide booklet” (Grenier & Pérez 2003:1). The U.S. government and the media have been sympathetic as well, giving Cuban refugees special status after the 1959 revolution<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> While the early waves of wealthy and middle-class (and largely white) refugees enjoyed positive attention from the media, later waves, especially the Marielitos in the early 1980s, have been depicted in a less flattering light, often being stereotyped as criminals or degenerates (Pedraza-Bailey 2003).

The history of interaction between Cuba and the United States, along with the people that claim each as home, is a long and rather schizophrenic one. Spanish-Cuban presence in what is now the U.S. dates back to at least the founding of St. Augustine in Florida in 1565 (Firmat 1994), with interaction likely occurring even before that time. Colonialism and trade in the West Indies forced indigenous Taíno together with Spanish colonists in the early sixteenth century, resulting in widespread disease and death among the indigenous group (Rouse 1992). The Spanish and British traders later brought African and Chinese slaves and contract laborers to the island (Pérez 1995). Hundreds of Americans died in 1772 on Cuban soil fighting in the service of the British for control of the island (Tucker 2002). In 1776, Spain first opened Cuban ports to direct trade with North America (ibid.). Félix Varela, a Catholic priest and prominent figure in the separatist movement to free Cuba from Spanish control, is considered the first Cuban person (e.g. not *Spanish*) to live in the U.S. He arrived in New York in 1823 after being forced to flee Spain when his attempts at garnering autonomy for Cuba failed (Grenier & Pérez 2003). Perhaps the most notable Cuban to walk the streets of New York in the nineteenth century, however, was José Martí. He arrived aboard the *France* in 1880 and would become known and beloved as “the intellectual architect of the modern Cuban nation” for his role in the independence movement and his vision for a new, sovereign country (Grenier & Pérez 2003:17). He drew much of his inspiration from the heroes of the American Revolution (Tucker 2002). Martí’s likeness is ubiquitous throughout Cuba and in Cuban landscapes all over the diaspora.

Martí’s journey to New York was spurred by Cuba’s independence movement. The war for Cuba’s independence from Spain began in 1868; the long battle would become known as the Ten Years’ War, or *La guerra grande*, and it was the first of several unsuccessful attempts at independence at the end of the nineteenth century (Pérez 1995, 1983). Though these attempts

were not successful, they resulted in an increase in the Cuban population in the U.S. as separatists worked from New York to raise funds and other support for the independence movement. The political situation in Cuba at this time was tense, and Spanish rule was such that many separatists, Martí among them, were forced to flee the island to continue their efforts; many found refuge and much needed assistance in New York (Pérez 1983). Many Cuban cigar manufacturers also left the island for New York and Key West during this era to avoid high tariffs and increasing Spanish interference with normal business operations; cigar makers were among Martí's biggest supporters (Grenier & Pérez 2003). A number of Cubans also fought in the American Civil War, for both the Union and the Confederacy (Tucker 2002). Back in Cuba, the war of 1895 in the name of *Cuba Libre* (Free Cuba) finally succeeded, at least in part, by displacing the propertied planter class and their political support in Madrid, but in the midst of this struggle, the U.S. staged a "neutral intervention" in 1898<sup>9</sup> with the goal of protecting U.S. political and economic interests in Cuba. In so doing, U.S. arms supplanted Cubans in their fight against Spain, and thus began the Spanish-American War for political control of Cuba, which the U.S. would win at the close of 1898 (Pérez 1998). The U.S. maintained a military presence in Cuba for nearly three years, at which point the Platt Amendment was passed by a margin of just one vote, "establish[ing] the terms under which the U.S. would end its military occupation of Cuba" (United States Department of State). The Amendment ensured that U.S. economic interests and a permanent U.S. presence in Cuba would be preserved, while handing over control of the government to Cubans (though the U.S. in fact maintained a great deal of influence over

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<sup>9</sup> Military occupation began in January 1899 and the U.S. assumed formal possession of the island, much to the dismay of *independentismo* proponents (Pérez 1995). The Teller Amendment prohibited outright annexation of Cuba, but U.S. political control prevented Cubans from self-government (ibid.).

subsequent elections) (Pérez 1998). The Platt Amendment governed U.S.-Cuba relations until 1934.

The path between the newly-minted Cuban Republic and the U.S. in the early twentieth century was trod by “shiploads” of U.S. workers arriving on the island and widespread North American investment in farming and mining (Pérez 1995). This shift, combined with cheap foreign labor from elsewhere in the Caribbean and a depressed postwar economy made employment for Cubans difficult to obtain, especially those that had been involved in the independence movement and for women and people of color (ibid.). Corruption and inflation eventually prompted the U.S. government to enact the intervention clause of the Platt Amendment<sup>10</sup> in 1920, and, despite the fact that North Americans had inserted themselves into nearly every level of the economy, Cuba’s economic problems were considered by Washington to be “wholly of local origin, the cumulative result of nearly two decades of maladministration and misgovernment” (Pérez 1999, 1995:227). Nevertheless, the relatively stable political environment at this time prompted substantial travel between Cuba and the U.S.; Americans traveled south “for business and pleasure, and Cubans came to the United States on a temporary basis seeking to develop their careers, either in U.S. schools, in music, in the entertainment industry, or in professional sports, notably baseball and boxing” (Grenier & Pérez 2003). Cuban migration northward also occurred in response to the cyclical pattern of repression and revolution that continued into the 1930s, and eventually spiked, of course in the early 1960s

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<sup>10</sup> “III. That the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the government of Cuba.”

(Pérez 1999). U.S. goods became popular and accessible in Cuba during the first half of the 1900s, like the iconic, hulking Fords and Chevrolets that still rumble down Cuban streets today.

Charlotte Bayala (2006) summarizes the dramatic shift that occurred after the success of the revolution in 1959:

The refugees' ability to leave their island depended upon the political relationship between the United States and Cuba. In the early years of the Revolution, many families did not arrive to the United States as a unit. Often family members had to leave separately and under different pretenses so as not to alarm the Cuban government of their intentions. A family, for example, would send one child to the United States to attend a camp, another one for school. The head of the family could leave on a business trip and his wife on vacation. They would later reunite at a predetermined site. After 1960, refugees did not leave with much. The Cuban government largely restricted the money and possessions a refugee could take and kept what was left behind. (Bayala 2006:27)

Thus, in spite of the closeness that had developed between the U.S. and Cuba over the previous two centuries, the movement of people between Cuba and the U.S. during the second half of the twentieth century contrasts starkly with the "business and pleasure" travel that characterized the 1930s, '40s and early 1950s. After the 1959 revolution, Cubans arriving in the U.S. were not just immigrants, but exiles and refugees seeking asylum. According to the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, a refugee is:

Any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or

unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

### Reasons for Leaving

Silvia Pedraza-Bailey notes that the primary difference between an immigrant and a refugee lies in the refugee's reluctance to depart, but that this reluctance is an issue of perception – what does the potential refugee perceive to be her fate should she stay (Pedraza-Bailey 1985)? Many early refugees watched as their businesses and property were confiscated, surprised at the Communist ideals infiltrating the government, and worried that the revolution would be bad for the children. Political disaffection as part of an “anticipatory refugee movement” (Pedraza-Bailey 1985:10) may have been the primary reason Cubans departed for the U.S. in the years immediately following the revolution, but subsequent waves of migration cite human rights abuses along with inadequate resources and high levels of unemployment as additional motivation (Pedraza 2000; Amaro & Portes 1972). In fact, Jorge Duany notes that the combined effect of Cuba's economic crisis and the U.S. trade embargo actually increased the rate of migration (much of it “illegal” or undocumented, prior to 1994) from Cuba in the 1990s and early 2000s, especially to reunite with family and to gain better access to material goods (Duany 2005:164). Recent trends in emigration have also demonstrated that Cubans are increasingly using other countries as way stations on the path to the U.S. (ibid.). The “extraordinary political climate” that continues to exist in Cuba has forced the nation to cope with “economic austerity”



and political inflexibility (Grenier & Pérez 2003:22) – of course, many have “coped” by emigrating<sup>11</sup>.

The precise motivating factors for individual migrants from Cuba to the U.S. are immensely varied, even among the small sample of people consulted as part of this research. Among those interviewed were people who accompanied parents to the U.S. as young children, fled imprisonment (or the threat of imprisonment) for actions against the government, left for religious or ideological reasons, or came to the U.S. in search of better economic opportunities. One man in Moultrie claimed that he came to the U.S. “*porque tuve hambre*” (because I was hungry), alluding to the lack of food and other resources in Cuba after the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1980s; acute shortages lasted until at least the mid-1990s. Some selected the U.S. rather than another country because of its purported freedoms, opportunities, and wealth, and because these traits are widely advertized along global channels<sup>12</sup>. Others followed family members to the U.S., who in turn followed routes often traveled between the two countries and drew on previously established social networks. Nearly all of these exiles and refugees left behind spouses or parents or children, often with the hope that once settled, they would try to sponsor (or “reclaim”) family members to join them in the U.S. Miguel and Dalia<sup>13</sup>, a young couple in Moultrie, exemplify this trend. Dalia has been in Moultrie for 12 years and Miguel has been there only 5; she came to the U.S. with her father, who decided to leave the island to escape persecution and “*asuntos politics*”, political matters. Then, on a series of family visits to Cuba,

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<sup>11</sup> Duany also argues that this trend is likely to increase, and he predicts a new, massive wave of Cuban migration to the U.S. with or without the embargo in place (Duany 2005).

<sup>12</sup> A young woman I met in Santiago de Cuba said that she had two wishes: to visit Italy and to come to the U.S. to eat one of the giant, juicy hamburgers she saw so often on television.

<sup>13</sup> All names included have been changed to protect interviewees’ privacy.

she met and married her husband, applied for his sponsorship, and was eventually reunited with him in Moultrie.

The mode of travel between Cuba and the U.S. varies nearly as much as individuals' reasons for leaving. Among the interviewees were people whose parents had entrusted them to Operation Pedro Pan, and some who simply boarded an airplane, either during the Freedom Flights or after applying and being granted permission to leave. Others traveled by boat or raft. A circuitous journey undertaken by Eduardo and Gabriel, a father and his young son, led them to Venezuela during the Special Period in Cuba. When Hugo Chavez began making changes to the structure of the national government that seemed eerily familiar, they tried to flee that country as well but were dissuaded because Chavez's government did not want to lose highly trained citizens (Eduardo worked as a physician). Finally, Eduardo and Gabriel made it to Mexico via a very expensive plane ride and walked across the desert into the U.S. They now live in Miami and have been reunited with mother and wife, Celia. The father of another interviewee fashioned a makeshift raft and, after several unsuccessful attempts, finally floated it from the northern coast of Cuba to the Florida Keys. Still other interviewees at both locations reported the use of legally sanctioned, officially recognized routes, traveling from Cuba in the freedom flights or during the Mariel boatlift or with "lottery" permission. Those with family in the U.S. often gained legal entry into the U.S. by sponsorship.

Members of the Cuban communities in Miami and Moultrie demonstrate much of the wide array of reasons and timelines for leaving Cuba and coming to the U.S., and for settling in a particular place here. For those participants interviewed in Miami, chain migration and the long-standing Cuban influence on the region (both pre-and post-revolutionary) played an important role in their decision to remain in the area. Some even recognize that Miami is now "more

Cuban” than Cuba, alluding to what many see as a decline in Cuban culture and values on the island since the revolution<sup>14</sup>. To be sure, one can live an entire lifetime in Miami without ever learning English fluently, or “as [Lisandro] Pérez points out, your life begins in the hands of a Cuban obstetrician and ends in the hands of a Cuban undertaker” (Pérez 1992 in Firmat 1994:8).

Owing to the religious beliefs of the majority of Cubans in Moultrie, it is not surprising that many left the island to escape religious persecution. Edita, who now occupies a trailer on the outskirts of Moultrie, noted that she was able to leave Cuba fifteen years ago via “*la presa*” – that is, rather than winning the special lottery, she received refugee status that allowed her to come to the U.S. legally – because she is a practicing Jehovah’s Witness whose religious obligations and religious freedoms were severely restricted under Castro’s government. Hernán, a man of about 70 years who now also lives in Moultrie, noted that “*la democracia representa la política de Jesus Cristo*” (democracy is the politics of Jesus Christ). According to Javier, who is regarded as the first Cuban exile to settle in Moultrie, when Cuban refugees first began settling in Moultrie about twenty years ago, there was little other than employment and affordable housing to attract them to that particular town. But as the Cuban community in Moultrie grows and becomes a more visible part of the local landscape, the “pull” of chain migration and social networks (especially those centered on the Kingdom Hall) increases as well.

Prior to 1959, “Cuba was a relatively unchurched nation, especially in rural areas” (Tweed 1999: 136). The majority of religious devotion took place outside the bounds of formally organized religious institutions and lacked the legibility and resources that more formal

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<sup>14</sup> Miami is also referred to as *la Cuba de ayer* (yesterday’s Cuba), and the “real Cuba” reflecting this same sentiment (Firmat 1994:8; Guerra 2007). In fact, there is a popular nightclub on Calle Ocho in Little Havana with this very name (Cuba de Ayer). When asked, club’s owner told me that he selected the name to highlight the region’s Cuban heritage; he books both “traditional” Cuban musicians and more contemporary styles to showcase and promote the interconnectedness of music, and culture more broadly, in Miami today.

membership and regular attendance entails. Catholicism, the colonial religion of the Spanish, was centered on the colonial headquarters in Havana and it has remained a largely Spanish institution, not a Cuban one<sup>15</sup> (Kirk 1989). Protestantism gained popularity soon after Cuba established independence from Spain in 1898, especially in the eastern part of the island, far from Havana. Philanthropic institutions like schools, clinics, and orphanages accompanied Protestant missionaries from the U.S., who saw it as their duty to protect Cuban people from “the infidels of North American civilization invading the country in the form of unscrupulous speculators, gamblers, and drunken soldiers” by putting into place a set of Christian ideals that would “civilize Cuba” (Yaremko 2000: 20). Jason M. Yaremko argues that by the 1940s, the influence of U.S. churches on Cuba played much the same role as the Spanish Catholic church – “ostensibly Cuban churches continued to equate Protestantism with perpetuating the forms and attitudes received from North American pioneers, numerous of whom remained in charge in Cuba” (Yaremko 2000: 125-6).

Shortly after the success of the revolution, Castro, who enjoyed immense support for his vision for Cuba from several Protestant and Catholic clergy, declared Cuba an atheist state (Mahler & Hansing 2003), and his reasoning for this drastic move was not merely ideological. Individuals who opposed the revolution tended to gather in churches to organize against Castro’s radical new policies (Poyo 2007; Crahan 1989). As religious leaders withdrew their support of the new government, Castro retaliated by “curtailing religious liberties, forbidding religious to join the Communist Party, and precluding the entry into Cuba of denominations that were not already present as of 1959” (Mahler & Hansing 2003:47). This strict stance on religion began to be relaxed in the wake of transnational exchanges with Chile and the U.S. around the theme of

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<sup>15</sup> Though, notably, some authors (e.g. Tweed, Brown) argue that ritual and symbol derived from Spanish Catholicism have evolved into uniquely Cuban (and Cuban American) religious forms.

liberation theology over the next decade; Cuban political leaders interpreted what they learned as evidence that socialism and religion could indeed co-exist and perhaps even strengthen Cuba as a nation (Mahler & Hansing 2003). Sarah J. Mahler and Karen Hansing (2003) note that Cuba has experienced an upsurge in religious expression since the 1990s, when the Special Period shortages began and spiritual fulfillment in churches was often accompanied by material handouts. Perhaps in an effort to access some of these incoming resources, or perhaps to embrace the reality of a multi-religious Cuba, Castro's government has seen fit to allow several churches to re-open and undergo restoration after years of being shuttered (Mahler & Hansing 2003; Tudela, Molina, & Riquenes n.d.). Further relaxation of the government's strict anti-religion stance also preceded the Pope's official to visit the island in 1998. The Declaration of Matanzas (December 1999), was aimed at ending the historical and hegemonic U.S. influence over organized religion in favor of "the Cuban Church," which, in light of the blockade, still maintains important ties between the two countries and peoples (in Triana 2004: 185). The freedom to practice religion has increased significantly in recent years, but open, public proselytizing, like that required of Jehovah's Witnesses, remains cause for suspicion, discrimination, and potential punishment; Jehovah's Witnesses and other actively religious people are still persecuted as "enemies of the state" for fulfilling their religious obligations (Sigmund 1996: 173).

Most of the members of the Cuban community in Moultrie lived for a time in Miami or Tampa after arriving in the U.S., often drawing on social networks there to begin adjusting to life in the U.S. Many complained, though, that the cost of living in South Florida was too high, or too many temptations existed for their children, or that the lifestyle was generally too "busy" or too "fast" to make a more permanent home there. Moultrie provided a suitable escape from

many of these complaints: it is a small town with a relatively successful agricultural industry and a low cost of living that facilitates homeownership – in general, it is “*más tranquilo y más barato*”, more tranquil and cheaper, than Miami, sometimes to a fault. Miguel responded to a question about the availability of culturally important foods and entertainment by saying, “*nos falta muchas cosas porque no es una ciudad grande*” (we lack a lot of things because this is not a big city). Without the security of an ethnic enclave in small towns like Moultrie, minority ethnic groups often find themselves in closer contact with the mainstream population, English language skills are more vital, and culturally significant foods and other products are not as readily available (Funkhouser & Ramos 1993). Another interviewee, Laura, commented that she had actually found greater opportunity for work in Miami because she could speak Spanish with customers and fellow employees; she worked as a cashier at a Winn-Dixie grocery store, and did so successfully without speaking any English. Fortunately, various organizations, including the local government, the county extension agency, churches, and schools that offer ESL courses, have mediated some these difficulties in Moultrie and have helped make resettlement easier by providing resources and promoting tolerance in the community.

### Stories of Resettlement

Whatever their reason for leaving, well over a million Cubans now reside in the U.S. and more arrive each year. The process of negotiating identity, of balancing one’s connection to a place left behind with one that serves as an itinerant home, is an intricate one that exists in a borderland space. Firmat’s metaphor of “life on the hyphen” speaks to the in-betweenness of this space (Firmat 1994). Still, even in that itinerant home, meaningless *space* becomes *place* embedded with new meanings that recall old memories and create a hybrid landscape. Cubans in

the U.S. continue to re-create elements of home as they settle in Miami and Moultrie, creating a landscape that evokes the history and the cultures of individuals, families, neighborhoods, and countries.

Migration theory has moved from simple “push-pull” explanations of immigration (Lee 1966) toward models that increasingly incorporate the economic, political, and structural variables that face migrants throughout the process of migration and resettlement (Pedraza-Bailey 1990, 1985). Jorge Duany, Alejandro Portes, and Silvia Pedraza-Bailey, among others, have contributed to this new, more holistic approach to understanding migration by considering the case of Cuban refugee migration (e.g. Duany 2005a; Portes 2007, 1987; Pedraza 2000). For instance, Pedraza-Bailey and Portes, et al. consider the changes over time in the settlement patterns of Cuban migrants within the last twenty years, and how those motives impact the sending and receiving societies (Pedraza 2000; Portes, Clark, & Manning 1985).

Cubans, to be sure, are at an advantage over some immigrant groups in that they enjoy preferential treatment from the U.S. government in the form of legal status and resettlement policy (based in part on the piecemeal policies that would eventually result in the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980). Many Cubans have entered the U.S. having achieved advanced degrees or with substantial work experience in white collar fields. In the 1960s and 70s, U.S. policy toward Cubans refugees depicted Cubans as “ideologically valuable”, encouraging the media to do the same lest a backlash from mainstream America occur (Brewer-Current 2008). That Cubans had left a communist, Soviet-friendly country for a democratic one during the Cold War era was considered admirable, and it worked in the U.S.’s favor that many of these early refugees were white and middle class.

Despite these advantages, though, many Cubans in the U.S. remain marginalized, often lumped together with other migrant groups in mainstream U.S. campaigns against immigrants. They are still tasked with learning English, and often, in spite of a high level of training and education, unable to “translate” their human capital into a comparable job in the U.S. (Eduardo). Subsequent stereotypes have depicted Cuban Americans as lotharios, Desi Arnaz-es, politically conservative, mambo kings, drug dealers and mobsters, traitors to their country, and “moving pieces” of the Sound Machine (Grenier & Pérez 2003; Firmat 1994). Starting over in a new location, with or without the aid of social services groups or “positive” stereotyping, is necessarily a time and resource consuming endeavor. That Cubans receive “papers”, legal documentation, upon entering the U.S. is a source of some consternation for other immigrants, but it comes at the cost of renouncing the Cuban government and forfeiting citizenship. Some have argued that the most recent wave Cuban immigrants to the U.S. since about 1989 no longer enjoys “a privileged position relative to other large Caribbean nations, at least quantitatively” (Castro 2002:5 cited in Duany 2003:4). Compared to migration flows from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Cuban immigration has slowed significantly (Duany 2003). Cuban exceptionalism, the notion that Cubans are somehow isolated from global matters and separate from the forces affecting people of other nations, thus must be revised (Duany 2009).

Some members of the early migrations from Cuba (see Chapter One for a summary of the primary post-revolution “waves” of migration from Cuba to the U.S.) supported counter-revolutionary forces, hoping not only to overthrow Castro, but to subsequently enable their own return to Cuba (Pedraza-Bailey 2003). “Unable to reach their goal, the Cuban communities became disenchanted with such activities and withdrew their support. As Kunz (1973) specified, when refugees realize that “the doors are closed behind” them, they begin to take the steps that



change them from temporary refugees into exiles” (cited in Pedraza-Bailey 1985:8). That is, Cubans in the U.S. found themselves faced not with a temporary exodus, but with having to adjust to life in a new place, often without family members or close friends. In spite of governmental restrictions, Cubans in the U.S. have found creative ways of maintaining a connection to a culture and a country that is no longer accessible in a traditional sense. As one Cuban American poet eloquently writes, “The exile knows his place, and that place is the imagination” (Ricardo Pau-Llosa, cited in Firmat 194:10).

The context of exile is one full of emotion – longing, anger or frustration, sadness, hope – that people cope with in a variety of ways. According to Firmat, there are three stages of adjustment that accompany exile: substitution, destitution, and institution. *Substitution* is marked by a profound sense of nostalgia, since often the reality of exile is too difficult to accept; the exile (re)creates familiar elements of home in the host country, often retreating into an enclave. When reality becomes impossible to ignore, Firmat argues that the exile has moved into the *destitution* stage: “the fantasy collapses. No amount of duplicate landmarks can cover up the fact that you are no longer there, and what’s more, that you may never return” (Firmat 1994:9). The final stage, *institution*, indicates that the exile has established “a new relationship between person and place” (Firmat 1994:11), that uprootedness has given way to rootedness. These stages occur simultaneously within Cuban communities throughout the diaspora; as new people join and begin experiencing “substitution”, other, more established exiles have already moved to the “institution” stage. That people in the same community are simultaneously at different stages in their acceptance of exile status informs not only the level of nostalgia evident in the landscape, but also may color the nature of interactions with the non-exile community. That is, more “instituted” exiles may have more regular interaction with people outside of the exile

community. Moreover, it could be argued that these stages do not always follow a linear pattern; nostalgia or feelings of destitution frequently sneak back into the lives and experiences of long-established exiles, as my interviewees in Miami and Moultrie revealed. Many arrivals, both long-established and recent, maintain that their time in the U.S. is temporary – that they are exiles, not immigrants. There is hope for return, which spurs much of the political action around Cuba undertaken by Cuban Americans (García 1998).

