

Social and Economic Adjustment of Afro-Cubans in the United States: Racial and Ethnic Considerations

by

Michelle Hay

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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This dissertation describes and analyzes the ethno-racial identities and the socio-economic experiences of thirty black Cuban men and women who live in the United States. In doing so it addresses some of the major issues in immigration and identity studies, and in the social history of people of African descent. Specifically, it examines how these immigrants of African descent are being incorporated into the US's ethno-racial and social class hierarchy, and sheds light on subjectivization processes—the creation of citizens-- and on the nature of racial formation that is currently taking place in the United States. It integrates larger societal forces and processes with ordinary everyday experiences, exploring how macro and micro processes shape ethno-racial identities and inter-group relationships.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

I dedicate my achievement to Dr. Benjamin Rudner who inspired and supported this undertaking. I am grateful to many, including members of my family who told me how proud they are of me and who every once in a while asked, “Yuh nuh dun yet?” I am also grateful to my professors at Lehman College and the Graduate Center for nurturing me intellectually. Special thanks to Dr. Colin Palmer. There are some folks who I am especially thankful for. Mamadi, Brenda and Dana surrounded me with their love and held me tight, especially at the end when I felt I was falling apart. Mamadi, I love your hugs. The promise of raising goats together keeps me going. Bren, thanks for reading my dissertation, and for the past 33 years of friendship. Here’s to 33 years more, and to long talks on the beach. Dana, though I often resist I am grateful to you for your gentle and even your not so gentle prodding. I look forward to sharing many more meals and bottles of wine with you. Andrea and Jennifer, thanks for your friendship, support and conversation. It feels good to know you have my back. Noel, your practical advice to take the path of least resistance helped me through the final weeks. You ground me. Nuff love! I also thank Liliana, Belkis, Samuel and Sergito in Cuba, and Simone, Malik, Charmaine, Keith, Corey and Amanda in Florida for opening up their homes to me. Simone, your generosity amazes me.

Mommy, I honor you. When I wanted to give up I saw your face. You began in me a love for books. The childhood memory that I hold close is lying next to you playing with the

soft part of your arm while you read. You and I both have come a long way. My daughters, Samantha and Gina, were little girls when I first began my undergraduate studies. They sacrificed a lot, including the fact that since I was always broke we did not shop much. One memory I have for example was the day when, in a state of frustration because she could not get a new pair of sneakers, Gina demanded, “Why can’t you be a regular mom and have a regular job?” Sam and Gina, you are now wondrous women who I respect and love deeply. I thank you for understanding when I couldn’t go out to play with you because I had one more paper to write and another exam to study for.

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Introduction

And they remain virtually invisible in the Miami power structure—there are no black Cuban-American elected officials, no leaders of a major exile group and no major academic studies documenting their migration—even though they are more representative of an island where half or more of the population is now estimated to be black and mulatto (Navarro,1997).

This research on black Cubans is in part motivated by the near invisibility of black Latinos in the social science literature on immigrants. This replicates their “invisibility” in their countries of origin. In many countries in Latin America social policy has been to deny the existence of people of African descent, to underestimate their percentage in the population, erase their presence by encouraging them to genetically and culturally whiten, stifle their demands for justice by accusing them of being unpatriotic and divisive and de-legitimize their charges of racial oppression by claiming their countries to be racial democracies (Hanchard, 1994; Skidmore, 1993; Wade, 1993; Whitten, 1998; Jiménez Román, 1996; Helg, 1995; Pérez-Sarduy et al, 1995). I argue that in the United States their non-black co-ethnics continue this erasure using similar tactics.

Social scientists participate in the erasure of black Latinos when they write volumes on Latin American immigrants and either do not, or barely, mention people of African descent. My own survey of the literature on Latin American immigrants reveals scarcely a mention of the presence and experiences of Afro-Latinos. One important exception is the literature on Puerto Ricans, but even here the dominant tendency is to speak to the ways in which all Puerto Ricans are racialized. The same applies to Dominican

immigrants, in that the focus is on the racialization of the whole group. The point is there is very little acknowledgement of the specific experiences of Afro-Latino immigrants.