In a similar vein, Douglas Massey's model of "spatial assimilation" (1985) suggests that as immigrant groups enter the U.S., some separation from the mainstream is bound to occur. Limited resources, along with language troubles and difficulty navigating mainstream customs, contribute to the desire to maintain ethnic communities, segregated from the mainstream. But as access to resources increases, the ethnic community begins to blend into the mainstream, in other words, it assimilates. This notion is tied to traditional assimilationist models of immigration and resettlement based on the immigration of the late nineteenth century and the work of the Chicago School (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie 1967 [1925]); ethnic enclaves such as those first named by Chicago School theorists were considered a necessary step in the resettlement process. New arrivals had no choice but to rely on the enclave, which insulated them from the economic and cultural hardships of the mainstream. However, as John R. Logan, Wenquan Zhang and Richard D. Alba note, ethnic enclaves may no longer be a necessity for all newcomers (2002). "If living in these zones is not associated with low economic standing or a need to find work in the ethnic economy – that is, if it is not at the same time an adaptation to circumstance – we must reconsider whether the ethnic choice stems from constraint or from preference. For some, the ethnic neighborhood is a starting point; for others, it may be a favored destination" (2003). Thus, in addition to the notion of the ethnic enclave, they propose the term *ethnic community*.

The element of preference is especially important in contemporary patterns of migration and settlement because more immigrants are coming to the U.S. with high levels of socioeconomic and human capital than ever before (Logan et al. 2002). For them, settlement in an immigrant neighborhood is not a necessity, but a choice.

### Reconstructing Cuban Landscapes in the American South

The American South has not traditionally been a destination for immigrants. Around the turn of the twentieth century when the U.S. experienced a large influx of immigrants, most were drawn to urban industrial centers in the north. But the economic opportunities that the South offered beginning in the 1970s attracted more migrants to the region than ever before (Bankston 2007). As people found jobs and settled in southern communities, they tended to attract family members and friends looking for similar opportunities. Chain migration (MacDonald & MacDonald 1964) such as this gives subsequent immigrants an advantage – they may emigrate knowing that a job or housing has already been secured for them, and that they have a social network from which to draw other forms of support.

Florida, according to Carl L. Bankston, is one of two primary “access states” (along with Texas) that immigrants currently use to enter the South (Bankston 2007:30). Florida serves just such a role for many Cubans: Miami is often the first place Cuban refugees set foot in the U.S. The traditional enclave model is supported in Miami, as financially successful Cuban Americans leave the ethnic neighborhoods in Hialeah<sup>16</sup> and Little Havana for the affluent (and

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<sup>16</sup> Hialeah may in fact be an example of Logan, Zang, and Alba’s “ethnic community”, however, because its residents include both long-established, financially-secure Cuban Americans and newly arrived exiles. It is considered a suburb of Miami, and thus a destination for wealthy city dwellers in search of good schools and safe neighborhoods. But it is also a haven for new arrivals looking for affordable housing, familiar language and culture, and jobs. The suburb

overwhelmingly white) suburbs of Kendall or Coral Gables or Pinecrest. They may return to *Calle Ocho* (Eighth Street), the heart of Little Havana, for community events and cultural festivals, but generally, mobility increases with socioeconomic status. “One-and-a-halfers” (Firmat 1994), those who left Cuba at a young age with their parents and were educated in the U.S. while growing up in a Cuban household, are perhaps best suited to straddle the “border” between Little Havana and the suburbs, owing to their fluency in both worlds.

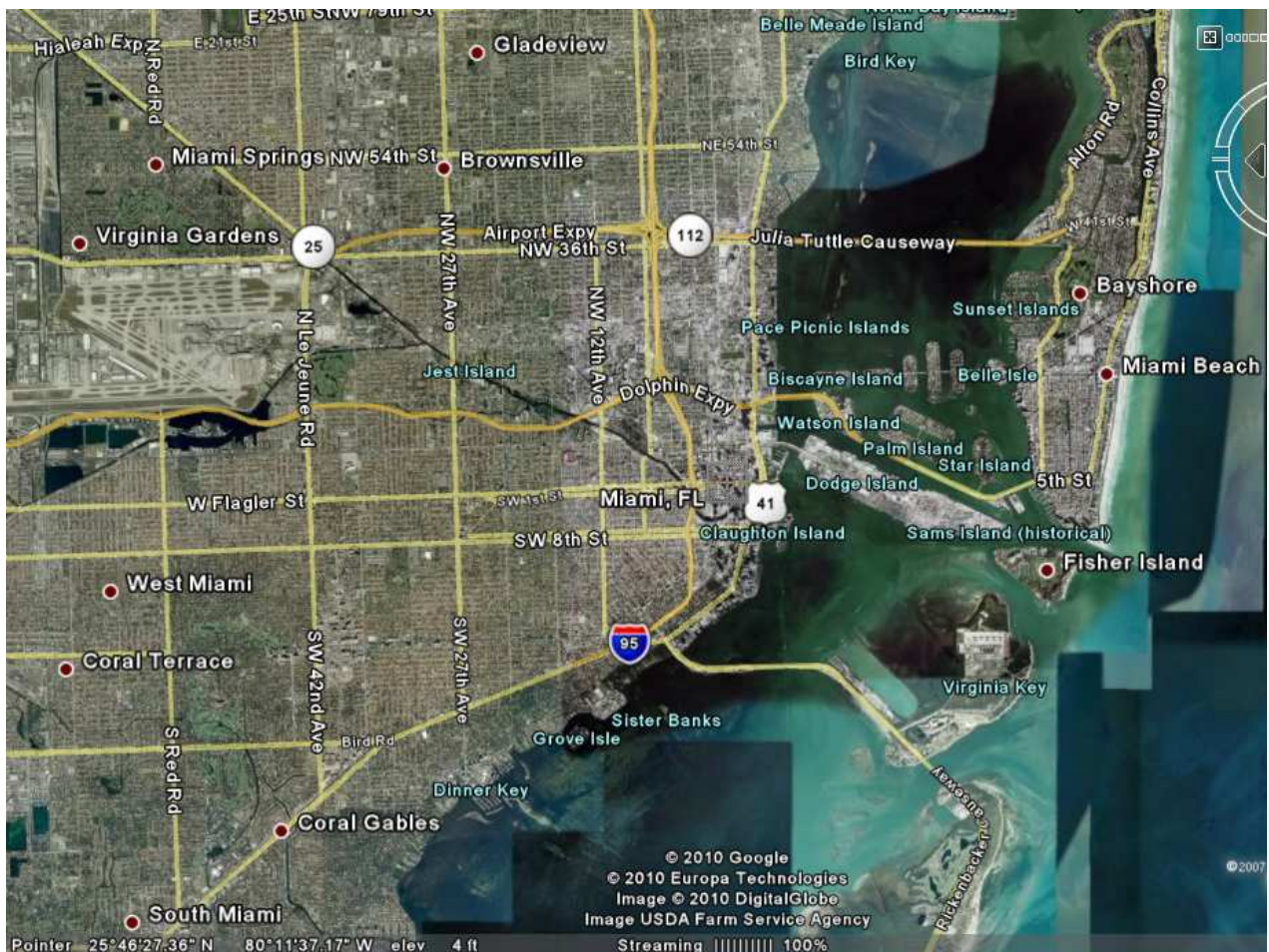


Figure 5. Miami metropolitan area. Google Earth.

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includes stores and other businesses catering to Cuban preferences, Spanish signage, and Caribbean architecture (interview).

An interesting friction exists between Cuban Americans who have been in the U.S. for decades and those who are newly arrived. Well-established Cuban Americans in the Miami area, whether they live in Little Havana or Kendall, tend to disassociate themselves from recent immigrants. Many interviewees noted that recent immigrants are not as *couth* as Cubans used to be, before Castro took power. Additionally, Little Havana is increasingly becoming home to immigrants from elsewhere in the Caribbean and Central America. Ethnic tensions, for which Miami has a dubious reputation, can run high. Generally speaking, the waves of emigration from Cuba since the 1959 revolution have become poorer and “darker” over time, reflecting the intersection of race and class politics in Cuba that prompted many wealthy white business owners to jump ship soon after the revolution. Those of less means had fewer options and have remained in Cuba longer. The popular (though misconceived) representation of Marielitos as criminals or degenerates has also stuck in the minds of people in the U.S. – including long-established Cuban Americans – prompting further discrimination against recent refugees (Croucher 1997).

The official line is that racism does not exist in Cuba; rather, *mestizaje* (racial mixing), is embraced as a cornerstone of Cuba’s cultural and political identity. After a particularly violent racially infused event “in which Cuba’s Republican government massacred some 3,000 Afro-Cuban supporters of the Partido Independiente de Color, a political party which championed the rights of Blacks” in 1912, race-based political groups were banned (Schmidt 2008: 160; Helg 1995; Pérez 1995). Employment opportunities in early twentieth century Cuba tended to be segregated by race as well, with White men and women filling a greater proportion of professional jobs than Black men and women (Helg 1995; Pérez 1995). By 1943, this trend had shifted somewhat, but Afro-Cubans still “occupied the lower end of the socio-economic order” –

Black Cubans experienced greater job insecurity, high rates of illiteracy, poor healthcare and housing, and earned lower wages than Whites (Pérez 1995: 307). This inequality meant that upon the success of the revolution, Afro-Cubans comprised a large proportion of those that stood to benefit from new policies of redistribution and rent reductions (ibid.).

Race and racism have remained pressing issues in the post-revolutionary era. Soon after the revolution, social clubs with “racially affiliated” members were also banned (Schmidt 2008). Blackness is officially embraced (and often put on display for tourists) as an integral part of Cuban culture, but African descent continues to be de-valued in terms of political power, which is overwhelmingly yielded by Whites (de la Fuente 2001). Jalane Schmidt reports that those Cubans who claim a “pure white” heritage are often admonished by the question, “where is your grandmother?” (Schmidt 2008: 160), an inquiry that highlights the widely-held, though “unofficial”, opinion that Spanish ancestry is preferred to African. Racism and anti-racist sentiments thus co-exist in post-revolutionary Cuba, resulting in “unofficial” tensions and marked inequality (de la Fuente 2001).

These attitudes extend their reach even to the ever-important remittances that come from family abroad. White Cubans are more likely to have relatives in other countries who can afford to send money, exacerbating racial and economic inequality. Even the government’s portrayal of Cuban exiles in the U.S. reflects a racial bias – “*los gusanos*” (the worms) are depicted as “uniformly white, wealthy, racist reactionaries [...] counterrevolutionary elitists who are diametrically opposed to preferred *mestizaje* ideals of “Cubanness,” as well as to Marxist solidarity and cultural populism” (Schmidt 2008: 161). Additionally, the tourism industry, so important to Cuba’s economy today, is overwhelmingly staffed with White Cubans who have the “good presentation” desired by hotel owners and the like. But this same industry capitalizes on

Afro-Cuban cultural traditions – music, dance, even religion – to represent Cuba (ibid.). In a 2003 public statement, Castro blamed Cuba’s persistent racial inequality (evinced by higher proportions of Blacks and mulattoes in prison) on “these disadvantaged populations having reproduced the conditions of ‘less knowledge and culture’” (Schmidt 2008: 163). Some younger people of color in Cuba have expressed admiration for U.S. models of racial political mobilization (ibid.).

Despite the unfortunate similarities between Cuban and American racism, Duany notes that immigrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean have “contributed to the erosion of the traditional dichotomy between black and white that has been prevalent in U.S. history” (2005:1). When Cubans began arriving en masse in Miami, most were willing to work for very low wages, which interrupted the racial (and class) binary structure previously in existence. Fear of an “invasion” quickly spread, and remained an elemental part of the local discourse on race and ethnicity in the city (Croucher 1997:63). Racial tensions soared to new heights in 1979 when Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance salesman, was killed by several white police officers after a being stopped for a traffic violation (Porter & Dunn 1984). Riots continued throughout 1980, peaking in May. The city’s resources were stretched even thinner when 125,000 Marielitos began disembarking in Miami that same year. They filled the Orange Bowl football stadium and overflowed into tent cities under Interstate 95 and the Dolphin Expressway (Croucher 1997; Lars & David interview). Like previous refugees, they brought very little with them in the way of clothing or other resources. South Beach at this time had stretches of deserted, boarded up homes, and many Marielitos eventually moved in. After the boatlift, *balseros* (“boat people”; those that attempt the crossing illegally aboard small boats or rafts) began floating to the U.S.; according to one local expert, nearly 40,000 have made it to Miami.

Of the 1.2 million self-identified Cubans and Cuban Americans in the U.S., at least sixty percent live in the greater Miami area (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000; Grenier & Pérez 2003). While Miami is the largest Cuban community outside of Cuba, sizeable settlements in the U.S. can also be found in and around New York City, Los Angeles, Tampa, and Chicago (Duany 2003; Grenier & Pérez 2003), along with much smaller communities dispersed throughout the country. While chain migration and ethnic enclaves are effective in attracting immigrants, so are the social and economic initiatives undertaken by social service groups that assist immigrants in finding housing, jobs, and education. Many of these smaller Cuban communities in the U.S. owe their presence to groups like Catholic Charities, which assists newly arrived refugees that come to particular dioceses, or organizations like Cooperative Extension, and to private foundations that perform outreach services to aid immigrants in the resettlement process.

Georgia has been “at the forefront of the economic opportunity states” since the 1970s, with numbers of immigrants jumping from 32,988 in 1970 to 577,273 in 2000 – 7 percent of the state’s population (Bankston 2007:34). Construction and growth in the textile, poultry processing, and agricultural industries accounts for many of the low-skill job opportunities attracting immigrants to Georgia<sup>17</sup> (Bankston 2007; Murphy, Blanchard, & Hill 2001). Coupled with a relatively low cost of living (according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Georgia is fast becoming one of the most popular secondary migration destinations for immigrants to the U.S. (Perry & Schachter 2003). Atlanta is a key attraction for immigrants, and based on 2000 Census figures, the city boasts “seventy percent of the state’s foreign-born Asians and 57 percent

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<sup>17</sup> The market for highly skilled immigrants has also increased dramatically in the last thirty years, attracting immigrants, many from South Asia, to white collar jobs in Atlanta (Bankston 2007).



of its Hispanic population” (Bankston 2007). The metro Atlanta area is home to nearly half of Georgia’s 9,685,744 residents (Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 estimates).



Figure 6. Map of Georgia. geology.com

According to responses to the 2000 Census, there are approximately 12,500 Cubans living in Georgia, and about half of that population is foreign-born (United States Census 2000). Unlike Florida, Georgia is without a large Cuban enclave and Cuban immigrants are dispersed throughout the state. There does, however, exist a long-standing relationship between Cuba and Georgia that has resulted in a small (relative to Miami) Cuban community of about 2,500 in Atlanta (Bayala 2006). Prior to the success of the revolution, elite Cuban families sent their children to camps and schools in Georgia, participated in sporting leagues like the Havat Atlanta football club, and enjoyed yacht clubs that bridged the gap between the two places. This presence is still visible in Atlanta's public landscape: the Cuban Club of Atlanta in Doraville, Georgia; the Havana Sandwich Shop on Buford Highway; and the Coca-Cola Company, which was famously (and profitably) led in the 1980s and '90s by Roberto Goizueta who emigrated from Cuba in 1960 (New Georgia Encyclopedia 2009).

Moultrie, named for General William Moultrie, a Revolutionary War hero, was chartered in 1879. Timber was the main attraction in its early years, and infrastructure like railroads and sawmills sprung up around this industry. This deforested land was converted to farms, and Moultrie's path to agricultural success was paved as experienced farmers from elsewhere in the region were invited to develop the land (A Pictorial History of Colquitt Co. 1993).

According to Moultrie residents, Cuban immigrants first arrived there from Cuba and from elsewhere in the U.S. in the years soon after the success of the revolution, but the bulk of the current population has settled there within the last two decades. Moultrie is known throughout the state for its agricultural industry, which attracts seasonal and permanent migrant

workers from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala as well. Many of these jobs were formally held by African American workers, and the shift toward hiring more foreign labor has not been met without resentment.

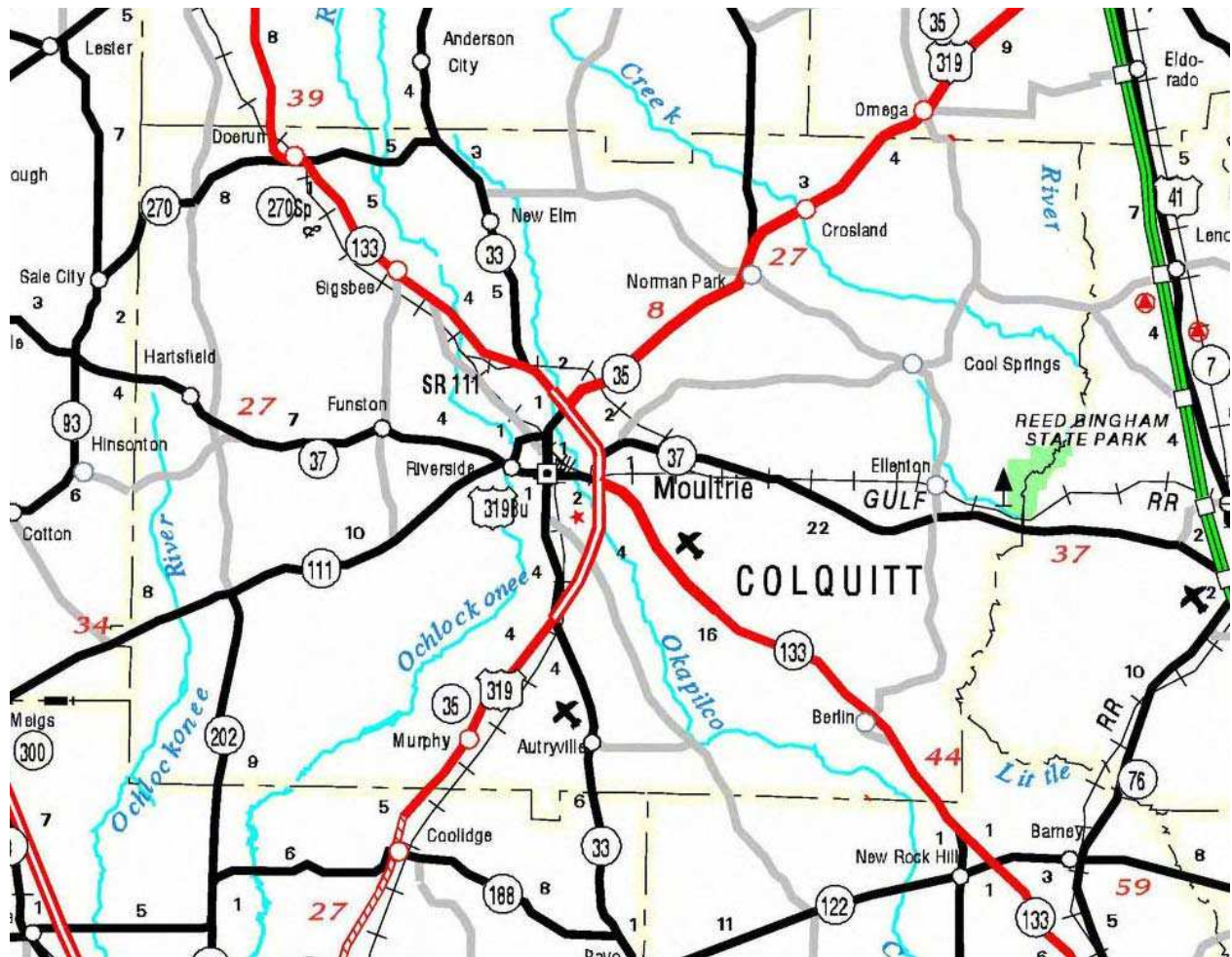


Figure 7. Colquitt County, Georgia.  
[georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/histcountymaps/colquitt1999map](http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/histcountymaps/colquitt1999map).

Most members of the Cuban community interviewed in Moultrie report living in “the countryside” for at least part of their lives in Cuba, in places like Las Tunas or Pinar del Rio that also have an agricultural base. They are accustomed to (or, in some cases, prefer) a slower-paced lifestyle than Miami tends to allow, and appreciate the significantly lower cost of living in

Moultrie. But opportunities beyond low paying work in agriculture are largely out of reach for Cubans in Moultrie because most of the community speaks very little English. Several of those interviewed had steady, white collar jobs in Cuba, in fields like teaching and human resources. That experience does not transfer to the U.S., however, especially without being sufficiently proficient in English. Many of the young parents interviewed noted that they view education as the most important factor in the lives of their children, though in most cases they are unable to help with homework or comprehend parent-teacher meetings.

Religion is a binding force for the community, with most of those interviewed reporting that they and their children attend up to three Jehovah's Witness meetings weekly. These are conducted in Spanish, with fellow Cuban immigrants, both in the Kingdom Hall and in private homes. Jehovah's Witness membership increased dramatically in Cuba after the revolution in 1959. Margaret E. Crahan provides an explanation for this phenomenon:

[Baptists], together with the Jehovah's Witnesses, [are] the most rapidly growing denomination in Cuba. Statistics on the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists are difficult to obtain. Estimates by officials of the Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches place their strength at 20,000 to 35,000 with an increasing number in Havana, although prior to the revolution they were concentrated in the rural areas (IH 47413; IH 471119; IH 3703212). Such groups, as well as other fundamentalist sects, provide alternative communities for those who resist integration into the socialist society being built in Cuba. Individuals, for example, who oppose universal military service, public education, and the collectivization of small privately held farms, find reinforcement among the Jehovah's Witnesses.

For those who wish to publicly express their disaffection from the present government, membership in such groups is an obvious means. (Crahan 1979: 165)

And, “overall, the churches attracted a fairly high proportion of the disaffected, with indications that those groups least integrated into contemporary Cuba, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, were the fastest growing (IH 47413; IH 471191)” (Crahan 1979: 177).

Other social gatherings revolve around the Witness community in Moultrie as well, because, according to Estela, “you can just tell” about those that are not Witnesses – prohibitions and a strict moral code distinguish members and non-members. Witnesses form a “millennial sect which emphasizes the approaching final judgment. [...] Witnesses are expected to be involved with the secular world as little as possible (Alston & Aguirre 1970:64-5). In general, gatherings are limited to the Cuban community, although large affairs like baby showers may also include Mexican Witnesses guests.

Compared to Cuban immigrants in Miami, those in Moultrie have not created visible public landscapes. This is likely a function of their relatively recent arrival and lack of financial stability. But private, symbolic landscapes take shape in people’s homes and through the Witness community. Special foods prepared for parties, Cuban music and dancing, and the freedom to speak Spanish are all elements of this process. Photographs from Cuba, especially those that include family members, along with the occasional piece of art depicting a scene from the island are common in many people’s homes. Interviewees commonly pulled out additional photographs during our conversations to accompany their stories, or lament a relative not seen in years.

A significant part of the resettlement process and the maintenance of ties with people still in Cuba is sending remittances. Remittances (private money transfers) from the U.S. to Cuba

have increased dramatically in recent decades, jumping from US\$13 million in 1990 to US\$720 million in 2000 (Duany 20003). The Cuban government is also attempting to benefit from this trend, charging exorbitant fees for money sent from the U.S.; “in 2002, the cost of sending money to Cuba was the highest in the [Hispanic Caribbean], averaging \$28 per \$250 transferred” (Duany 2003:11). The money transferred is used to augment low wages just as it is in many other remittance-receiving countries. Transnational migration is a key source for much needed funds, and those living in Cuba with relatives abroad tend to enjoy more economic security in Cuba’s dual economy. Indeed, the economic crisis of the Special Period prompted the relaxation of Cuba’s policies for allowing people to emigrate from the island, which had the effect of providing a safety valve of sorts. These revised policies ensured that more people would leave and reduce shortages for those who remained on the island. One such policy indicates that Cubans who leave the island with legal permission to do so are no longer barred from returning (Duany 2003; Barberia 2002). The traditionally tenuous and distrustful relations between the Cuban government and the Cuban diaspora also relaxed during the 1990s, as emigration and remittances were increasingly recognized as key survival strategies during the Special Period (Duany 2003).

Cuban food, music, and art have left a distinct imprint on the Southern landscape, often resulting in hybridized, re-imagined versions of Cuban traditions. Thus these transnational landscapes not only re-envision Cuban identity, but influence the mishmash that is “American” identity as well. The following two chapters present results gathered in Miami and Moultrie, evidence of landscapes that incorporate elements of the local environment and memories of Cuba. It should be noted that while this project seeks to compare the experiences of immigrants at these locations in the Cuban diaspora, their difference precludes identical treatment here.

Chapter 4, which includes data gathered in Miami, presents “Vignettes”, excerpts from individuals’ life histories that demonstrate the ways they have (re)created Cuban landscapes. Research participants in Moultrie, however were generally more reluctant to share details about their lives in Cuba and in the U.S., so these are not included here. Instead, Chapter 5 presents a detailed account of one of the largest Cuban gatherings in Moultrie, the baby shower.

## CHAPTER 4

### CUBAN LANDSCAPES IN MIAMI, FLORIDA

#### Introduction

Miami, Florida, has come to be nearly synonymous with its Cuban influences. Language, music, cuisine, architecture, even local political persuasions in Miami, have all developed over the past century or two in tandem with South Florida's relationship with Cuba and Cuban people. Cubans continue to exert a strong influence over the region in part because of their economic and political success, but also because of their sheer numbers relative to other minority groups. And because "new" Cubans continue to arrive and Cuban Americans periodically return to Cuba, the region's connectedness to Cuba remains vital. Many Miami institutions feature this connection prominently; the extensive Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami, El Nuevo Herald – the Spanish language counterpart to the Miami Herald daily newspaper, and the Archdiocese of Miami are just a few examples of the formalized connections to Cubans and Cuban culture that are maintained and made publically accessible to Miamians. Scores of popular and academic publications have presented accounts of Cuban (and Cuban American) lives lived in Miami, or "Havana, U.S.A." (Garcia 1996). Many of these publications also outline the influence of the political agenda in line with the majority opinion of first generation Cuban refugees in Miami: Castro's government must be ousted lest it commit more abuses. More tempered perspectives toward the revolutionary government have developed among those Cubans that either grew up in the U.S. or were born here, but a sense of loss pervades in much of



this segment of the community as well. In general, the conservative perspective so popular in Miami has promoted a nostalgic longing for a place that has been ravaged, and, according to many, ruined, by communism. Monuments, both public and private, stand as testament to this sense of loss and longing to such an extent that it has become an integral part of Cuban landscapes in Miami.

Miami is a stronghold of anticommunist sentiment in the U.S., and anticommunist leaders tend to leave little room for compromise or tolerance of island politics (Guerra 2007). Events like the tragic case of Elián González highlight the Miami Cuban “vision of an alternative nation” (Guerra 2007:20). Elián was a young Cuban *balsero* and the subject of an international incident in 2000 when the boat he was in capsized and his mother was killed. In response to this case, “thousands of young Miami Cubans, who had never known Cuba, enthusiastically celebrated their membership in the alternative Cuba their parents had created in South Florida” (Guerra 2007:21). This “alternative Cuba” in Miami tends to draw on its own material wealth to demonstrate the failures of communism. Indeed, Elián’s home in Little Havana was turned into a shrine, overflowing with toys and a bronze statue of the boy playing on the front yard (Guerra 2007). A moral argument against communism is often combined with arguments regarding its material deficits to add to the convictions of exile leaders that Cuba, so long as it is governed by a communist leader, will not win the grace of God; rather, Miami has become the chosen, the “real”, Cuba (Guerra 2007). As testament to the strength of these convictions, a religious following equating Elián variously with the Santería deity Elegua or with the Messiah has also developed. Pamphlets and online blogs still illustrate the uncensored fury felt by some exile Cubans over the handling of Elián’s case by the U.S. government:

Poor Elian! [sic]

For the last six years, after he was forced to return to Cuba to become another slave, Elian Gonzalez had to celebrate his birthday with his real father, Fidel Castro. But now, the Cuban dictator is half dead and unable to attend his young slave's birthday party.

However, that doesn't mean that Elian would be able to celebrate his birthday as a normal child. Not in Castro's Cuba!

Elian, who today became a teenager, still had to "celebrate" his birthday party in the presence of two "viejos cagalitrosos," the new dictator-in-chief and Ricardo "Watermellon [sic] Head" Alarcon.

Can you imagine? A teenager having to salute these two sinister characters on his birthday, after having been forced to do the same with Cuba's mass murderer for the last six years?

Poor Elian! I wonder if Janet Reno remembered to send him a birthday card.

(excerpt from [www.therealcuba.com](http://www.therealcuba.com))

But the response to Cuba-U.S. relations is not always so negative. Anticommunist political extremists aside, most Miami Cubans fall somewhere towards the middle of a broad spectrum of perspectives. For instance, while some of those interviewed in Miami swear that they will not return to Cuba until Castro's government has been eradicated, others have visited several times. Not surprisingly, for those interviewed, the focus is not on the governments of Cuba or the U.S. themselves, but on the effects of government policies on the interviewees and their loved ones.

The frenetic pace of Miami, fueled in part by the thimblefuls of strong, sugary Cuban coffee available on most street corners, has been attributed to the city's Cuban presence in other ways as well. David Rieff has noted that Cubans in Miami have lent the city a particularly Cuban atmosphere and suggested that Cubans are perhaps the most comfortable, stable, and securely rooted population in Miami today (Rieff 1987, 1993). He connects this fast-paced, almost impatient atmosphere to the frustration Miami Cubans feel toward Castro and his policies (Rieff 1993). But, of course, despite their frustration, many people still visit Cuba. They go not to show support for the government but to reconnect with family and friends who still live there. Flights continue to depart three times a day from Miami International Airport, adjacent to Little Havana, to Havana's José Martí International Airport at the edge of the city, carrying people and their bulging suitcases to visit relatives on the island or returning home from a visit to the U.S. And allegiances to Cuba, Castro or no, abound in Miami. Place names, foods, sounds, stories, architecture, art and music, and language throughout the greater Miami area are reminiscent of a connection shared by the region's Cuban population – a connection both to the island and to each other.

Miami in general, and Little Havana in particular, has become what Thomas Boswell has called “the Cuban American homeland” (Boswell 1993). James Curtis has documented the Cuban American yard shrines of Little Havana, noting their tendency to reflect a family's religious beliefs, often with more intensity than in Cuba (Curtis 1980). But the depth of the Cuban landscape in Little Havana far surpasses people's yards and even their homes. *Botánicas*, stores that sell herbs, candles, and other ingredients essential to the practice of *Santería*, a syncretic religion with Afro-Cuban roots, dot the landscape as well. *Santería* in the U.S. is said to have become “‘a mental healthcare system’ for the shock of exile” (Cros Sandoval 1979 in

Brown 2000:5). Thomas Tweed's (1997) careful analysis of the *Virgen de la Caridad* chapel in Miami also highlights the unique exile status of many Cubans there. "Our Lady of the Exile", as la Virgen is also known, has been transformed from the patroness of Cuba to the patroness of the exile community in Miami since she arrived there shortly after the revolution (her likeness has since made the journey hundreds of times in the pockets and luggage of people hoping for safe passage under her watch). La Virgen's followers in Miami hail from all over Cuba, although older White women make up the majority of visitors to the chapel (Tweed 1997). Tweed notes that the chapel and its surroundings have been shaped and embedded with meaning by the unique exile community in Miami; the inner walls are decorated with portraits of famous pre-revolutionary Cuban political leaders, social activists, and religious leaders. The shrine's orientation on Biscayne Bay and its proximity to the sea (and Cuba) is especially significant to many devotees, as it enhances "[the chapel's] power as a diasporic symbol because it [is] aligned with the island and juxtaposed to the sea" (Tweed 1997: 101).

Violaine Jolivet, a doctoral student in geography at Université Paris, has considered the mobility of Cuban and Haitian immigrants in Miami by looking at the ways these groups mark space in their new city (Jolivet 2007). She has documented a series of geopolitical place-making techniques, most notably signs, that label space and seem to reflect the relative level of support Cuban and Haitian individuals and communities receive from the mainstream and from the geopolitical context more broadly. Indeed, Cuban influence on the city is nearly impossible to avoid; it appears in yards, on signs, in markets, in architecture, on the airwaves, and in individuals' homes and hearts. It is woven into the existing landscape, embedded in the culture of Miami, so as to create a hybrid, transnational landscape unique in its breadth and depth.

Public displays of Cubanness are ubiquitous (though certainly not homogenous) and they lend Miami a unique air of nostalgia.

The remainder of this chapter includes a discussion of several elements of Cuban landscapes created in Little Havana, focusing on the area known as Calle Ocho. Also included here is an overview of *CubaNostalgia*, a popular annual cultural gathering in Miami that features Cuban art, food, music, and businesses. A number of individual's experiences comprise the fourth section of this chapter, highlighting the diversity of Cuban experiences in Miami, the variety of contexts in which people's Cuban heritage shapes their lives, and the landscapes created therein. Unless otherwise noted, information included in this chapter and the following comes from the author's observations and communication with residents of Miami.

### Little Havana

Little Havana is the undisputed heart of Cuban Miami. I spent several weeks living there in 2008 and 2009, and much of the following information is based on that experience and interviews conducted with residents. Cuban and other Latino immigrants to the U.S. began settling in this neighborhood in the 1950s after the area's largely Jewish<sup>18</sup> population began moving from Riverside, as it was previously known, to Miami's suburbs. Little Havana is officially defined as the area bordered by the Miami River to the north, 37th Avenue to the west, Interstate 95 (4th Avenue) to the east, and Southwest 11th Street to the south (City of Miami Neighborhood Enhancement Team; see Figure 9 below). As increasing numbers of Cubans began arriving in Miami in the 1960s, many were attracted to the cheap housing and central

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<sup>18</sup> Previous inhabitants of this region include Miccosukees, white and black Bahamians, Middle Easterners, "and folks with Deep South pedigrees" (George 2006: x).

location of the Little Havana neighborhood. The cost of living in Little Havana remains relatively low for Miami, with an average house selling for around \$150,000 and an abundance of duplexes, rental units, and motels (Trulia).



Figure 8. Calle Ocho, Little Havana, Miami, Florida. Photograph by author.

Throughout the 1980s and '90s the area was riddled with crime, along with much of the rest of Miami, but within the past two decades the main commercial drag along Calle Ocho (Southwest 8<sup>th</sup> Street) has developed into a small but busy collection of businesses, including art galleries, cigar stores, Cuban restaurants, guayabera merchants, and Cuban grocers and bakeries. Today, Little Havana acts as an intermediary between the wealthy Coconut Grove neighborhood and poorer areas to the north and west, and according to local police, crime rates remain fairly



high in Little Havana. The City of Miami government also notes that, “the population [of Little Havana] is over 50,000 and has the highest residential density in the city. This residential area is comprised of a combination of single-family, duplex and medium density multi-family structures but the majority of all of the housing units are apartments” (Little Havana NET Office). Recent immigrants from Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean are popularly perceived as contributing to this crime rate, especially those that come from poor or uneducated backgrounds or those that grew up under the influence of Fidel Castro’s policies. But Miami has the distinction of being the poorest city in all of the United States, which is likely the primary reason for the high crime rate (U.S. Census 2000).

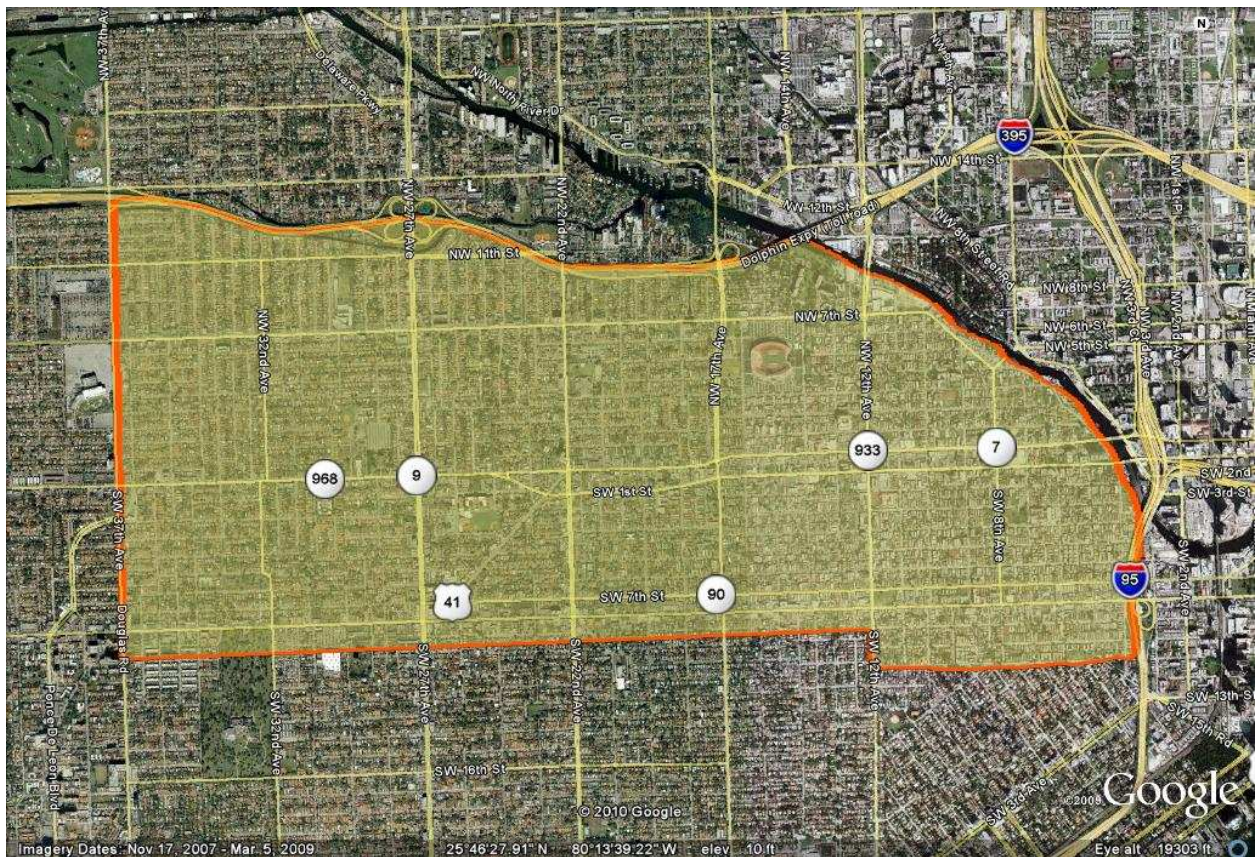


Figure 9. Map of Little Havana Neighborhood, Miami, Florida. Google Earth.

While Calle Ocho may be reminiscent of other regions of the U.S. with a large or concentrated immigrant population, it is uniquely Cuban in its incorporation of historical and city-sanctioned landmarks. Cuban Memorial Boulevard occupies a stretch of 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a quiet, shady street just off of Calle Ocho. The Boulevard displays a series of monuments reflecting Cuban history and commemorating those who fought in the struggle for Cuban independence. The Eternal Torch, in honor of the 2506th Brigade, stands at the entrance to the Boulevard in honor of those who fought in the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961. Statues of Nestor Izquierdo, General Antonio Maceo, and the Virgin Mary, themselves heroes and saviors that factor prominently in Cuban history and culture, follow. There is also a plaque dedicated to José Martí that was installed in 1995 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. At the end of the series is a large bronze map of Cuba dedicated to “the ideals of people who will never forget the pledge of making their fatherland free.” It is not uncommon to see older Cuban gentlemen sitting on benches or atop up-turned buckets between the sturdy plaques and busts playing dominos in the shade of the huge ceiba trees, themselves a reminder of Cuba and a frequent site for Santería offerings, growing between monuments.

Màximo Gomez Park, more popularly known as Domino Park, also sits along Calle Ocho not far from the Boulevard. This park, named for a famous Cuban revolutionary leader in the fight for Cuban independence from Spain, was created in the late 1980s by the Little Havana Development Authority to provide a space for people to gather in Little Havana. The site was popular for dominos before the park was officially created by the city, but problems with loitering and drug dealers that occupied the area after hours, and the refusal of domino players to relocate to another park, prompted local authorities to create a more legible space (Marquis 1987). Most days it is filled to capacity with retirees, mostly men in guayaberas, clicking



dominos onto the carefully edged tables or pondering their next chess move at the checkered ones. The activity is carefully shaded by canopies pieced together under a few trees.

Occasionally, busloads of tourists stream by to snap photos and sniff at the cigar smoke wafting over the fence. Use of the park is restricted to residents of Little Havana over the age of 55, and an attendant on duty checks identification before allowing visitors to enter.

The new Domino Plaza links Domino Park with the historic Tower Theater, which was built in 1926 as one of the first state-of-the-art movie theaters in the South. As Cubans émigrés moved into homes around Calle Ocho in greater numbers throughout the 1960s, the Theater altered its film offerings to include American films with Spanish subtitles (George 2006). Many members of the Cuban community who have grown up in or around Little Havana remember spending Sunday afternoons in the Tower Theater, enjoying cartoons and Westerns and the air conditioning (personal communication). The Theater closed in 1984, but is now run by the Cultural Affairs Department of Miami Dade College. “The Tower Theatre continues to serve as a historic gathering place for cultural connections in Little Havana, where the community can enjoy alternative and culturally specific exhibitions and performances, free educational lectures given by MDC faculty and other scholars in our community, and both Spanish-language films and English-language films, subtitled in Spanish” (Miami Dade College). Around the corner from Domino Park and the new Plaza is the *Paseo de las Estrellas* (Walk of the stars), which features star-shaped bronze plaques set into the brick sidewalk inscribed with the names of famous Hispanic artists, businesspeople, and sports stars.

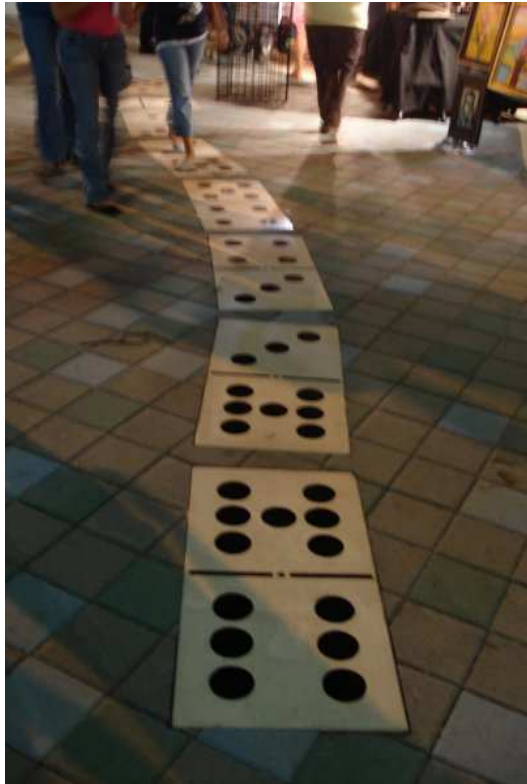


Figure 10. Domino Plaza during Viernes Cultural. Little Havana, Miami, Florida. Photograph by author.

Viernes Culturales, or Cultural Friday, is held the last Friday of each month in Little Havana. These events are a free, open-air celebration of the area's Cuban culture and heritage, and they draw people from all over the region. Viernes Culturales are sponsored by Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, and a handful of local businesses. According to its organizers, Viernes Culturales attract nearly 70,000 visitors each year (Viernes Culturales, Inc.). Most of the activities and vendors are located along Calle Ocho, between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenues, with stages and room for dancing reserved along the alleyways. Art galleries, cigar shops, and restaurants keep their doors open late into the night, many of them hosting receptions for new artists or offering cocktails to customers. The plazas and open spaces near Domino Park are filled with vendors selling such wares as fine art, Panama hats, and knickknacks that say "Cuba". There is a

main stage, featuring a popular Cuban music ensemble in the late evening, along with street musicians and performers. Conga lines may materialize at a moment's notice. Viernes Culturales pale in comparison to Miami's annual Carnaval celebration, but their cultural focus remains more narrowly fixed on the Cuban community than does Carnaval Miami.

Businesses throughout Little Havana reflect the neighborhood's Cuban heritage as well. Little Havana's art galleries feature Cuban art made by Cuban exiles or imported from artists still on the island. Art also factors heavily in other businesses; popular Cuban restaurants up and down Calle Ocho and elsewhere in Miami feature murals and collections of framed artwork that circulate occasionally, most of it depicting idyllic scenes or monuments in Cuba. Cigar stores feature "Cuban" cigars made from Cuban-bred, Dominican-grown tobacco soaked in Spanish red wine, thought to be the closest to a genuine Cuban available lawfully in the U.S. Many of the pricier varieties at Cuba Tobacco Trading Cigar Shop are hand rolled in the store at an old fashioned wooden workstation by a recent Cuban exile trained in the art of cigar-making in Havana's factories. Sedano's, a grocery store chain founded in 1961 by successful Cuban American businessman Armando Guerra, has a store on Calle Ocho as well – Sedano's is now considered to be among the top retailers of Hispanic foods in the nation. Other, less anglicized grocery stores can be found throughout Little Havana as well, featuring names like El Colón, Ayestaran Market, and Presidente Supermarket. A large majority of the goods sold in these stores are imported from other Caribbean islands, from South America, or produced in South Florida by Cuban-owned (or Cuban-inspired) companies, often re-creating popular Cuban brand names (eg. El Pilon coffee). Most independent grocers and restaurants in Little Havana also include a cafecito window in their establishment, continuing the Cuban custom of a walk-up coffee and snack counter.



Figure 11. Sign for the famous Versailles Restaurant on Calle Ocho in Little Havana, Miami. Photograph by author.

Just a few blocks away in Coral Gables is the University of Miami. According to the head librarian at the Richter Library, the University has had a long relationship with Cuba, one that dates back to the 1920s. As a result, the Cuban Heritage Collection, established after several exiled Cuban librarians were hired in the early 1960s, receives donations of Cuban materials (magazines, newspapers, personal papers, books of all kinds) from people all over the world. This collection includes papers from the likes of the now-defunct Cuban Refugee Center, the entire collection of wealthy Cuban activist Lauriano Batista, a large set of documents from Pedro Pan children and parents, and well over 100,000 issues of *Bohemia* and other Cuban magazines and newspapers. There is a general photograph collection as well, featuring scenes from the

Peruvian embassy in Cuba in 1980 along with refugees sleeping under bridges near Miami's Orange Bowl. The mission of the Cuban Heritage Collection is not only to support the research and educational needs of the University community, but also to provide information "related to Cuba and the Cuban experience outside the island with an emphasis on the Cuban community in South Florida" to people in the local, national, and international communities (Cuban Heritage Collection 2006). The Collection, along with other Cuban studies experts at the University, comprise yet another Cuban layer of Miami's landscape.

### *CubaNostalgia*

CubaNostalgia is billed as "a three-day event showcasing Cuban life, customs and heritage through exhibits, vendors selling Cuban-themed items, and memorabilia, art galleries and artists. Also featured will be music stores, jewelry stores, bookstores, and traditional Cuban foods and drinks" (CubaNostalgia 2009: 2). The 2009 event I attended was staged on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> in Miami's vast Fair Expo Center on the outskirts of the city near Florida International University. The first annual CubaNostalgia occurred in 1998 at a smaller venue in Coral Gables where it remained until 2006. The event was the brainchild of two prominent Cuban American businessmen who are now president and vice president of CubaNostalgia, Incorporated. Pablo began the "showcase" in part because of his own personal interest in Cuban memorabilia; since then, CubaNostalgia has grown into "the premier Cuban event outside of Cuba," attracting thousands of guests in 2009 and amassing an impressive collection of sponsors, including at least thirty local and national businesses (CN 2009:2). The theme for the most

recent incarnation of CubanNostalgia was Freedom, and the event featured an exhibit of one of the original copies of Cuba's 1902 Constitution, along with abundant images of Miami's Freedom Tower<sup>19</sup> on event fliers, posters, and indoor scenery.



Figure 12. 2009 CubaNostalgia entrance, Miami Fair Expo Center. Photograph by author.

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<sup>19</sup> The Freedom Tower was originally built in Miami in 1925 as part of the offices of the now-defunct *Miami News and Metropolis* newspaper. When the paper went under thirty years later, the U.S. Government took over the building to process the influx of Cuban refugees entering the U.S.. Between 1960 and 1974, the Freedom Tower welcomed over 400,000 Cubans seeking refuge in the U.S.; it has become an important symbol in the Cuban community and is popularly known as “el refugio” (the refuge). The Tower has since been bought and restored as a museum and a monument to the trials of Cubans in the U.S. (George 2006; Lavender n.d.).

CubaNostalgia invited its sponsors and special guests to a preview party, tropical attire required, hosted the evening before the event officially opened. The party was sponsored in large part by Bacardi, Dewar's, Grey Goose, and Bombay Sapphire, and drinks flowed freely, especially the Bacardi *mojitos* described by one guest as "the only Cuban drink". There was also a large buffet of food from Café Mambo, featuring Cuban classics like *arroz con pollo*, *maduros*, *puerco asado*, *croquetas de jamón*, *plátanos*, bread, and *flan*. A coffee stand, frequented considerably less than the bars or the buffet line, was set up throughout the event. The preview party guests were almost exclusively middle-aged, wealthy White Cuban Americans, tanned and dressed impeccably in guayaberas and linen pants and slinky sundresses with impossibly high heels.

The main event, beginning Friday at 11:00 a.m., featured upwards of ninety vendors and exhibits. Among the most striking were an elaborate booth provided by *El Nuevo Herald*, and another by anti-Castro Cuban veterans group from the Museum of the 2506<sup>th</sup> Brigade. The *Herald* booth featured hanging panels displaying high quality reproductions of newspaper clippings from important occasions since the triumph of the revolution, especially focused on the trials of *exilios*, and a cluster of computers connected to their new network of Operation Pedro Pan Cuban Americans. Staff members invited visitors to either browse the database or add their own experiences to it.





Figure 13. *El Nuevo Herald* booth at 2009 CubaNostalgia, Miami. Photograph by author.

The booth provided by members of the Museum of the 2506<sup>th</sup> Brigade was understated compared to the *Herald*'s, but it was moving nonetheless. A group of ten or so Cuban men in their sixties and wearing military hats and pins sat at long tables flanked by temporary walls displaying black and white photographs and newspaper stories about the Bay of Pigs invasion and the events that inspired it. The tables were covered in literature created by the group (and others like them) to promote a sense of pride in Cuban exiles' involvement in the fight against Fidel Castro and to increase historical awareness of the violence that has resulted from Castro's

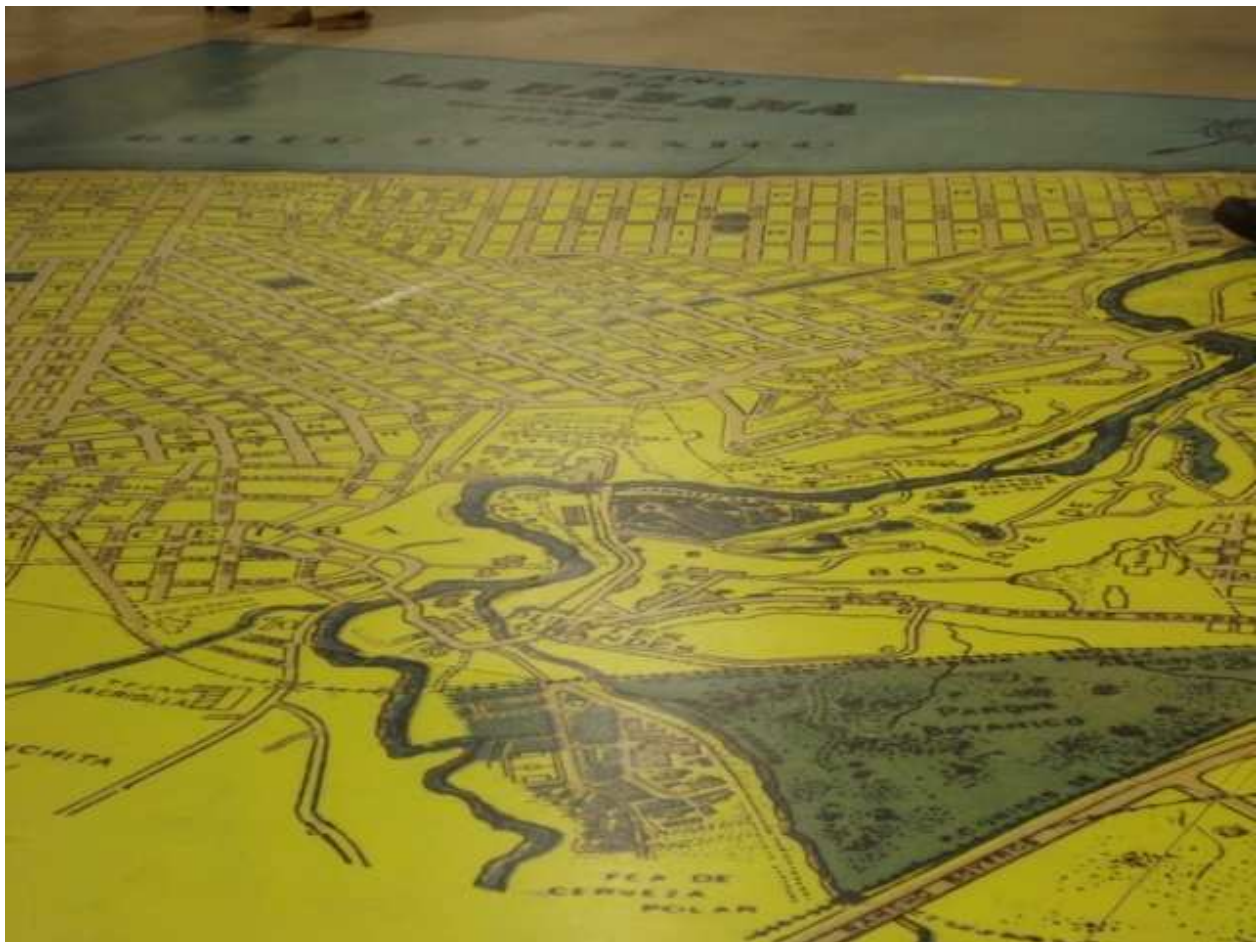


policies. Their primary publication is called *Girón*, named for one of the beaches where Bay of Pigs fighters landed. Also included in their display was a collection of bombs and parachutes used by the 2506 Brigade and set up amid American flags.

The exhibits at CubaNostalgia also had a dramatic effect. The giant Trade-Expo Center provided plenty of space for sizeable re-creations of Cuban landmarks and scenery. Noticeably, these re-creations almost exclusively depicted scenes from the 1950s. Winn-Dixie sponsored a kitchen, set up to mimic part of a “typical” 1950s home in Cuba, complete with traditional recipes and demonstrations. A pair of 30-foot maps, printed on padded decals and fastened to the floor, provided visitors with the chance to wander across 1950s-era Havana and Santiago de Cuba. A *bodeguita* from the same era was replicated in a display sponsored by Goya, along with an exhibit of a trio of 1950s Fords in a display sponsored by Ford Motor Company. Even the cafecitos for sale throughout the weekend were sold for the 1950’s price of 3¢ at el Pilon’s booth. Displays of older Cuban landscapes like the arch pictured below, which represents Cuban independence from Spain, underscored the impression that CubaNostalgia presents a very particular image of Cuba in which poverty, rural life, Afro-Cubanness (beyond its recognition as a part of Cuban “folk” culture), and even the recent revolutionary-era past factor little.



Figure 14. Re-creation of the arch at Obispo Street, built in Havana in 1902 in honor of José Martí and Antonio Maceo (sponsored by Humana) at 2009 CubaNostalgia, Miami. Photograph by author.



The display of Cuban culture and the overall atmosphere of CubaNostalgia live up to the event's name. Displays and exhibits hearken back to a time when life in Cuba was "freer" – especially for those who benefitted from the U.S.'s political and economic control of Cuba. One Cuban American man in attendance, a photographer for *El Nuevo Herald* in his late twenties, noted in response to the event that "Miami has lots of layers...what you see here is not all of Cubans". The image of Cuba at CubaNostalgia is largely a glossed and homogenous representation. It is a version common to, and perhaps preferred by, CubaNostalgia's wealthy, conservative, White planners and sponsors, many of whom come from similarly wealthy families that were robbed of their livelihood in Cuba in the early 1960s. This community is inclined to remember particular aspects of pre-revolutionary Cuba, despite the problems of that time, as home, and silence others. Owing to the power they wield in South Florida, other public representations of Cuba and Cuban heritage in Miami often mimic the kind of Cubanness presented at CubaNostalgia. But this version of Cuban landscape, with its 1950s-era decadence and inattention to more recent events (and arrivals), is not shared by all members of the Cuban exile community.

### Vignettes from Cuban Miami

Because the Cuban diaspora encompasses a diverse collection of perspectives and experiences, it is valuable to also include here a glimpse of individual expressions of Cubanness. The vignettes that follow come from interviews conducted with Cubans and Cuban Americans living in Miami. The sample included here was selected in part because of the different experiences the stories represent and in part because of these interviewees' willingness to share important details about the places they have created for themselves in Miami's Cuban landscape

that reflect their own personal connection with Cuba. Personally identifiable characteristics are avoided or changed, including names, to protect the privacy of these participants, per institutional review board guidelines.

The five vignettes presented below come from people who have emphasized a connection to Cuba in their lives in Miami. Despite this similarity, these interviewees represent a diversity of paths to the U.S., from child immigrants to Mariel boatlift passengers to third country exiles. Some have visited Cuba or would like to go soon, while others have not and do not wish to visit while Castro's policies are still in effect. Yet they each remember and re-create familiar foods in Miami. They recall Cuba with a sadness that betrays even the bubbliest personality. They are each happy to talk about their experiences migrating from Cuba and resettling in Miami, if only to wax nostalgic or promote a political ideology.

### *Marina*

Marina offered a raucous welcome into her Coral Cables office, immediately apologizing for not having any Cuban coffee prepared. She is a Cuban woman with dark curly hair and bright pink lipstick. She works as a producer in a music and events promotion company, which focuses on Cuban artists, that she owns with her son. She is proud to have worked closely with the likes of Celia Cruz and planned events for the Atlanta Olympic games, and she continues to organize the musical talent for the Calle Ocho Festival as part of Carnaval Miami each year.

Marina was born in Havana. Her family moved to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1963 when she was just four years old. She and her expectant mother were only able to bring with them the clothes they were wearing. They were held in the Freedom House on Biscayne Boulevard for about 27 hours after their arrival, which was still a church at that time, and workers there

provided her with clothing and a tiny radio and a doll that she has kept ever since. Marina's father had arrived in the U.S. (via Puerto Rico) and settled near his brother's family in Boston a few months prior. They were the only two Cuban families in Boston at that time. She remembers the first things given to her in the U.S., especially since they had so few resources. Marina remembers always having been a music enthusiast; during her childhood, she became well-known in her community by organizing Latin rhythm dance classes for her school peers at lunch time. When school faculty took notice of her dancing, these activities led to an official yearly event titled "Cuban Rhythms", which Marina produced and directed.

In Boston, her parents and grandparents encouraged her to continue speaking Spanish, and they continued key Cuban traditions in the family. Marina remembers special emphasis on events like *noche buena*, the night before Christmas, and *reyes malos*, January 7<sup>th</sup>; "we kept all the culture stuff from back then." This included reproducing Cuban foods too. "They taught me to do *frijoles negros* and rice and Cuban steak, and fried *empanadas*. We used to order the Cuban food from Miami, like avocados, because those were very expensive in Boston then. They didn't even have mangos." Her father would arrange periodic shipments from Miami via Greyhound buses to ensure a supply of essentials like plantains, mangoes, and Bustelo coffee. Marina's parents would wake the whole family at 6:30 on Sunday mornings to watch the only hour of Spanish-language television broadcast in Boston – they played old Spanish movies from the 1930s. Then her father would play records from Miami (and make Marina and her sister listen).

She has encouraged her own children and grandchildren to speak Spanish as well, but her children are accustomed to both American and Cuban foods. Music, of course, factors heavily in her home life as well, but songs like "*Cuba que linda es tú*" and "*Guantanamera*" that her father

used to sing over and over again bring Marina back to her childhood. But she has not gone to visit Cuba:

I never did go back. Although I defend Cuba in many ways, I try to say that different generations are different, not all the Cubans are criminals, not all the Cubans are good. It's like everybody, all the countries, have good people, bad people, *como si, como sa*, in between<sup>20</sup>. So I try to defend that part of me. But I don't like communism. I was raised up hating the communists, hating Castro.

I've seen what the guy has done. But of course, before I die I would like to see the place where I was born, the neighborhood, the house. It's one of my dreams.

Her son has visited Cuba already, as have her mother and sister. "I would say 80% of the people go to visit relatives. But then the other 20% go on business. They bring a bag of t-shirts, jeans, saying that they're for family, but then they sell it." She has only a few photographs from her childhood in Cuba, but now she asks friends who visit Cuba to bring back photos and compact discs for her.

### *Andrés*

Andrés took over his uncle's restaurant on Calle Ocho in 1992 after working there intermittently since 1985. The restaurant has been in business since 1974, when his uncle came from Cuba to the U.S. via Spain. He is proud of the awards that grace the walls at the entrance of the restaurant, many of them for "Best Cuban Food". The tables in the restaurant were

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<sup>20</sup> "This [younger] generation [of Cuban immigrants] is different. Many of them have not attended school, many of them lack education. It's a different level of culture. And they grew up with communism, so they come here and they are used to what Castro did. They're sometimes shy to express their thoughts [for fear of punishment]. They lack respect; they think that coming to the U.S. is a free country so they can do whatever they want. But they do bad things behind their backs, because they're used to doing that to live under Castro."

custom-made a few years ago by a local artist; they each depict a different scene “relevant for Cubans” from cities all over the island. He has decorated the remainder of the restaurant with art from the galleries on Calle Ocho in an effort to support other businesses in Little Havana. Two televisions broadcast programming from Univisión. In the evenings, musicians set up in a corner to play Cuban music, mostly old *boleros* or *son*. Attached to the main restaurant is another room with a separate entrance outfitted with a lunch counter, complete with stools (one with a police officer on top) and a bakery case.

Andrés was born in 1959, in his words “an important year”, and he came to Miami from Cuba in 1980 as part of the Mariel boatlift. He grew up in Viñales and Pinar del Rio, the inspiration for the cuisine he now serves. When he arrived in Miami, he had already completed three years of college; he enrolled in Miami Dade College to finish his degree, but was distracted by the restaurant business. He has not been back to Cuba, and has no desire to visit “unless they change the government”. When asked about his experiences growing up in Cuba and leaving for the U.S., Andrés says:

When I went out of Cuba, I went out illegal. In 1972, when my uncle left, we were supposed to leave all together – my uncle, my aunt, by two cousins, my father, my mother, my sister. In 1972 they gave the ok for my uncle to leave, my uncle’s father, and myself. I was only 11 years old. But my father said “no, no, no. We go all four together or we don’t go.” Later, when I was 15, I got permission to leave, but I didn’t because my parents didn’t leave without me and I wasn’t gonna leave without them. Then when Mariel came, that was a different story.



He had to “change” his papers to deny his university career and to get out of military service in Cuba and be allowed to board a boat at the port of Mariel. He waited fifteen days in the camps near Mariel to leave Cuba, the whole time exposed to Cuban military propaganda, and he turned 21 during that period. He described the agricultural work camps students are required to do each year, and said that his father was a forced worker for seven years as punishment for applying to leave Cuba. But Andrés has nicer memories of his time in Cuba as well. He says he was lucky to get into the University because he was a good student, but he wasn’t sent to nearby University of Havana; instead, because he was not a “good communist” – he had long hair, did not tuck in his shirt, and listened to rock music – he was sent to a university in Moa on the eastern side of the island, a 24-hour trip from his family. During his time there, he organized a successful water polo team (sans water) with the idea of getting a free trip back to Havana.

I have a lot of nostalgia about Cuba. I love the Cuban music, the Cuban people.

If you notice, my English is not that good. It’s because I’ve always been in the Cuban neighborhood with the old people that play domino in the park. I’m always talking to them, and trying to read a lot about my place. I see my Central American workers here or other places, that they take a vacation and they go to Colombia or El Salvador, and we can’t. We have to ask permission to go to our home place. It’s very sad. There’s a lot of sadness among the Cuban people that can’t go visit their relatives there that died. It’s very sad. I want to take my children to the family farm with the horses. It’s very sad.

He notes that the restaurant’s location on Calle Ocho plays a big role in its success. Other businesses on Calle Ocho attract people interested in Cuban culture, and more are scheduled to open soon, like the new Casa de Tula “based on a really, really old Cuban song that

was popular...this is the real heart, the center of Little Havana is here”. He notes that more and more tourists are becoming customers, but the regulars are primarily people from the surrounding neighborhood. He lives just a few blocks from the restaurant and he considers this an important element of the neighborhood – he can walk to work or to patronize other Calle Ocho establishments. “I always do my Christmas shopping in the Cuban memorabilia place.”

### *Francisco*

Francisco runs a lively shop in Miami that is always bustling with customers, deliveries, and food preparation. Their specialty is fresh juices, in any combination of tropical or North American fruits and vegetables imaginable. There is typically a young man with a machete slicing away at fresh coconuts near the front door and women in hairnets and white aprons behind steaming mounds of Cuban food set in a series of cafeteria-style buffet tables around the store. The whole store is situated in a kind of semi-outdoor space similar to a produce stand one might find in a much more rural setting than Miami. On the wall behind the cash register inside is hung a small statue of La Virgen de la Caridad. Two dozen picnic tables are set into a concrete floor outside the main portion of the store under a metal roof with ceiling fans that are rendered mostly useless by the heat. Tropical plants in a parking lot median make an effort to block the noise of the road. On this patio customers can enjoy their purchases and watch Univision on the satellite television. And rumor has it that this is the place to come if you find yourself in need of a boat to Cuba.

Goods for sale at Francisco’s store range from the aforementioned fresh juices to classic Cuban foods like *arroz con pollo* and *empanadas* to guava paste and bread. There is a warehouse attached to the back of the store and wonderful food smells everywhere. Francisco

says that this is a family business. He came to Miami thirty years ago to work in the store, and soon took over as manager. Francisco is a thin man in his late forties with a slight look of almost-panic about him. He says that he still considers Cuba “*mi tierra*”, though he has not been back in the thirty years since he left. Unlike others’ stories included here, Francisco still has family in Cuba. His language reflects a mixed allegiance: “*no hay barrier de la idioma...es una mezcla de idioma aquí*” (there is no language barrier...it’s a mix of language here). But employees and customers in the store speak only Spanish. Francisco is one of only three research participants in Miami to speak in Spanish throughout the entire interview.

### *Pedro*

Pedro’s office at the base of a Little Havana parking structure is filled to the brim with his collections of, well, a host of things. In one corner stands a mannequin wearing a camouflage vest and a string of ammunition across its chest. In another corner is a three-foot-long rusty missile with a paper Osama bin Laden taped to it. There are handcuffs on the doorknob and a “Braveheart” movie poster, photographs of community members, a statue of La Virgen de la Caridad, and a plaque documenting his service in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division of the U.S. Army on the walls. Pedro is a very affable man<sup>21</sup>, with thick, silver hair and a Polo shirt and wire-frame glasses. He came to Miami from Havana in 1961, when he was fifteen years old, with his mother and brother; his father joined them a few months later. His wife came to the U.S. that same year, but she went with her family to New York to live with relatives that had previously settled there.

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<sup>21</sup> “If they don’t give you an ‘A’, just call me and I’ll talk to your professor.”

Pedro works as an intermediary between the City Government of Miami, including the Police Department, and the Little Havana community. His job requires that he act as a translator of sorts; he and his office organize outreach efforts and community meetings at which locals have the opportunity to air their grievances to representatives from the city government and, hopefully, create a more productive relationship with local police. He also communicates information from the neighborhood to the city government and the local police in an effort to better assist community members. Petty crime and drug offenses, along with homelessness, undocumented immigrants, and garbage, are the primary issues he faces. He's been in his job for sixteen years now, all in Little Havana; he boasts that he is one of the most enduring employees among his co-workers. Pedro himself is a veteran of the Viet Nam war – and he notes that “the Little Havana today is definitely not the Little Havana that we used to have years ago. Years ago they called it Little Viet Nam. There was a section here at Flagler and 7<sup>th</sup> – we made so many arrests at that corner, more arrests than anyplace else in the city.”

Pedro attended the University of Miami for two years, where he became a member of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) because he hoped it would provide the opportunity to return to Cuba and fight to free Cuba from Castro's government; instead, he wound up in Viet Nam. When he finished his service in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, he enrolled at Florida International University and completed a degree in construction management. He became interested in the helping the community after college when he worked in city management, targeting “crack houses” throughout Miami first, then focusing on Little Havana in 1992 when he began his current position.

Pedro and his family enjoyed a comfortable middle-class lifestyle in Cuba; his father was an electrical engineer and made enough money that the family had a nice house in a nice neighborhood. He had come to visit Miami twice before the revolution as a tourist with his family. On one trip, they boarded a ferry in Havana, landed in Miami and then drove up to North Carolina. After the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, his parents decided to leave more permanently. They moved into a tiny duplex in Miami and worked to adjust to life in the U.S., which was difficult with little income for the family. “We adapted.” He remembers certain things about that trip that would separate him from his boyhood home for over fifty years. They travelled directly on an airplane, carefully observing the Cuban government’s restrictions on what each person could carry – two shirts, one pair of pants, one pair of shoes. At just fifteen years old, Pedro also packed his baseball glove in his suitcase, but it was confiscated by guards at the airport. In the U.S., he and his brother had to learn how to share space in their new, smaller home, and how to share a Coke.

He has not returned to Cuba since leaving in 1961, probably, he admits, because he has no family in Cuba anymore. But he insists that he would love to see his house, his neighborhood again after fifty years’ distance. He has seen pictures from friends that have visited, and the house has fallen into serious disrepair.

Right now it’s against my principles to go back to Cuba since Castro’s there.

Hopefully the system will change. And maybe I’m wrong. Maybe by opening the doors and having that exchange of tourism would open the doors even more and there would be a transition to a free Cuba. The mentality that we are gonna change the system by force is gone. That’s not gonna happen. But there may be, there could be, a change if they open the doors as far as tourism and we let people

go and let them see. A lot of people in Cuba know a lot more than people think.

A lot of people know what's going on even though they don't have great access to computers or internet, but they know. [...] I would like to go, but I would like to go to a different government.

Growing up in Miami, Pedro learned to speak English very well, but he has maintained his Spanish accent, whereas his wife, who grew up primarily in New York among far fewer Spanish-speaking peers, speaks English without an accent. He argues that English needs to be promoted more in the neighborhood, and he protests when literature from his own office comes out in both Spanish and English. He enjoys his work immensely and speaks proudly of the improvements he has seen in Little Havana since beginning his job there, but notes that the work is far from over:

There is a marked difference between the arrivals of 1961, 1971, and the latest arrivals. You're talking about a big generation gap. My parents didn't care. They would do anything to survive. [...] At one time the only work my father, an electrical engineer, was able to find was over in the sugar processing plant. He did it just to make a living. But most of the people that come now, most of them have family here, they are looking at "how can I get a welfare check? They don't have the drive that the early ones did. They were born in a system where there was no drive, where everybody would be paid equal no matter if you worked hard or not. So the system that we're raised in, it makes the difference. I don't see them as hard working as we used to be. The older generation probably won't have much in common with the generation that's there in Cuba now. It's gonna be a big, big problem when we go back there and try to establish some of the

businesses we have here, like Burger King, MacDonald's, Home Depot. I hope the next government, the next president, is going to be a close ally of the United States. That's the only way that Cuba is really gonna flourish. In the end, communism is a system that doesn't work."

### *Celia and Eduardo*

Celia lives with her family in a spacious suburban ranch-style house with tile floors and a swimming pool in the back yard. She is a stylish woman in her late forties, with her make-up just so and her highlighted hair carefully styled. She is the executive editor for a popular Spanish-language fashion and lifestyle magazine based in Miami. She arrived in the U.S. in early 2000 with her husband Eduardo and young son Gabriel. Eduardo wears thick glasses and his hair is beginning to grey at the temples. The family is originally from Havana, but they took a circuitous route from Cuba to Miami. In 1994 in response to the political environment and widespread censorship in Cuba promoted by Castro's policies, they traveled to Venezuela. Because he is an orthopedic surgeon and she is trained as a journalist, it was extremely difficult to obtain permission to leave Cuba – the Cuban government fought hard to keep professionals in the country. And even when Celia and Eduardo finally succeeded in obtaining the proper paperwork, it was another five years before they were allowed to actually leave the country. In Venezuela, they lived quite happily for a time; they had a beautiful home in a gated community, and they were able to send their son to private school and maintain a small staff of housekeepers. Their careers flourished.

But Chavez took power in Venezuela and the family traveled to U.S. in 2000. They lament how difficult it was for their son to understand and cope with exile not once, but twice,

and how the transition from Venezuela to Miami was made all the more difficult by the language barrier and a drop in socioeconomic status. But in Miami, they have a community of Cubans and social support, whereas in Venezuela there was none.

Since arriving in Miami, Eduardo first worked as a janitor, then he found a job as a pharmacy technician and he soon passed the exam to become a surgical assistant in a clinic, but he has not yet been able to obtain a surgical license to continue his career in the U.S. The whole family applied for and gained citizenship within five years of arriving to Miami – it was important to them to do things “by the book”. They haven’t had a vacation in six years. Eduardo notes that Cubans have been particularly successful at combining cultures in exile:

Los Cubanos han incorporado la *American way of life* y la forma de vida Cubana – hicieron un *sandwich*. Los Cubanos lo crearon aqui y es una de las cosas mas significativa de la inmigracion Cubana aqui en Florida. Los Cubanos aquí habian incorporado la vida Americana – el *air conditioning*, *health insurance*, la libertad *to own your own business* – pero mantienen el café cubano, los frijoles negros, y el pastel cubano.

(Cubans have incorporated the American way of life and the Cuban way of life they made a sandwich. Cubans created that here and it is one of the most significant parts of Cuban immigration here in Florida. Cubans here have incorporated the American life – air conditioning, health insurance, the freedom to own your own business – but they maintain the cuban coffee, the black beans, and Cuban cake.)

In general, Celia and Eduardo view Miami as an extension of Cuba, at least an old version of it, that reflects the character of the exile community there.



Eduardo: Miami es muy, muy paracida a Cuba. El clima – el calor, muy humeda, llueve, no nieva. La comunidad Cubana es bien grande. Hay muchas extranjeras de Nicaragua, Colombia, pero la mayor parte es Cubano. Los Cubanos han construido la ciudad y los Cubanos están en todas partes. En la política – tenemos dos o tres Cubanos en la casa congreso, algunos senadores, alcaldes – están en arquitectura, restaurantes, la música...

Celia: ...y de alguna manera, a mi puesto tambien el idioma. Porque en todas partes los restaurantes tienen nombres en español.

Eduardo: It's the Cuban way of life. La vida Cubano se refleja en todas partes. En las verduras pueden comprar en los Sedano's, en el restaurante La Carreta, en Versailles. Hay un modo de vida que los Cubanos han logrado, esto crear un environment muy similar a Cuba.

Celia: Pero es interesante. Es que como despues de que Castro entró en el poder, Cuba se instruyó. Se instruyó culturalmente. Pero lo que seas en infraestructura – los restaurantes, la música ... Cubanos trataron de hacer una Cuba aparecida a la querida antes de Castro.

Eduardo: Hay muchas restaurants aqui que tienen los mismos nombres que tenían en Cuba. Son un reflejo, o es una transculturación del lugar de Cuba hecho aqui para que, los Cubanos estan aqui puedan a seguir disfrutando hacia no lo olvida parecida la que siguen antes de inmigrar.

Celia: Aquí en Miami, en todas las esquinas, hay un café cubano. Un poquito al norte, no hay nada del café cubano.

(Eduardo: Miami is very, very similar to Cuba. The climate – the heat, very humid, rain, no snow. The Cuban community is quite large. There are many foreigners from Nicaragua, Colombia, but the majority is Cuban. Cubans have built the city and Cubans are everywhere. En politics – we have two or three Cubans in Congress, some senators, mayors – they are in architecture, restaurants, music...

Celia: ...and in some manner, it seems to me also the language. Because restaurants everywhere have names in Spanish.

Eduardo: It's the Cuban way of life. *La vida Cubano* is reflected everywhere. In the vegetables you can buy from Sedano's, in La Carreta restaurant, in Versailles. There is a style of life Cubans have created, this makes an environment very similar to Cuba.

Celia: But it is interesting. It's that after Castro took power, Cuba was taught. It was instructed culturally. But this infrastructure – the restaurants, the music... Cubans tried to make a Cuba to look like their memories before Castro.

Eduardo: There are many restaurants here that have the same name they had in Cuba. They are a reflection, or it is a transculturation of place from Cuba made here so that Cubans here can continue to enjoy without forgetting how it looked before emigrating.

Celia: Here in Miami, on every corner, there is a Cuban coffee. A little to the north, there is no sign of Cuban coffee.)

Eduardo went on to discuss how Cubans built up the area that is now Little Havana from a relatively rural zone whose main mode of transportation was by horse, influenced by the Cuba

that they remembered – 1950s Cuba. But, not surprisingly, Cubans from different socioeconomic backgrounds have re-created different versions of Cuba in South Florida. Those that have clustered in Hialeah, for instance, tend to be from “el pueblo” and tend to emphasize the more casual elements of rural life<sup>22</sup> than those whose families owned big companies in Cuba and who would later create a similar status in Miami.

An important difference between Cubans and the increasing diversity of immigrants in Little Havana today is that most of those other immigrants can return home. Celia and Eduardo received a stamp in their passports upon leaving Cuba that bars them from returning. Celia’s parents are still in Cuba. While it is possible for her to get permission to visit them on the island, she prefers to visit with them in a “third party” country like Jamaica or Peru. *“Ir a Cuba significa tener que traer una maleta de dinero. No hay nada alli, y tienes que comprar cosas por todo el mundo. Representa un año de trabajo”* (Going to Cuba means that you have to bring a suitcase of money. There is nothing there, and you have to buy things for everyone). They say that this hesitation to even visit Cuba is the motivation for creating and maintaining familiar landscapes abroad.

### Cigars, Dominoes, and Nostalgia: Cubanidad in the Public Sphere

Cubans in Miami enjoy a good deal more power than do other minority groups in the city or Cubans in Moultrie. The luxury of practicing one’s culture in a public forum comes in part from the long history and security of the Cuban ethnic enclave in South Florida as well as the economic and sociopolitical successes of generations of Cuban Americans. The adage, ‘strength

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<sup>22</sup> Celia said that more Cuban women in Hialeah will wear their curlers out of the house. There are peanut vendors in town as well, something that reminiscent of Cuban life in the country and not typical of most parts of Miami.

in numbers' demonstrates a similar advantage, alluding to the social capital accessible to those who are affiliated with a minority group that enjoys the support of its many members in addition to some level of mainstream acceptance. Cuban success stories in Miami abound, and the non-Cuban population is often more sympathetic to their situation – Cuban exiles fled a communist dictator, after all – than they are of many other immigrant and minority groups currently in the U.S. This confluence of factors – economic, political, and social capital amassed among the Cuban community (especially among long-established exiles) – has contributed to a public landscape in Miami that is receptive to, and inclusive of, Cuban culture (Grenier & Pérez 2003). Names of streets and businesses in Miami reflect Cuban counterparts, Spanish language media presents programming primarily geared toward the Cuban community, local taxes contribute to Cuban cultural activities... and the list goes on.

Cuban identity is also expressed in private settings, of course, such as photos displayed in the home or the stories and holiday traditions passed down to children. These landscapes tend not to be on display for tourists to see or taste as they often are along Calle Ocho. They represent the underlying heterogeneity that exists within the Cuban community in Miami: based on each individual's context of migration and their experience as part of the diaspora and as part of society more generally, they are likely to create and live within a unique mosaic of meaningful places that comprise a Cuban landscape. Some display the Virgen de la Caridad, the patron saint of Cuba (and Cuban exiles). Others frequent Cuban restaurants or attend Viernes Culturales each month. There exist similarities and overarching themes in these landscapes, to be sure, but it is important to recognize that they are lived and experienced differently on the basis of individual histories and sociocultural diversity across gender, race, and class.

A strong theme across these landscapes is nostalgia. Longing for what was or what could have been in reference to Cuba and family or friends or memories there. Most people agree that Cuba is not the same now as it once was. The mainstream nostalgia that pervades expressions of Cuban identity in Miami is reminiscent of the widely-held notion that Miami now represents the “real Cuba” in contrast to the island that has been ravaged by the effects of a half century of communist leadership. But Miami Cubans remain a minority – relative to both the U.S. population and island Cubans. “Their “real Cuba”, regardless of what exile leaders say, has arguably little to do with the everyday experiences, aspirations, and agendas of islanders – for whom, potentially, the only “real Cuba” may exist on the island, not in Miami” (Guerra 2007:20). The following chapter delves into expressions of Cubanness in Moultrie, Georgia. These differ, not in their broad strokes but in the details, from the landscapes created in Miami.



Figure 17. CubAmerica travel and immigration services. Miami, Florida. Photograph by author.

## CHAPTER 5

### CUBAN LANDSCAPES IN MOULTRIE, GEORGIA

#### Introduction

Moultrie, Georgia, dubbed “the city of Southern living”, is not particularly known for its ethnic diversity or multiculturalism, but within the last few decades, Colquitt County’s Hispanic population has skyrocketed (U.S. Census 2000). Just twenty years ago, persons claiming Hispanic heritage in Colquitt County numbered a mere 1,588 (Pew Hispanic Center). In 2008, persons claiming Latino or Hispanic origin totaled 6,857, or 15% of the county’s total population, double that of the rest of the state (Pew Hispanic Center; U.S. Census Bureau 2010). These numbers would likely be substantially higher if unreported and undocumented immigrants are included, and they continue to rise in response to global economic inequality and the growing agricultural industry in the county.

Colquitt County includes about 550 square miles of land and has a relatively low concentration of residents, only 76 per square mile (compared to Miami’s 1,158 people per square mile) (U.S. Census 2000). This low concentration leaves plenty of space for the region’s farming enterprises, which in turn attract migrant workers. The city of Moultrie was chartered in 1859 and deemed the county seat. Colquitt County agriculture gained momentum in the 1960s and in 1967 the county became the number two producer of tobacco and cotton in the state of Georgia, bringing in close to \$25 million (Colquitt County Community Assessment 2007). Now it is the home of the hugely popular Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition and farmers maintain

successful partnerships with several local universities and colleges. The warm, humid climate in South Georgia creates an environment in which crops can grow year-round, which means that farm workers are likely to find employment year-round as well (Atiles & Bohon 2002).

In addition to agriculture, jobs in Moultrie come from the healthcare, manufacturing, and service industries. Colquitt Regional Medical Center opened in 1975, providing more jobs to the region and filling a need for more healthcare services in Moultrie and surrounding towns.

Sanderson Farms, another major employer, opened its doors in 2005 and according to their website is now processing chicken at the Moultrie plant at a capacity of 1,250,000 birds each week. National Beef also has a plant in Moultrie, one of their two “case-ready facilities” in the country, which opened in 2001. This facility processes and packages butchered and partially trimmed large cuts of meat shipped from the Midwest, then ships the finished product to grocery stores throughout the Southeastern U.S. Riverside Manufacturing also operates in Moultrie, and, while it maintains business connections all over the world, it has kept its headquarters in Colquitt County since 1911. The company, which makes uniforms and fire-resistant clothing, was recently presented with the award for Manufacturer of the Year by Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue (Glenn 2005). Riverside maintains over 1,600 employees in this region, making it one of the largest employers in southwest Georgia. Moultrie also has thirteen public elementary and high schools and is the home of Southwest Georgia Bank, both significant local employers.



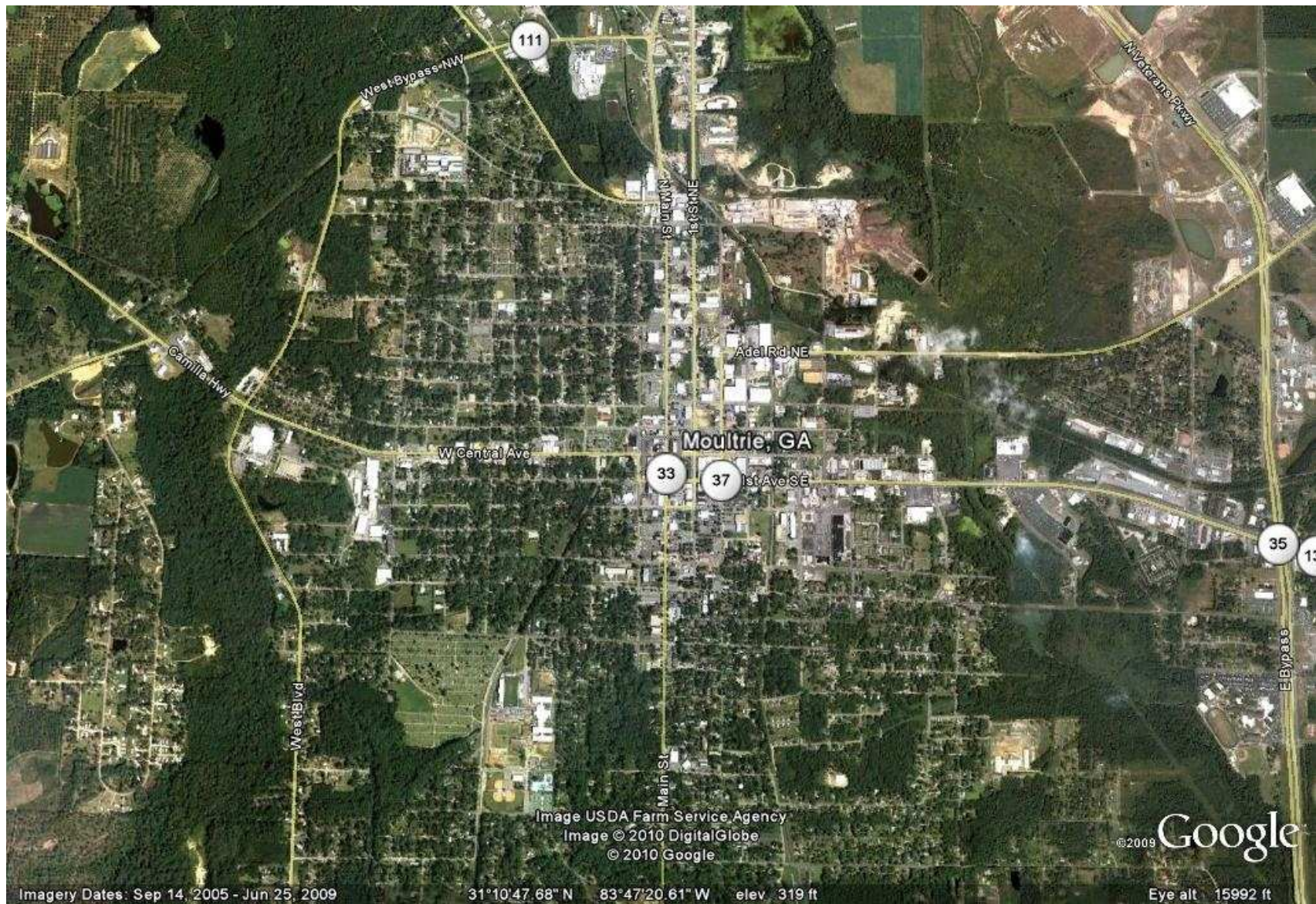


Figure18. Moultrie, Georgia. Google Earth.



Despite these employment opportunities, Colquitt County and Moultrie have their share of economically depressed areas, along with a host of problems commonly associated with poverty such as crime and vacant buildings. According to U.S. Census figures, the county poverty rate in 2008 was 22.6 percent compared to a state-wide average of 14.7 percent. The city and the rest of the county are currently working on a number of development initiatives in partnership with the Southwest Georgia Rural Development Center, aimed primarily at renewing dilapidated buildings, reducing crime, and maintaining the health and wellbeing of county residents. Due in part to these efforts, “Colquitt County has obtained corporate sponsorship to run preschool programs for Latino children and recently built a migrant health clinic” (Atiles & Bohon: 3).

According to local residents, Cuban exiles began settling in Moultrie in 1994; since that time, about 200 Cuban families have made Moultrie their new home. Many traveled to Moultrie after extended stays in Miami or Tampa, Florida, but increasing numbers of Cuban immigrants are traveling directly to Moultrie. Compared to those in Miami, Cubans in Moultrie are more commonly from rural regions of Cuba, “*el campo*”, not urban centers like Havana. Moultrie is an attractive alternative to Miami because of the lower cost of living (2008 individual median income for Miami-Dade county: \$43,000; Colquitt County: \$34,000) (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), the availability of low-skill agriculture and industry jobs, and a slower pace of life – what many have called “*tranquilidad*”. Most members of the Cuban community in Moultrie reported having several relatives still in Cuba, perhaps owing to their own recent emigration. Many of those interviewed rely on phone calls to the island to communicate with loved ones, but rates are often very expensive. They note that internet is becoming more common as a means of communication, although computer and internet access in Cuba, especially outside of the larger

cities, is still unreliable and can also be cost prohibitive. Letters or small packages sent from the U.S. to Cuba are subject to such scrutiny and delay that mail and courier services are also not easy options for maintaining contact. Restrictions on family visits from U.S. citizens and permanent residents to Cuba have recently been relaxed to allow visits to “close relatives” once a year for an unspecified amount of time (U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control; U.S. Department of State). Currently, allowable remittances are \$300 four times annually for each Cuban household, and many within the Cuban community in Moultrie set aside a significant portion of their modest paychecks to send to relatives and friends in Cuba through services like Western Union.

Estela, an energetic and cheerful young mother, served as my main entry point into this community. She arrived in Moultrie from Cuba in 1997 after a day-long stopover in Miami. She works as an Extension assistant, a position that allows her to lend support to members of her own small community, as well as other Spanish-speaking residents, in Moultrie. Estela acts as a medium through which people can voice their concerns and access assistance for tasks ranging from securing a home or car loan to achieving good nutrition to finding English lessons. She translates many of her coworkers’ projects to ensure that they are also accessible to the Spanish-speaking community in the form of pamphlets or presentations. As part of that community herself, she is in the unique position of being able to communicate with, and gain the trust of, members of both the majority and the Hispanic minority.

The Hispanic population in South Georgia was recently targeted by criminals because of their tendency to carry a lot of cash, resulting in the 2005 murders of six Mexican men between Tift County, just twenty miles from Moultrie, and Colquitt County. In response, the state of Georgia hired several bilingual people in Colquitt County and neighboring counties to assist in

roles similar to that filled by Estela (although other employees are not Cuban). Increasing the immigrant community's financial literacy was of primary importance since many of those coming to the region have never used banks before. Allison, one such community worker, noted that she was happy to "help those workers achieve the American dream". Migrant agricultural workers in the county typically arrive with H-2A Visas that enable them to work legally on farms that need extra seasonal labor. Cuban immigrants, however, are considered "legal" as soon as they enter the country, a point of some envy and disdain among other immigrant groups.

### Ethnicity, Status, and Language

Table 1. Ethnic composition of Colquitt County, 2008. (Ethnic or racial groups representing less than 1% of the population are not included.) U.S. Census.

<b>Ethnic Identification</b>	<b>Percent of Total Population</b>
White	75.3
Black or African American	22.9
Hispanic or Latino	16.0
White, not Hispanic	60.2

As Georgia's status as an immigrant receiving state solidifies, traditional Southern racial hierarchies are challenged. A global trend towards the politicization of migration, which often results in unfounded suspicion that immigrants are taking resources from residents, is evident in Moultrie as well (Castles and Miller 2003). Discrimination against Latinos comes from both the White and Black communities in fear that job opportunities in the region have been co-opted by inexpensive migrant laborers – a fear that is regularly expressed in editorials in *The Moultrie Observer*. Additionally, intra-Hispanic discrimination creates a local hierarchy of Latino

immigrants based on generalized notions of each groups' legal status, socioeconomic level, and stability in the community (e.g. language skills, home ownership). In general, this hierarchy portrays Cubans as the most advantaged Latino community, followed by Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants, many of whom are undocumented or temporary migrant workers. Members of the Cuban community that I spoke to report having limited interaction with Mexican immigrants living in Moultrie. Social events like soccer matches and backyard parties may attract people from both countries. Mexican grocery stores are also popular places to attain some Cuban staple food items that are often unavailable in White American-owned markets, though the WalMart in Moultrie has begun carrying a wider selection of these as well.



Figure 19. Entering Moultrie, Georgia. Photograph by author.



Figure 20. Business district. Moultrie, Georgia. Photograph by author.

### Mapping Cuban Landscapes in Moultrie

As noted previously, many of members of the Cuban community in Moultrie come from outside of Havana, regions that tend to be more rural with greater opportunity for agriculture. As part of their participation, interviewees were invited to create a cognitive map by sketching and explaining a picture of a meaningful place or landscape in Cuba and a meaningful place in the U.S. Figures 21 and 22, below, come from two Cuban women who now live in Moultrie. To my surprise (and dismay) all of the other interviewees in Moultrie and in Miami declined to sketch a place. Gloria, a Cuban woman in Moultrie, even asked if her young daughter could complete the

drawing for her – she was too embarrassed to showcase her artistic abilities (or lack thereof) and instead she opted to give me a tour of her house and yard.

The first drawing included below comes from a woman named Marisa. She and her husband arrived in Moultrie just a year before our interview, after he won the Cuban “lottery”. They came seeking better wages and more stability. All of their family remains in Cuba, including their grown children, and they are not permitted to return to visit them yet since they have not established permanent residence in the U.S. Their current home is a small rented wooden cottage with a sagging front porch. Marisa works at Sanderson Farms, processing chickens. Throughout much of the interview, she was working in her kitchen putting the finishing touches on a large pot of *congrí*, a typical Cuban dish made with red kidney beans and white rice.

Her drawing is centered on a rural school building and the Cuban flag. Surrounding the school are children, rolling hills, coconut palms, an orange tree, flowers, and a barely visible smiling sun in the upper right corner. As she drew, she explained why she included the school: “teachers in Cuba are the highest, most respected. They care much more about what their students learn than teachers here. And schools in Cuba are different. They have more [fresh] air.” She intended the flag to highlight the location of this particular school (e.g. in Cuba rather than the U.S.). Marisa described the remainder of the scenery with a hint of longing; oranges, coconut palms, and tropical flowers do not grow well in Georgia, but the sights and smells and tastes associated with these plants are an integral part of her sensory memories of the Cuban landscape.



Figure 21. Marisa's cognitive map.

The second drawing (below) was made by a woman named Ines. She is about 40 years old, with long, curly dark hair and glasses. Her home is new and bright and airy. Ines is one of only a handful of Moultrie Cubans to live in Havana as an adult, though she also spent a great deal of time with relatives in the countryside throughout her youth. She was granted political asylum and moved to Moultrie in 2007 with her young son after spending a year homeless in Tampa. In Cuba, she worked as a secretary for the human resources division of the health department; now she works in Moultrie's poultry processing plant. Ines recently purchased her home in Moultrie, a small, two-bedroom ranch near the railroad tracks, with the help of community workers. She is struggling to learn English to earn her citizenship, but her son, age

eleven, picked it up very quickly in school. Ines finds herself in the minority in her community because, while she is Cuban, she is not Jehovah's Witness. She contends with her doubly outsider status by forming friendships with Spanish-speaking women from other countries (e.g. Mexico, Honduras) and frequently visiting friends and family in Miami.

Her drawing depicts a man carrying buckets of water, a horse grazing in a pasture, a modest house, smiling sun, and rolling hills with palm trees. Like Marisa, Ines' "meaningful landscape" reflects an idyllic scene – one that surely provides enough food, water, fresh air, and privacy for its occupants. Nostalgia among the Cuban community in Moultrie differs drastically from the mainstream version promoted in Miami. Moultrie Cubans tend to focus not on a time (e.g. pre-Castro) but on places that represent happy memories that, for them, reflect what it means to be Cuban. One key difference between these populations is that Moultrie residents are recent arrivals, and, proportionately, they experienced significantly more of the effects of Castro's policies in Cuba – including the food shortages, confiscations of land and other property, and reduced freedoms – than did most long-established Miami Cubans. It is telling that neither woman drew a meaningful place in the U.S. Both completed their picture of a place in Cuba and did not wish to continue the activity.

Reluctance to select and draw a place in the U.S. may be explained in part by the short length of time these women have lived outside of Cuba. And, perhaps, in process of adjusting, settling in, and "reterritorializing" their lives, they have yet to find any particularly meaningful elements of their new surroundings. But both of these women chose to make a new home not in bustling, noisy Miami and its version of 1950s era Cuba, but in tranquil Moultrie, with its ample resources and greater sense of privacy and independence. This same priority is reflected in their



drawings and in their descriptions of pleasant memories of farms and rivers in rural Cuba, which, for them, tended to be places of freedom, self-sufficiency, and plenty during the shortages of the early 1990s.

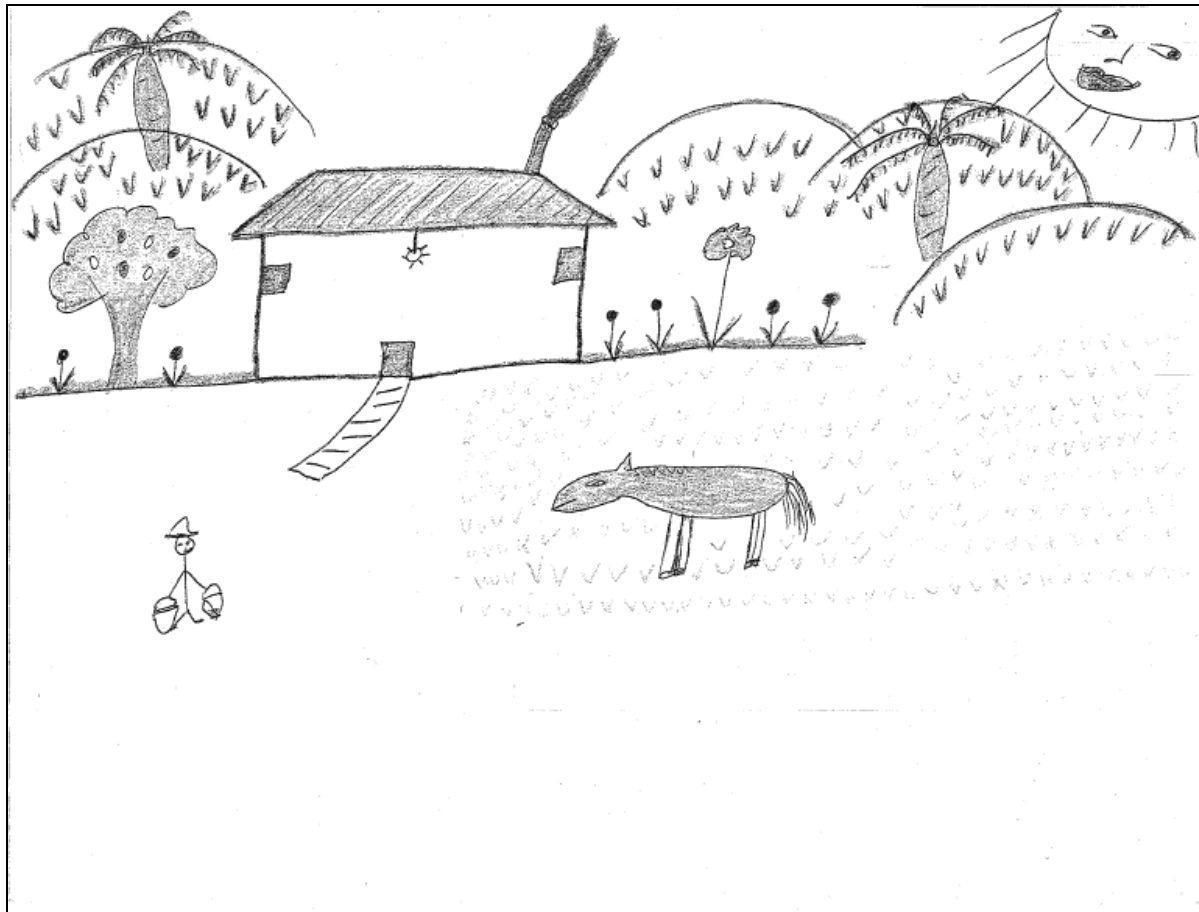


Figure 22. Ines' cognitive map.

Independence and self-sufficiency, combined with the freedom to amass material goods, is displayed often through decorating, cooking, and gardening in Moultrie. Upon entering her friend Gloria's newly-remodeled home on a sleepy old suburban street in Moultrie (Figures 23 and 24, below), Estela noted that the new style reminded her of the glamorous Mediterranean-influenced homes of South Florida, calling it "*una casa florida*". Gloria and her husband own a

successful used car dealership in Moultrie; they left Cuba about twelve years ago, along with her parents and sister, from Baracoa in eastern Cuba. She did not work while she lived in Cuba but noted that a common disagreement between spouses reflects men's desire to someday return to Cuba, while women hope to maintain the freedoms and new power they enjoy in the U.S. by staying here permanently. Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) have documented a similar scenario among the Dominican immigrant community in the U.S. Gloria has two young children; her son accompanied Gloria's mother Juana on a recent visit to Cuba (because her family wanted to see her, so she made the "sacrifice") and there Gloria's son became so ill he had to be admitted to the hospital. Cleanliness and sanitation, or lack thereof, is both a common theme in people's recollections of Cuba and a priority, akin to a stereotype one wishes to disprove, for many Cuban exiles in the U.S. Gloria has also amassed a collection of highly polished sturdy wooden furniture from Miami for her newly-remodeled home.



Figure 23. Exterior of Gloria's house in Moultrie, Georgia. Photograph by author.



Figure 24. Interior of Gloria's newly-remodeled home. Photograph by author..

Her parents live on the outskirts of Moultrie in a trailer on a lot that backs up to a neighbor's wide horse pasture. They have been in Moultrie for about twelve years, but only recently moved into this home. They are both retired, and recently Hernán has developed some health troubles that keep him close to home. He has not visited Cuba since leaving: *"hay problemas con la religion y las visas... es mi tierra de vida, y lamentablemente tuve que migrar a los estados unidos. Pero fue una buena idea migrar"* (there are problems with religion and visas... it is my homeland, and unfortunately I had to migrate to the U.S. But it was a good idea to migrate). In their yard, Juana has planted several rose bushes along with mint, a tiny lime tree, and a few annuals that she grew in Cuba. Juana and her husband wanted this place in the country because it reminded them of "home". They planted a vegetable garden along one side of the

house with rows of *calabasa*, *pepino*, *ajo*, *boniato*, *yuca*, and *malanga* (squash, peppers, garlic, yucca, and taro). These are some of the traditional staple foods in Cuban cuisine, but others they tried to grow would not tolerate the cooler climate in Moultrie. Juana and Hernán cultivate these plants largely because the taste is dramatically different when they are bought from a grocery store; many other interviewees agreed: fresh meat and produce are much more difficult to find in the U.S. than they were in Cuba. The taste of packaged foods is considered inferior to their fresh, unadulterated versions that were significantly more common (and affordable) in Cuba.

Food plays a key role among the Cuban community in Moultrie. Because certain ingredients can be difficult to find, “orders” are periodically submitted to friends or family travelling south to Miami. In general though, and despite the difference in quality and freshness of some ingredients, Cuban food traditions continue in Moultrie. *Cafecitos*, instead of a location at each corner store, are brewed in kitchens in Moultrie neighborhoods. The *cafetera* (stove-top coffee maker) and tiny porcelain cups are a staple in these kitchens, along with a *tostonera* (wooden or plastic plantain press) and a deep fryer for making *tostones*. Estela noted that children born in the U.S. often will lose a taste for Cuban food, opting instead for the hamburgers or pizza and French fries they get at school. But she continues cooking mostly Cuban food in her home because she sees food as an important link to her children’s heritage. Food is also a relatively easy way to express and remember a sense of Cubanidad; it is private, inoffensive, and it does not tend to draw attention from members of the majority. The smells and textures of cooking and eating evoke happy memories of Cuba and create a sense of community among those that share in them together.

Another pleasant memory many Cuban exiles in Moultrie recall is a strong sense of neighborliness, open doors and windows, and a sense of safety and community. Most contend

that these are not at all present in Moultrie. Whereas one might holler through the neighbor's window to gossip or say hello in Cuba, the very nature of homes in Moultrie prevents this; glass windows and air conditioning create barriers to casual conversation between neighbors, and language barriers between recent immigrants and "native" Moultrians further complicate things. One popular anecdote was shared by way of example: a group of Cuban families decided to join together to share a meal. It was decided that the celebration would include a pig roast, a common custom for the Cubans in Moultrie, many of whom come from rural regions of the island. One of the men procured a pig from a local farmer, transported it to his house inside the city limits, and proceeded to slaughter it and prepare it to be roasted. A neighbor noticed all the commotion and called the police, mistaking the pig for a large dog. When the police arrived, they followed the man around to his backyard to see that he was not, in fact, roasting a dog. They shared a laugh and the police soon left. Estela noted that in Moultrie, not everyone accepts having "a pig in the yard".

Cultural misunderstandings aside, language is a very real issue – few members of Moultrie's immigrant population, including the Cuban community, speak English. Jobs in agriculture and industry in this region, of the sort held by recent immigrants in other parts of the U.S., generally do not require English language skills. Once these skills are learned, however, people often move into other kinds of employment in the service industry. Low-skill jobs in agriculture, like harvesting and sorting produce, are especially attractive to recent immigrants from rural parts of the island who may have lower levels of education than those who migrated to Miami in the first waves. A small subgroup of Cuban exiles in Moultrie moved there after establishing successful businesses in Miami in fields like real estate, cosmetology, and used car sales.

One English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor at Moultrie Technical College noted that the Cuban community is actively learning English; she reported that about one third of her ESL students were Cuban, saying that “English is a first-felt need”. This is, of course, not just an issue of day-to-day communication; lack of English language skills contributes to the imbalance of power between the majority and immigrant minority in Moultrie. Laura, a young Cuban woman living in Moultrie, reported that she felt WalMart was discriminating against all Spanish-speakers in Moultrie because the managers have not recognized that the reality in Moultrie includes increasing numbers of people who do not speak English. Harsh working conditions, health and safety concerns, and abuses of worker rights, all due in part to lack of English, have been documented locally. Cooperative Extension Services is working to end this abuse by offering bilingual programs and literature that outline immigrants’ rights, facilitating meetings with local law enforcement, and promoting English language classes.

Linguistic stereotyping contributes to inter-community tension as well. Cubans are known for (and generally proud of) their loud, fast speech, abundance of hand gestures, and kissing is a common greeting. Said one community worker: “Cubans are much more expressive, flamboyant, loud in their expression. And in general, the Mexicans and Guatemalans tend to be a little more shy and timid. It is easier for the Cuban population – they have access to citizenship immediately, and they can step out and begin realizing their dreams from day one”. Cubans are quick to distinguish themselves from other Spanish-speaking communities in Moultrie. Several interviewees recalled being referred to as “a Mexican”, describing the event with disgust and astonishment and voicing many of the same discriminatory stereotypes commonly employed by anti-immigration White and African American communities.

The Mexican community figures prominently in articles and opinion pieces in *The Moultrie Observer*, often reflecting intolerant attitudes toward Hispanic immigrants and lumping people from several different countries and backgrounds into one, equally disdained, group. A recent article in *The Observer* chronicles the life of one Cuban American high school student living in Moultrie (Lawson, November 6, 2009), but otherwise there is little public acknowledgement of the city's Cuban population.

### Vignettes from Cuban Moultrie

According to local claims, about ninety percent of the Cuban community in Moultrie is Jehovah's Witness. Some people interviewed for this project reported having been imprisoned or otherwise oppressed in Cuba for actively practicing their religion, a situation that continues to prompt emigration from Cuba. Applying for asylum or refugee status to come to the U.S., however, means renouncing the Cuban government, which complicates the prospect of returning one day to visit family left behind. Interviewees' experiences in Cuba make many Cubans in Moultrie wary of outsiders, authority figures, and even graduate students like myself. Interviewees often agreed to participate only on the condition that no questions be asked about politics or religion, and even then, many declined to be recorded. Without Estela's presence and reassurances that interviewees were indeed free to decline to answer any questions they wished, it is likely that only a handful of people would have agreed to participate.

### *El salón del Reino*

The Jehovah's Witness community in Moultrie is somewhat split along linguistic and ethnic lines. According to Estela, separate meetings are held each week for "Cubans, Americans,

and Mexicans”. Among the Cuban sector, things are very close knit – meetings of various purpose and duration occur several times a week in the Hall and in people’s homes (e.g. tri-weekly Hall meetings, Bible study). Subsequently, there are few occasions outside of Witness duties on which the community gathers. Jehovah’s Witnesses frown on drinking alcohol and fraternization with non-Witnesses, and they do not celebrate birthdays, but the Cuban community does like to come together and party on occasion. Small gatherings in people’s homes to play dominos and share Cuban food are common, but one celebration that draws everyone together, within the rules of Jehovah’s Witnesses, is a baby shower like the one I was invited to attend in late May, 2008<sup>23</sup>.

Estela arranged the party for her expectant friend since she and her husband have no family in Moultrie. Yanet and Octavio moved from Havana to the U.S. in 2008, just months before the interview and the baby shower. The couple also has a 10-year old boy. Guests began to arrive to the cafeteria-type room in the community center just after 6:00 p.m., while a stereo system set up in one corner blared salsa music. The room was filled with long tables, about twenty total, set with white or blue plastic tablecloths with party favors at each place-setting (alternately, plastic baby booties with tulle and ribbon inside, teddy bears hugging bud vase, and small plastic baby bottles filled with candy) and baby-themes confetti sprinkled over everything. There was also a head table for the new mom and dad and their relatives, and a shorter table for the cake alongside it. Bouquets of blue and white latex balloons filled with helium bobbed against the ceiling. The kitchen entrance, at the back of the hall near the cake table, was a site of constant commotion.

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<sup>23</sup> Upon consultation, it was decided that photographing or recording the event was not appropriate; some guests in attendance had previously declined to be interviewed or tape-recorded.



Estela arrived with her family at about 7:00 p.m. (Cuban time, perhaps?) wearing a surprisingly flashy sheer, low-cut black and gold top (her young son later commented disapprovingly that when she bent over to get something, he saw a man look down her shirt). Otherwise, guests were dressed rather conservatively and all the women, and most of the girls, wore high heeled shoes. A few men wore slacks and a dress shirt, but most others wore jeans or khakis and t-shirts or short-sleeved button-down shirts.

Upon arriving, Estela and her “assistant party-planner”, another young Cuban woman, immediately began reviewing their list of activities for the evening – games, food, dancing – to make some last-minute adjustments to the order for the evening, including a list of songs for the DJ that were to accompany each activity. Estela had compiled some music for the occasion. By the time the evening plan was officially set, a group of helpful party-goers had started setting cups of ice at each place setting. Then a bottle or two of soda went at each table – most were generic store brands, and guests who were already seated jokingly requested the name-brand ones like Coke or Sprite. When the drinks were settled, Estela handed out plastic gloves to several women who were planning to help serve the food. They were instructed to put a spoonful of each dish on each plate, but the actual process resulted in a slightly different selection of food on each plate since there was not room enough for all of it. Large chunks of roasted pork also came from a huge vat set on the floor. Some of the men in attendance had killed and roasted the pig for that party – the whole animal was cut up and marinating in tomato sauce laced with garlic and cumin. One man’s wife bragged heartily about her husband’s skill at cooking pork and told us that this particular pig had kicked him, causing his arm to swell. Estela’s husband later made fun of the story, saying that the pig’s toenail had merely grazed his arm when he started jumping up and down, grabbing his arm and crying.

Along with the roasted pork, the kitchen counters and tables were overflowing with dishes of *moros y cristianos* (black beans and white rice; some with *chicharrones* and sliced green olives), Chinese rice (fried rice with small steamed shrimp), two types of potato salad (one made of mashed potatoes with thinly sliced red bell peppers on top, the other a chunkier salad with green olives and tomatoes in it), roasted bone-in chicken pieces with garlicky tomato sauce, baked chicken breast with green olives and tomato sauce, several fresh vegetable salads, spicy *pico de gallo*, macaroni salad with tuna, and white rice set in a rice cooker to keep warm. All of the food was prepared by guests at Estela's request. Once each paper plate was passed between the women in the kitchen and loaded to capacity it was placed on one of several large silver trays and delivered to guests seated in the hall.

After the meal, guests were invited to participate in several rounds of musical chairs (two versions were played, accommodating both children and adults). Winners were awarded gag gift prizes such as a plunger, pepto bismol, and a very large pair of women's underwear. A second game involved four couples racing around the room to find a package of baby clothes, including a hat, bib, diaper, and pacifier. The first couple to find the package and get the husband dressed up in the baby clothes won. Yet another game, this one played by a group of young men (ages 17 to about 30), was a lively competition to speedily drink coke from a baby bottle. In the final game, a man and a woman competed to eat a jar of baby food – the man was reluctant to participate and gave up quickly. Most of the games were accompanied by loud American pop music.

Dancing, an item included on Estela's list of activities for the party followed by several exclamation points, figured prominently throughout the evening. The parents-to-be danced to a love song in Spanish – Octavio lip synced dramatically and many of the guests oohed and aahed

and giggled as he and Yanet slowly circled the dance floor. A group of girls got up and danced the Hustle a few times. An older man, dressed very traditionally and stylishly in a linen guayabera and pressed slacks, showed off his footwork. One younger man soon joined him on the dance floor, challenging his elder with some exaggerated dance skills. Everyone stopped to watch and applaud, conveying a sense of reverence for the older man and acknowledging the humor of the younger man.

Estela's husband commented that one of the songs was Mexican, and it was included for the few Mexican guests in attendance. He noted that Mexicans cannot dance the Cuban samba, but that Cubans know how to do all sorts of Mexican dances. Women and girls often danced together rather than with men, whether the song called for a line dance or a couple's dance. Some parent-child dance couples also took the floor over the course of the evening – most were mothers trying to teach their teenage sons to dance (rather unsuccessfully).

Towards the end of the evening, Yanet handed out special favors to all of the women in attendance (with the help of a female friend who carried the blue and white decorated basket). Mothers received a lace and tulle pin and women without children received a blue or clear plastic pacifier tied onto a ribbon to make a necklace. A family member made a speech thanking everyone on behalf of the mother- and father-to-be.

Then came time to cut and distribute the cake. On top of the two layered cake was a large plastic figurine of a baby coming out of a cake. Notably, the baby was dark-skinned. Towards the end of the evening Octavio commented jokingly on this figurine to Estela, and Yanet noted with a smile that it did look like them after all. The couple took home this top layer of cake along with the figurine.

Around 10:00 p.m. a noticeable number of people had begun to leave. Most packed a plate of food, placed another plate over it and put it in a plastic grocery bag. Some older couples combined half-full bottles of soda to take home. Old women collected the modest party favors that had been placed on each table in plastic grocery bags to carry home with them. Estela had previously told me that Cubans like to clean up and leave things particularly orderly, and this event was no exception. Even though the contract for the hall did not require that they sweep or take out the trash, a whirlwind group effort by those still in attendance (including the father-to-be) ensured that the room was spotless. Estela had reserved the hall until 11:00 p.m., and by 10:55 the DJ was packed up, and a group of women was gathering leftover cups and plates and picking up table cloths. Once the tables were cleared, half a dozen men began moving tables and stacking the chairs to sweep the whole room. The job was finished in a matter of about twenty minutes and the last helpers were permitted to go home.

### *Olga*

Olga is an energetic, cheery woman with light brown curly hair who lives in a new house in Moultrie along with her husband, Antonio, and their two young children. She is a homemaker and spends much of her time attending to her son, who is developmentally disabled. Olga grew up in a place in Cuba much like Moultrie, a small town surrounded by farms. But she noted that, *“es muy diferente porque aquí nadie se visita – todo el mundo vive de puerta cerrada. Nadie va a visitar nadie. Y en Cuba, no. En Cuba la gente te visita, las puertas están abiertas siempre. Es más familiar.”* [It is very different because here, no one visits – everyone lives behind closed doors. No one is going to visit anyone. And in Cuba, no. In Cuba people visit you, doors are always open. It is more familiar.] But she enjoys that she can have her own house in Moultrie,

reflecting the trend there for Cuban residents to increasingly shift from low-income housing or rental properties to owning a home – a striking change that for many is a political move made in contrast to Cuban policies disallowing private property, which have largely remained in place for the past sixty years.

Olga noted that no other members of Moultrie’s Cuban community live near her in her current neighborhood, but that her neighbors are nice. She drew attention to her family’s friendly interaction with people in Moultrie outside the Cuban community, especially for her young daughter, noting of her family, “*no somos racistas*”(we’re not racist). While this emphasis may have been provided for my benefit, as Jehovah’s Witnesses traditionally emphasize in-group relationships, it also may simply be a response to living as part of an ethnic minority group in a diverse community. The language barrier is difficult in Moultrie, more difficult than it was in Tampa, where Olga and her family lived before settling in Moultrie – she knows just “*unas palabritas*” (a few little words). This makes doctor’s appointments and meetings with her children’s teachers challenging. Olga tends to bring her daughter along as a translator for her son’s frequent doctor visits.

When asked to discuss her thoughts about other differences between Cuba and Moultrie, Olga responded that “*la comida aquí es mejor en sentido de que hay mas cosas. Pero los gustos, como explicarme, en cuestión de sabor, hay cosas en Cuba que son mejores, como la fruta – es mejor*” (the food here is better in the sense that there is more variety. But the tastes, how can I explain, in terms of flavor, there are things in Cuba that are better, like fruit – it’s better.) She and her family kept animals like hens and goats in Cuba, primarily for food. In Moultrie she can re-create her family’s tradition of *criando* (raising) animals in the back yard (there were several chickens clucking away throughout our interview); she also plans to plant a vegetable garden like

the one she remembers from her parents' house in Cuba. Moultrie, unlike Tampa, gives her space for these familiar landscapes.

### *Idalma*

Idalma echoes Olga's emphasis on food as a means to (re)create Cuban landscapes in Moultrie. Idalma came to Moultrie in 2004 with her husband and two daughters to avoid religious persecution. The family shares a tidy house near Moultrie High School. When Idalma learned of my interest in the way her community upholds particular Cuban cultural elements, she insisted that I come to her home. When I arrived, she was in the early stages of preparing a sumptuous meal<sup>24</sup>. On the counter in her neat kitchen was the quintessential set of *cafecito* cups and saucers, orange and white with tiny flowers. Before launching into an explanation of what she was preparing, a list of her favorite foods, and her life as a Witness, Idalma emphasized (and demonstrated) the cultural importance of cleanliness by carefully washing all of her countertops prior to pulling kitchen appliances from the cupboards. Into a food processor went onions, garlic, and cilantro. Idalma then skinned and quartered a chicken from Sanderson Farms, one of her workplaces, which went into a large and obviously well-used pressure cooker along with tomato sauce and paste and the fragrant mixture from the food processor. While the chicken began to cook, she toasted whole cumin seeds in a small pot, adding a little oil and a pinch of salt, which all went into the pressure cooker as well, followed by several cups of rice. Then she cleaned again. As the chicken continued to cook, her husband came into the kitchen, grabbing a baguette and some butter for a snack<sup>25</sup> and quickly setting off.

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<sup>24</sup> Estela's husband would later treat me to a similar experience in their home.

<sup>25</sup> Baguettes are about as close as one can get in southern Georgia to approximating Cuban bread, a staple on the island often served very simply with butter, mayonnaise, or guava paste.

As Idalma fussed over the electric deep fryer, she spoke of the role of cooking and its importance to Cuban women: “*cocinar es integral... completar una mujer cubana*” (cooking is integral... it completes a Cuban woman). She added that cleaning is much the same. She refuses to use the automatic dishwasher in her home, preferring to wash dishes and pans by hand, “*porque es costumbre*” (because it’s a custom). Idalma also carefully bleaches all her dishtowels; these are often used in lieu of rare disposable paper napkins in Cuba and she continues the tradition in her home in Moultrie.

Idalma does not tend to use recipes for “*las comidas tradicionales*” (traditional foods) since she has simply grown up eating and cooking most of these dishes. She prefers the fresher taste of foods that she remembers from Cuba, but like other interviewees, she noted the much wider availability of a broad range of food items in the U.S. And she so prefers the taste of sea fish, she was planning a trip to Florida to purchase fish to make with *congrí* later that week.

When the deep fryer was nearly ready, Idalma began squashing green plantain medallions in her plastic *tostonera*, purchased from a Winn-Dixie supermarket in Florida, and dropping them into the hot oil. As they cooked, she combined green beans and diced tomatoes with a squeeze of lime juice and a little salt, apologizing for not having her usual assortment of fresh vegetables on hand (beets, carrots, cucumber) to make a truly Cuban salad for me. She cooks similar meals for her family most evenings, and happily reported that her daughters still love Cuban food, in spite of the pizza and burgers they are fed at school. It was delicious.

#### *Cafecitos, Puerco Asado, y Baby Showers: Cubanidad in the Private Sphere*

Events like the baby shower and Jehovah’s Witness meetings factor prominently in the lives of most Cubans living in Moultrie. Collective or communal and individual expressions of

Cubanness, while not showy like some in Miami, continue to occur in the home and other private environments. It is a small community in a small, traditionally homogenous town, and the Cuban sub-population has overwhelmingly turned inward for support and a sense of belonging in the context of exile. Non-public places, like kitchens, homes, yards, and the Hall, are the settings for family and community interaction, unlike the large festivals and public parks and monuments that Miami Cubans incorporated into their landscapes. The community's lack of power and prestige as recent exiles and refugees is a likely factor underlying this tendency towards expressions of membership in the Cuban diaspora that are largely limited to the private sphere. Additionally, that such a large proportion of Moultrie's Cuban population emigrated within the last five years or so, and thus have not had sufficient time to claim relatives still in Cuba and bring them to the U.S., may be one reason for the frequent contact with relatives (through visitation or phone calls) noted by most interviewees.

The nostalgia that factors so heavily in Miami (re)creations of Cuban landscapes is also largely absent in Moultrie for a host of reasons. First, Moultrie does not have the same intimate, historical relationship with Cuba that Miami does. Secondly, while much of the mainstream Cuban nostalgia presented in Miami comes from those who left the island (especially from Havana) in the very early years of the revolution, most Cuban residents in Moultrie lived through some of the leanest years of post-revolutionary Cuba, and many have suffered religious persecution to boot. Their image of Cuba as a nation and an identity is arguably shaped more by personal hardship than memories of 1950s opulence, and its expression differs in kind. That is, careful attention is paid to particular elements of Cuban culture, and Cuban identity, that have little to do with the revolutionary government or its policies. The community's emphasis on food, language, and religion as pieces of a (re)created landscape exemplifies this departure from



the more overtly politicized public landscapes in Miami. Traditions are valued and maintained in Moultrie, but only insofar as they are divorced from the contemporary Cuban political climate. This results in a distinct, much quieter set of Cuban landscapes.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS: *CUBANIDAD* IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE CREATION OF A TRANSNATIONAL LANDSCAPE

“Nostalgia is a painful homesickness that generates desire...nostalgia sets in motion a dialectic of closeness and distantiation.” (Stewart 1988: 228)

#### Introduction

##### *Summary of Results*

The glimpse into the Cuban diaspora in the U.S. provided in the preceding chapters is intended to highlight both the connections Cuban immigrants maintain with Cuba while they are living in the U.S. and how those connections are expressed. *Landscape* provides a unique theoretical approach to questions of immigrant resettlement, integrating both the physical attributes of place and the layers of meaning and memory laid atop that physical foundation. The Cuban exile community maintains a collection of landscapes that also reflect a transnational connection, in this case, between the island and the U.S. The research questions stated at the beginning of this text ask,

1. In what ways are landscapes (re)created and given meaning at these locations in the Cuban diaspora?

A. Which elements of the Cuban home landscape do immigrants and exiles in the U.S. use to create transnational landscapes?

2. How does the context of migration or exile affect the (re)creation of landscapes?

A. Do members of exile or immigrant communities share a set of memories of the home country?

B. Are there particular factors (age, length of stay in a certain location, frequency of contact with persons in Cuba) that influence the meanings of place or the creation of landscapes?

C. What kinds of place-making mechanisms do members of these communities use to create landscapes?

Research among the Cuban communities in Miami and Moultrie revealed that, indeed, people have fashioned landscapes representing tangible and intangible connections to Cuba. The meaning underlying these landscapes and the ways they are utilized in both research sites is impacted in interesting and diverse ways by individuals' experiences as members of the Cuban diaspora. For instance, the experiences of a recent exile differ from those of a person who arrived in the U.S. from Cuba as a young child in the 1960s, which may in turn differ from those of someone who traveled to the U.S. on a raft. This diversity, some of which is represented here, is indicative of a wide range of sentiments towards the island (and towards the U.S.).

Interviewees in both locations report either visiting Cuba, entertaining visitors from the island, cooking and enjoying typical Cuban foods, sending remittances to family in Cuba, talking on the telephone (or via e-mail) with people in Cuba, telling stories about their experiences in Cuba, or sharing in celebrations with other members of the Cuban community in the U.S., indicating a sense of cultural pride and a desire to maintain contact with the island. In many cases this desire supersedes individual and community ideological arguments against Castro's policies and several barriers of governmental bureaucracy, along with the intricacies of

navigating a life in the U.S. while maintaining these transnational connections. Thus despite the challenges involved, people find a way to retain particular elements of their Cuban heritage and a relationship with their homeland. Specific mechanisms for (re)creating Cuban landscapes in Moultrie and Miami are summarized in the tables below.

Table 2. Elements of (re)created Cuban landscapes in Moultrie, according to research participants

	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Symbolic</b>
<b>Public</b>	Grocery markets (Mexican-owned)	
<b>Private</b>	Home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cuban flag (inside)</li> <li>- tile flooring</li> <li>- portraits of Cuban leaders (Martí)</li> <li>- framed scenes of Cuba</li> <li>- landscaping/garden</li> </ul>	Sensory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FOOD and coffee</li> <li>- music</li> </ul> Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- network to “import” goods from Miami</li> <li>- pig roasts</li> <li>- Jehovah’s Witness meetings</li> <li>- baby showers</li> </ul> Shared Experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stories &amp; photographs</li> <li>- contact with people in Cuba</li> </ul>

Table 3. Elements of (re)created Cuban landscapes in Miami, according to research participants.

	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Symbolic</b>
<b>Public</b>	<p>Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Domino Park</li> </ul> <p>Landmarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Calle Ocho</li> <li>- Virgen de la Caridad Chapel</li> <li>- street signs</li> <li>- Memorial Boulevard</li> </ul> <p>Businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cuban restaurants &amp; cafecito counters</li> <li>- business names (e.g. signs in Spanish)</li> <li>- Cuban grocery markets</li> <li>- art galleries</li> <li>- cigar shops</li> <li>- theaters</li> </ul>	<p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CubaNostalgia</li> <li>- Viernes Culturales</li> <li>- Carnaval Miami (incl. Calle Ocho Festival)</li> <li>- Feria de Los Municipios</li> </ul> <p>Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cuban Heritage Collection</li> </ul> <p>Sensory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cuban restaurants/bakeries &amp; cafecito counters</li> <li>- music &amp; dance</li> <li>- language</li> </ul> <p>Clubs and Organizations</p>
<b>Private</b>	<p>Home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stained glass transom windows</li> <li>- Cuban flag</li> <li>- Cuban art</li> </ul>	<p>Sensory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- food and coffee</li> <li>- music</li> </ul> <p>Shared Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stories &amp; photographs</li> <li>- old television programs &amp; films</li> <li>- nostalgia</li> <li>- contact with people in Cuba</li> </ul>

Public elements of (re)created landscapes in Miami are much more common than in Moultrie, owing in part to the relative power (and the political orientation of that power) of each community within their respective regions. Historical interaction between South Florida and Cuba contrasts strikingly with the lack of interaction between Moultrie and the island – a difference that undoubtedly affects the contemporary landscape at all three locations.

Other notable differences, such as the context of departure of the majority of Cuban exiles at each research site, play perhaps an even larger role in the ways that Cuban landscapes are (re)created than sheer numbers or a history of exchange. The private expressions of Cubanness in Moultrie are tremendously preferred over public displays, which in Miami tend to reflect a strong undercurrent of political activism that is typically shunned by Witnesses. Jorge Duany (2009) conveys similar findings, and notes that recently, Cuban immigrants in the U.S. tend to have stronger direct ties to people in Cuba:

In spite of the time and distance, numerous families have maintained sporadic communication, although not always uniting physically or ideologically. Contact between the Cuban population and emigrants has intensified during the 1990s. [...] The networks between Cuban Americans and residents of the island are concentrated in Havana and between the most recent migrants, particularly those that left after the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 (Duany 2009:6, my translation).

With a greater proportion of recent arrivals (nearly all 200+ families have arrived to the U.S. within the last twenty years), Cuban Americans in Moultrie tend to exhibit closer contact with the island than do Miami Cubans. Those living in Miami, on the other hand, tend to have larger and more long-term networks with others in the U.S., which may take the place of explicitly transnational ties to some degree (e.g. Cuban American social networks are rooted in the U.S., rather than in Cuba). Additionally, with a longer historical presence in Miami and a much larger, more politically visible community, it might be said that Miami Cubans have easier access to a network of resources, formal and informal, that facilitate the process of gaining residence, citizenship, and subsequently sponsoring any relatives still in Cuba to come to the U.S. – hence, less direct interaction with the island. Even long-established conservative Cuban Americans,

however, were prompted to reconnect with family and friends in Cuba during the worst of the shortages after the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, with compassion outweighing “political considerations” (Blue 2003:29). These transnational ties take an informal role – one that the Cuban government “has not quashed” (Duany 2009:6). Cuban and Cuban American extremists on both sides of the Straits of Florida have seen fit to reconnect with family and friends, despite their respective “traitorous” political actions (Duany 2009; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). These ties influence the manners in which Cuban landscapes are (re)created throughout the diaspora.

The ways that transnational landscapes are created and lived in the U.S. are also influenced by individuals’ experiences in Cuba. Many Cuban exiles in Moultrie arrived seeking religious asylum. Several people included in this sample, especially those aged 50 or above, expressed concern at addressing questions concerning travel to Cuba or religion in general. There was also a noticeable difference in their reception of me, a researcher (read: White outsider working for a U.S. institution), as compared to participants in Miami. Despite the presence of a trusted intermediary (Estela) several interviewees in Moultrie declined to be recorded and many signed their consent forms with an ‘X’ rather than a discernible signature. Several days after their interview, one family asked that their responses not be included in the research because they felt they had divulged too much information about their relationship with the island. Relatively non-polarizing topics, like Cuban foods and interior decorating, tended to be more common topics of conversation and tactics for creating a sense of place in the landscape among interviewees in Moultrie. Both the religious background (Witnesses are discouraged

from engaging in politics) of most interviewees and their (recent) negative experiences in and memories of post-revolutionary Cuba must be taken into consideration when comparing these kinds of responses to those provided in Miami.

Most participants in Miami, on the other hand, made it difficult to end the interview – especially those that have lived in Miami most of their lives or who have achieved a high level of socioeconomic success there. Cuban-U.S. politics commonly entered the conversation. Members of the Cuban community in Miami were generally more comfortable criticizing the Cuban government, which is not surprising given the historical and contemporary presence of outspoken independence and anti-Castro activists in Miami (Grenier et al. 2007). But the community is becoming increasingly diverse. The trend of recent exiles (that is, people who have lived the majority of their lives in Cuba) being hesitant to share details of their experience continues in this Cuban-friendly city as well. Gabriel, Celia and Eduardo's son, arrived to the U.S. via Venezuela with his parents just eight years before our interview. He was visibly emotional when he told of first leaving Cuba, then adjusting to life in Venezuela only to eventually arrive in Miami, where he was held back a year in school to learn English. His trip from Venezuela to Miami was a traumatic one in which he and his father became separated; he told the story with an air of stoicism. Despite his travails, or perhaps because of them, Gabriel attained U.S. citizenship as quickly as he was able – a trend that is mirrored in Moultrie among other recent immigrants.

While political discord is at the fore of many debates about Cuba, economic opportunity was overwhelmingly the primary motivation for migration among people in both the Moultrie and Miami communities, in line with global trends in international economic development and



migration (Castles & Miller 2005). Government jobs, which still include a majority<sup>26</sup> of available positions in Cuba, simply “do not pay enough” according to participants in both cities. Monthly salaries were raised in 2005 from 203 to 398 *pesos* (15 USD), with a corresponding increase in the minimum wage, to 225 pesos (8.50 USD) each month (Espina 2008). These numbers mask Cuba’s double economy, wherein government workers are paid in Cuban pesos, but much of the available food and durable goods on the island are sold for Cuban “*dolars*” (Cuban *pesos convertibles* that took the place of U.S. dollars and other foreign currency in 2004). One peso convertible is equivalent to almost 30 pesos (roughly one U.S. dollar) (Alejandro 2008). The poverty rate has also increased dramatically, especially in urban centers, since the Special Period in the early 1990s (Espina 2008). As recently as June, 2008, however, the Cuban government announced that it would move to a pay system based on productivity – a monumental shift away from hard-line Communist policy.

Participants in both cities also repeatedly commented that other freedoms were truncated. For those interviewees who migrated to the U.S. soon after the 1959 revolution, those lost freedoms included government control of businesses and other personal assets, forced military service, and dramatically reduced wages. More recent arrivals complained that they were not allowed to travel, purchase consumer goods (though personal computers and cell phones are now legally sold in Cuba to those who can afford them), and that they were restricted from speaking or acting against any part of the government – a difficult thing to avoid since government policies in Cuba currently manage most aspects of daily life.

In spite of these experiences and the decision to leave the island, Cuban exiles interviewed in Moultrie and Miami maintain overwhelmingly positive memories of their

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<sup>26</sup> Private sector jobs comprise just 21% of Cuba’s labor force (Espina 2008).

homeland, or, in the case of second generation Cuban Americans, their parents' homeland. Nostalgia for idyllic rural scenes and sumptuous fresh foods, along with Cuba's beaches and once-grand buildings, was common throughout the sample. These memories and the connections people maintain to the island through friends or family have resulted in the creation of landscapes with both visible and invisible components that reflect the "translocative and transtemporal" quality of exile and diaspora life, wherein "emplacement [is] as significant as displacement" (Tweed 2006: 81). Tweed suggests a revision of the anthropological notion of dwelling that encompasses the transitory nature of exile: to dwell is to inhabit, to abide for a time in a place – it is not a permanent or a static state. Rather, it implies "mapping, building, and inhabiting", an active, agentic, and temporary experience (Tweed 2006: 82).

People are not apt to re-create negative experiences as they build landscapes. Pleasant experiences, like a fragrant, steaming *empanada*, photographs from a high school dance, a particular old song, or a lively game of dominos, are re-created in the U.S. and re-imagined in this new context, both apart from and still touched by Cuba. In this process, it is common also to draw strength from attributes of a shared history or shared experience, including religion. Brown (2003) has documented the manner in which Santería is used and "reformed" within the Cuban exile community in New Jersey, making for a resilient and flexible belief system that structures the present while preserving some essence of the past. Tweed's work reflects a similar trend, or perhaps even some degree of re-purposing, within Catholicism among Cuban exiles in Miami (2006, 1999, 1997). The shrine to Our Lady of Charity aids its devotees in remembering Cuba and the island's patron saint, along with presenting the opportunity to re-create Catholic rituals. But in the context of exile, *la Virgen* has also taken on new meaning, and a new name, as "Our Lady of the Exile" (Tweed 1997). The Shrine itself provides a physical space to gather and share

in a collective experience that recognizes and legitimizes the transitory nature of exile (and dwelling). Tweed highlights this “crossing” from one place to another – homeland to host country, home to Shrine, life to death – as an integral part of Miami Cubans’ experience (Tweed 2006: 123).

The silences I encountered among interviewees are also telling. That a large majority of participants elected not to participate in the cognitive mapping exercise, and some preferred that our interaction not be recorded, might simply reflect a lack of rapport or a sense of distrust, but these choices may also mark insecurities tied more directly to the experience of exile. Perhaps interviewees simply wished to avoid the risk of delving into a potentially painful reminiscence about their experiences, and shaped their participation accordingly. The same might be said for the lack of public landscapes amidst the Moultrie Cuban community. While it is true that this community has a much shorter history than Cuban Miami, it has become a fairly well-established minority contingent in the county. Its members take advantage of employment and educational opportunities, and all have the advantage of legal immigration status compared to the more numerous and obvious Mexican immigrant population. So why have they not begun another “Little Havana”? One additional reason for this lack of public displays of Cuban memories or traditions might simply lie in the fact that there already exists a Little Havana, a nostalgic public landscape that Moultrie residents can also share. Many of those Cuban exiles who eventually settled in Moultrie lived for a time in South Florida – and elected to move elsewhere. Perhaps Moultrie will never create its own Domino Park, or perhaps there is merely some critical mass that has yet to be reached. Owing to this community’s unique religious background, it is likely that participation in the sorts of public displays of Cuban culture like those in Miami will remain limited to periodic trips to stock up on specialty foods.

## Conclusions

Nostalgia and ‘place building’ are common among the Cuban communities in Miami and Moultrie. While the landscapes created by these forces may be more visible in Miami than in Moultrie, Cubans in Moultrie are certainly no less invested in maintaining memories of Cuba and creating interior, private landscapes to keep those memories alive and well. Transnational connections, be they in the form of visits to Cuba or visitors from Cuba, telephone calls, remittances, or staying up-to-date with news from Cuba, abound in both locations and inform the experience of Cuban identity in the U.S.

Arjun Appadurai (1993), and Linda Basch and Nina Glick-Schiller’s early work (1994) succeeded in moving migration studies in anthropology away from simple push-pull socioeconomic mechanisms and towards a more holistic dialectic between people and institutions at both ends of the migration stream. Basch and Glick Schiller’s theory of transnationalism is now indispensable in the contemporary context of faster, more frequent exchanges of people and information across expansive distances and geopolitical boundaries. And the Cuban case is certainly no exception. Contrary to popular and sometimes romantic notions of Cuban exceptionalism, especially around topics such as politics and nationalism, Cuban migrants and exiles living throughout the contemporary Cuban diaspora continue to interact with the island (e.g. Duany 2009; Blue 2003). They are not distinct from other immigrant groups in this manner. The situation of the Cuban diaspora in the U.S. is unique, however, in that transnationalism is restricted by several layers of ideological and political disarray that must be stripped away in order for such interaction to occur.

By way of addressing the first research question (in what ways are landscapes (re)created and given meaning at these locations in the Cuban diaspora?), it is helpful to highlight this transnational character of the Cuban diaspora in both Miami and Moultrie. In this context of transnationalism, Cubans in both cities have re-imagined their environments – their landscapes – to reflect particular elements of Cuba and their connection to the island, be it ongoing or in the distant past. Howard Murphy has characterized such activity as “the sedimenting of history and sentiment in the landscape” (Murphy 1995:187). Cuban identity in these cases has been displaced from the island into the diaspora, resulting in an effort by those interviewed to hold on to particular parts of their identity in specific ways as they integrate into a new place. That ‘holding on’ results in a sense of connectivity to the island when living there is no longer possible.

“The deterritorialization of identities [...] can result in a sense of local isolation, estrangement, and exclusion. Another consequence may also be a compensatory and nostalgic ‘place building’ and an attempt to affirm the meanings and memories that are perceived to be threatened and soon to be lost” (Allon 2000: 276).

I would add that the *re*territorialization of identity, much like Brown’s (2003) and Tweed’s (2006) accounts of Cuban religion in exile, can be an effective technique for maintaining those meanings and memories.

It stands to reason that the (re)created landscapes Cuban immigrants make in the U.S. are also deeply influenced by their contemporary surroundings; this represents a significant disparity between Miami and Moultrie. Miami is a bustling international city, which is generally proud to display its Cuban influences, and public cultural displays (e.g. festivals, monuments, Spanish

language media) are common. Miami's Cuban community (and even people outside of that community) counts shrines, cigar stores, parks, restaurants, and monuments among the places comprising transnational landscapes incorporating elements of Cuban and U.S. culture. Moultrie, on the other hand, scarcely notices its Cuban population and Cuban immigrants are not especially eager to make themselves known, owing in part to the community's negative responses to other immigrants in the region. Instead, they quietly carry on, away from the prying eyes of vaguely suspicious locals.

It is this difference that most directly addresses the second research question (how does the context of migration or exile affect the (re)creation of landscapes?), since the "context of migration" includes experiences around departure, arrival, and resettlement. Miami, along with other historically Cuban American cities in the U.S., has a longer and more complex history of interaction with the Cuban exile community than does Moultrie, which affects the level of political and socioeconomic security experienced by immigrants at each site. The presence of a social network upon arrival at a migration destination is a key indicator of migrant "success" (Palloni et al. 2001). While Moultrie Cubans take advantage of social networking, especially through the Jehovah's Witness community, this network and its resources remains small and limited compared to Miami.

Prior to the revolution, travel and trade networks formally joined the two nations (with Havana as the primary point of contact in Cuba) as early as 1819, when steam power, technology from the U.S., was introduced to the island's sugar industry (Pérez 1999). Cuban influence on the "American" landscape first occurred in substantial form during the latter part of the nineteenth century; Ybor City, a Tampa, Florida, neighborhood, was home to hundreds of Cuban émigrés (and two Cuban cigar factories) by the 1880s. Cuban migrants hoping to escape the

political and economic instability in Cuba during this time, along with those mostly upper class Cubans travelling for business or pleasure, had also built up Key West in the 1860s, eventually spreading their influence on the built landscape to New Orleans and New York. Cuban leaders sought refuge and support for Cuba's movement for independence from Spain within northern cities as well. This relatively rapid exchange of people and ideas across the Straits of Florida, which continued until the 1960s, influenced not just the physical landscape. U.S. ideology filtered back to Cuba, and typically in larger proportions than the reverse (Pérez 1999). Due in large part to this long and intimate history of interaction, most post-revolutionary exiles have settled in South Florida, a region with which many are familiar.

The distinction between the resettlement experiences of Cuban exiles in each region, South Florida and South Georgia, reflects another key difference: the majority of the Cuban community in Moultrie is comprised of Jehovah's Witnesses. Because of the tenants of Jehovah's Witnesses' religious doctrine – proselytizing among them – many members of this community were imprisoned or otherwise threatened on the basis of their religion in Cuba. Rules governing religious expression have relaxed in Cuba within the last few years (now churches are open and religious groups are permitted to practice more publicly), but Castro's policy of religious intolerance continues to negatively impact popular opinion of religion in Cuba (personal communication). Owing in part to this experience, Cubans in Moultrie tend to be more guarded and reserved compared to most Cubans in Miami included in this research. The confluence of religious discrimination, a tradition of cultural homogeneity in Moultrie, and the recent nature of the development of the Cuban community there impacts the role that Cuba and Cuban culture have in the daily lives of Cubans in Moultrie.

For people in exile or immigrant communities at both of the research sites, nostalgia plays a key role in the ways landscapes are created. Nostalgia, according to Kathleen Stewart, “is a cultural practice, not a given content; its forms, meanings, and effects shift with cultural practice – it depends on where the speaker stands in the landscape of the present” (Stewart 1988:227). In other words, because Moultrie’s “landscape of the present” is not particularly conducive to public cultural displays from its recent immigrant population, Cubans there have turned primarily to their homes and places of worship as sites at which to (re)create familiar or comforting elements of Cuban culture – and they live in and are influenced by that landscape. It is within these more private places that memories are rehashed (in a language that suits them), familiar foods are prepared and shared, and the freedom to express it all without judgment from the mainstream is most felt. Nostalgia plays no less a role in Moultrie than in Miami, it simply takes a distinct form based on the setting and the more recent arrival of this group of exiles.

### Implications of the Research

This work contributes to theories of transnationality and against a notion of Cuban exceptionalism. That is, Cuban migration and interaction between the diaspora and the island is similar to that of other immigrant and diaspora experiences. Indeed, transnationalism is enacted and, while it results in the creation of uniquely diasporic Cuban landscapes as Cuban émigrés cope with the loss of a homeland, so do other immigrant and minority groups re-make elements of their cultural past in new or inhospitable settings (e.g. Sutton 2001; Seremetakis 1996; Airriess & Clawson 1994). The Cuba-U.S. scenario differs from others in the simultaneity of closeness and distance represented in transnational landscapes – geographically, Cuba and the



U.S. are close neighbors, but the political and social ideological differences prevent barrier-free interaction.

Research on transnational landscapes also adds a new dimension to scholarly work on exile and immigrant experiences, including the competing notions of assimilation and transnationality, which are not, in fact, mutually exclusive strategies in the context of resettlement as some would think (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). In fact, assimilation and transnationality are for many interviewees two of the most productive (and concurrent) coping mechanisms for dealing with the reality of exile, and, according to Grenier and Pérez, “part of the legacy of exile is its irrational character, based as it is on emotion and passion” (Grenier and Pérez 2003:115). This “emotion and passion” is evident in that despite a host of negative experiences, all of the immigrants and exiles interviewed still love their country and want to remember it as a good place. Exiles speak with melancholy or sad nostalgia about even happy times in Cuba, because many of them are prohibited from returning to the island or refuse to go while Castro’s government still reigns. They have been barred from a homeland and forced to make do with assimilation and transnationality.

That people continue to enter the U.S. and other wealthy nations and fashion a place of their own in an increasingly global or transnational context necessitates that researchers devote more time to researching the new and clever ways that people adjust to life in a new setting. A holistic approach, one that includes the role of memory and nostalgia along with attention to transnational ties – and how these mechanisms of place-making combine to form landscapes – will be vital. Without attention to these “fuzzy” and often personal experiences, we risk seeing immigrant and exile communities as homogenous and ignoring the variety of transnational interactions that increasingly, and informally, link nations.

The results of this study, while not entirely generalizeable beyond the Cuban diaspora, add a new element to landscape theories as well, combining perspectives from cultural geography, archaeology, ecology, and anthropology to include not just physical elements, but also the very real, non-tangible elements that people use to make place. Memory and nostalgia, imprinted on the landscape, create a lens through which people view their physical surroundings and interact with others. Landscape and place-making are often theorized from the perspective of indigenous groups with long-standing connections to a physical place, upon which they layer meaning (e.g. Basso 1996). But social scientists have increasingly recognized that marginal status, which may not allow for much control over events in the public sphere, often influences people to turn to what they can control – namely, their own memories, tastes, gardens – that, together, result in a new landscape, influenced by but distinct from mainstream (Nazarea 2005; Stewart 1996; Westmacott 1991). As Barbara Bender writes,

There are still those who would like to reserve the word ‘landscape’ for a particular, elitist way of seeing, an imposing/imposed ‘viewpoint’ that emerged alongside, and as part of, the development of mercantile capital in Western Europe. But this is just one sort of landscape which, even for those who enjoyed ‘a fine prospect’, was partaken of in very different ways depending on finely graded and gendered subtleties of class. [...] The emphasis is on a visual ‘scape in which the observer *stands back* from the thing observed. But [...] stasis is an illusion. (Bender 2001:3)

Rather than this “elitist” form, landscape represents, in fact, a contested set of places, always in the making – a hybrid space turned to place by one’s unique desire for comfort and stability.

Apart from its emphasis on the (re)creation of landscapes, this work also serves as a contemporary case study of the intersection of place-making and nostalgia within the context of immigration or exile, in the vein of such scholars as Seremetakis (1996) and Airriess and Clawson (1994). The Cuban government has a particular animosity towards the diaspora, even pricing return visas for Cuban Americans higher than those for tourists (Duany 2005). Cuban citizenship represents little advantage abroad (Duany 2005). As a result, Cuban immigrants' naturalization rates in the U.S. are among the highest of any immigrant group (Garcia 1997). While this is due in part, no doubt, to the wet foot/dry foot policy under which even those Cuban exiles who enter the U.S. without proper documentation are granted permission to stay, it also represents a political move away from Communism in addition to leaving the island. Laws targeting other undocumented immigrants do not apply to Cuban migrants once they are on U.S. soil. This advantage means that Cuban immigrants have access to legal employment opportunities and U.S. citizenship more quickly undocumented immigrants might.

### *Limitations*

Any research undertaking is bound to have its share of shortcomings or limitations. First and foremost in this case, as with most scholarly endeavors, is that time in both research sites was restricted by funding limitations. The results presented here would certainly be enhanced if return trips enabled more time with community members and archival resources. Members of Moultrie's Cuban community may have been more comfortable sharing the details of their experiences if I had been able to commit more time to living in and with that community. And beyond the sites included here (Moultrie, Georgia, and Miami, Florida) there are hundreds of other Cuban communities throughout the diaspora comprised of people that maintain ties to the

island and re-create a sense of place and a landscape in distinct ways. Future studies are aimed at achieving a greater depth and breadth of data so as to establish a more detailed account of the creation and experience of Cuban transnational landscapes across the diaspora.

In addition, my standpoint as a middle-class, White woman who was raised Catholic in a Midwestern suburb, and who entered these communities in my role as an American doctoral student, necessarily shapes the research. I have not lived in Cuba for a substantial length of time or experienced exile from any nation. Should I chose to do so, I can easily visit my home state and speak the language my parents speak. These facts were readily available to interviewees, and it is important to make them available here, as my biases in experience are likely to have influences both the research and presentation of this material. While I am genuinely interested in learning and sharing the information gathered as part of this project, it is also a means to an end for me – the selfish nature of academia.

Perhaps owing to my social position and background, all but one of the formal interviews in Miami was conducted in English, per participants' preference; all interviews in Moultrie were conducted in Spanish (except for some interactions with Estela and non-Cuban participants). It is unlikely that this language difference affects the results presented here to any large degree, but it does reflect a major disparity in the two communities – English language proficiency is indicative not only of an immigrants' time or experience in the U.S., but language proficiency provides access to key resources and better employment opportunities (Berman et al. 2003), especially in Moultrie and outside of Little Havana. This advantage is well-known among Cuban immigrants in both places, and learning English is a priority for many. But knowledge of the English language does not preclude strong connections to individuals' Cuban heritage; in fact, it may even enable Cuban Americans to publicize their transnational landscape. For

example, the founder of CubaNostalgia is a successful and highly influential Cuban American businessman. He has transformed his favorite memories of Cuba into a giant three-day public event that celebrates the Cuba of “yesteryear”.

### *Future work*

The research contained herein represents a foundation for future studies on the Cuban diaspora. The next phase of this project will focus on the Cuban community in Moultrie, looking specifically at how its membership changes over time and how local people and institutions perceive this sub-population as it continue to grow. As exiles become established community members, will their presence be visible in the physical landscape? Will Spanish-speakers enjoy a better reception from the majority? How might the relationship between the Cuban community and other minority communities change? What role does religion play in local perceptions of the Cuban community?

It will also be important to compare reactions from members of Moultrie’s and Miami’s Cuban communities to future changes in Castro’s government, as well as from the remainder of the diaspora. Duany predicts that should Castro’s policies continue to weaken or should the U.S. government decide to make significant changes to the embargo, it will result in a substantial new wave of Cuban emigration to the U.S. (Duany 2005). Where will these people settle? Miami is likely to be at the forefront of “gateway” cities, but most of these potential immigrants will probably elect to settle more permanently in other places where housing and employment are more accessible.

More broadly, the results of this research have practical implications as well. The project contributes a broader understanding of how immigrants to the United States adjust to and

(re)create their new surroundings, and highlights the necessity of contemporary diversity tolerance in an increasingly pluralistic society – especially in those places that have not traditionally been immigrant destinations. By sharing the project results with members and non-members of the diaspora community, fellow researchers, policy-makers, cooperative extension officers, city planners, and other state and private institutions (e.g. social services, immigrant rights groups), I expect that this work will also have a positive impact on the lives of immigrants and the communities in which they settle. Policy implications include the creation of community spaces, including fora for addressing issues unique to immigrant communities (especially those newly formed or forming), parks, and allocation of space for community meetings, along with greater tolerance of and appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity.

The hybrid, “creolized” character of transnational landscapes is likely to become increasingly relevant to anthropological research (Palmié 2006). In keeping with current trends of globalization and as “the nation” increasingly exists apart from formal geopolitical borders, scholars now argue for viewing society itself as a transnational phenomenon (e.g. Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). Landscapes, both physical and symbolic, reflect and influence human experience (Ingold 1993); if that experience is increasingly transnational (Vertovec 1999; Hannerz 1998), then it stands that transnational landscapes will be an important element of migration studies and investigations of place as social scientists seek to better understand the contemporary patterns of human mobility around the globe.

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## APPENDIX

Key research participants in Moultrie, Georgia.

	<b>Name (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Cuban?</b>	<b>Age/sex</b>	<b>Time in U.S.</b>	<b>Path to U.S.</b>	<b>Current job</b>	<b>Add'l notes, reasons for leaving</b>
1	Estela	yes	35/f	13 years	Sponsored by parents	Extension assistant	
2	Allison	no	40/f	n/a	n/a	Extension agent	
3	Sol	y	43/f	2 years	Escape religious persecution	National Beef	“porque no podría aguantar más”
4	Susan	n	55/f	n/a	n/a	Extension Supervisor	
5	Inés	y	40/f	1 year	Political Asylum	Sanderson Farms	
6	Eliana	n	34/f	n/a	n/a	Extension Assistant	
7	Gloria	y	30/f	12 years	Lottery (with parents and sister)	Secretary, Co-owner car dealership w/husband	“para mejorar el estilo de vida”
8	Juana	y	65/f	12 years	Lottery, Escape religious persecution	retired	garden
9	Hernán	y	70/m	12 years	Lottery, Escape religious persecution	retired	
10	Juan	y	40/m	13 years	Lottery	Truck driver	“no hubo oportunidades”
11	Fernando	Y	60/m	5 years	Sponsored by son	retired	“más tranquilo”
12	Maggie	Y	60/f	5 years	Sponsored by son	homemaker	Economic opportunity

13	Javier	y	40/m	14 years (4 mos. in Miami & Tampa)	Religious asylum	Notary, Local immigration specialist	Has visited Cuba 4 times
14	Edita	y	61/f	15 years (2 years in Moultrie	Religious asylum	Sanderson Farms	
15	Laura	y	30/f	7 years in South Florida; 4 mos. in Moultrie	Sponsored by mother	Farm worker	Came for “el sueño Americano”
16	Marisa	y	55/f	1 year	Husband won Cuban lottery	Sanderson Farms, Evangelist	More financial opportunity
17	Susana	y	45/f	14 years	Accompanied husband	Homemaker	
18	Mateo	y	55/m	1 year	Lottery (applied to escape religious persecution)	Sanderson Farms	
19	Alonso	y	49/m	2 yrs, 4 mos. (2 mos. in Miami)	Sponsored by wife’s family	Sanderson Farms	More financial opportunities
20	Miguel	y	33/m	5 years	Wife sponsored him	Traveling salesman – phone cards	“porque tuve hambre”
21	Dalia	y	32/f	12 years	Arrived with her father; religious asylum	Homemaker, mother	
22	Luís	y	60/m	27 years total, 6 in Moultrie	Mariel boatlift	Medical doctor	
23	Bernal	y	89/m	3 years	Sponsored by his daughter	Retired	
24	Idalma	y	57/f	4 years	Religious asylum	Sanderson Farms and National Beef	

25	Antonio	y	35/m	7 years (Tampa, then 2 in Moultrie)	Lottery	Sparkman's Dairy	Low wages, low standard of living
26	Olga	y	35/f	7 years (Tampa, then 2 in Moultrie)	Lottery	Homemaker, mother	
27	Ester	y	60/f	5 months	Escape religious persecution	Retired	
28	Pedro	y	61/m	5 months	Escape religious persecution	Retired	
29	Ana	y	45/f	4 years (2 yrs in FL first)	Sponsored by family	Sanderson Farms	Economic opportunity, family
30	Javier	y	70/m	15 total, 5 Tampa, 10 Moultrie	Sponsored by son	Retired	
31	Yaimara	y	35/m	2 years	Religious asylum	National Beef	
32	Maria	y	32/f	5 years	Sponsored by family	Medical assistant	
33	Justa	y	34/f	6 years in Orlando, 8 months Moultrie	Lottery	Riverside	

Key research participants in Miami, Florida.

	<b>Name (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Cuban?</b>	<b>Age/sex</b>	<b>Time in U.S.</b>	<b>Path to U.S.</b>	<b>Current job</b>	<b>Add'l notes; reasons for leaving</b>
1	Adela	yes	50/f	Arrived in 1966 with mother	Freedom flights.	Accountant	Followed father to U.S.; he was fleeing Cuban militia
2	Sylvan	y	22/m	Arrived in 1996	Accompanied mother	Musician	
3	Lars	no	34/m	Arrived in 1999	East German- Polish	Guide, Miami Cultural Tours	
4	David	n	40/m	Arrived in 1990	From Chicago	Owner, Miami Cultural Tours	
5	Marcos	y	21/m	21 years	Born in Miami to Cuban parents	Manager, Salsa Kings dance instruction (office at FIU)	
6	Marina	y	55/f	Arrived to Boston with her mother in 1963; to Miami in 1987	Freedom flights.	Co-owner, Unforgettable Music (producing and management)	"I love both cultures; I diffuse them both"
7	Andrés	y	35/m	Arrived in 1980	Mariel boatlift	Owner, Exquisito Restaurant	
8	Samy	y	36/m	Arrived in 1988	Sponsored by mother	Owner, Hoy Como Ayer nightclub	Pro dancer, actor, singer in Cuba
9	Francisco	y	48/m	30 years	Boat	Owner/manager, Palacio de los Jugos	To work in family store
10	Ann	n	58/f	11 years	From New York City	Owner, Little Havana To-Go	"First Cuban store in Miami"

11	Mailyn	y	59/f	Arrived in 1960	Born in NYC, moved to Cuba at 6 mos., then Miami; sponsored by father	Dancer and former owner of Salsa Kings	
12	Elisa	y	23/f	23 years	Born in Miami to Cuban parents	Assistant at Kristie's House charity group	
13	Eduardo	y	29/m	29 years	Born in Miami to Cuban parents	Sociology graduate student (research in Little Havana)	Strong desire to "reconnect, revisit" Cubanness
14	Violaine	n	30/f	1 year (research)	From France	Geography graduate student (research in Hialeah)	
15	Pablo	y	60/m	45 years	Freedom flights	President, Public Relations firm and CubaNostalgia, Inc.	
16	Pedro	y	57/m	Arrived in 1961	Freedom flights	NET officer for Little Havana	
17	Gabriel	y	25/m	8 years	Via Venezuela	Musician	
18	Eduardo	y	50/m	8 years	Via Venezuela	Medical assistant (former physician)	Political ideology
19	Celia	y	50/f	8 years	Via Venezuela	Magazine editor	
20	Sara	n	28/f	3 years	From France	Financial controller	