I was particularly struck by the near-complete absence of black Cubans and of any discussion of racism among Cuban immigrants. I had traveled to Cuba, saw with my own eyes that there were many black Cubans and had studied some of the social history of blacks in Cuba. But here in the United States, they were invisible. At academic conferences about Cuba, nothing! Unless the topic was religion or music, and even these topics were often bleached of blackness. These were traditions that belonged to all Cubans, and in which all Cubans participated. Maybe black Cubans did not migrate, preferring instead to take advantage of the social policies of the revolution? That is one theory that has some validity but which does not adequately explain their invisibility. Many blacks had come in the Mariel boatlift of 1980. The estimates are that somewhere between 20 percent and 50 percent of the approximately 124,000 of these exiles were black or mulatto. Thus, while their low numbers prior to 1980 might explain their absence in the early literature, they should have been very much a part of the literature since the Mariel boatlift. Yet, four of the six academic studies I have on my bookshelf about Cuban immigrants either do not have an index entry for black Cubans, race and racism, or they deal with these topics in woefully inadequate ways. For instance, James and Judith Olson's *Cuban Americans: From Trauma to Triumph* (1995) dedicates approximately two paragraphs to Black Cuban Americans and the discrimination they face. Boswell and Curtis's much referenced *The Cuban American Experience* (1984) indexes "Afro-Cuban influence" on cuisine, literature, music and visual arts, but has no

reference on racism among Cubans. A two-page subsection of the text on “Racial Characteristics” (pp. 102-103) *mentions* the possible discrimination black Cubans face from their white co-ethnics, but attributes this to the resentment “a minority” of the exiles feels toward black Cubans because they feel “blacks welcomed the Castro revolution.” These authors also gloss over the fact that most black Cubans do not live in Miami, but in the Northeast. According to them, “the reputation for racial tolerance is better than in the South.”

A more recent study, Maria Cristina García’s (1996) *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*, does not have an index entry for “Afro-Cubans,” “Black Cubans,” “race” or “racism.” Her sole mention of black Cubans was the following: “Black Cubans experienced discrimination from both their white compatriots and the larger society, and as late as 1990 their income lagged behind that of white Cubans by almost 40 percent” (1996:110).

Only two of these texts treat black Cubans as a significant group of people. One, *Between Race and Empire*, (Lisa Brock et al, 1998) comes out of an African diaspora perspective; the other, *More than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa*, (Susan Greenbaum, 2002) is the only ethnographic study of black Cuban immigrants, and in fact one of very few studies on a Latino immigrant group which explicitly addresses the racialized experiences of Latinos of African descent. This ethnographic study joins that very limited body of literature, using primarily qualitative, but also quantitative methods, to shed light on the experiences of one group of Latinos of African descent.

This research addresses three dimensions of the social life of the study's participants. First, it uses statistical data to identify the socioeconomic status of black Cubans as a group, and the ethnographic data collected from the study's subjects to explain these statistical findings. Second, it sheds light on the nature of black identities, and the macro and micro-level processes and structures that shape ethno-racial identities in the United States. The third dimension of social life that this study addresses are the political ramifications of the ways in which my informants self-identified, i.e. the groups they felt allied with and those they felt estranged from, in addition to the nature of their political views and behaviors.

Social Mobility

The dominant narrative of Cuban Americans emphasizes their success and represents them as a model minority group. Model minority groups are often used to make the case that race is not a significant enough barrier to upward mobility, and does not explain the low socioeconomic achievement of large numbers of African Americans (Kwong, 1996; Kim, 2000; Won Moo Hurh et al, 1989; Jaynes, 2000). Both Cubans and African Americans, the argument goes, experience racism, yet Cubans are successful and African Americans are not. Other factors must, therefore, explain achievement and the lack thereof. These factors, according to this narrative, are in part the cultural values, mores and attitudes that each group has (Ogbu, 1994; Waters, 1999; Portes et al, 1993; Min Zhou et al, 1996; Sowell, 1981). Cubans, for instance, are said to have "effort optimism," which African Americans lack (Portes et al, 1993). Cubans also have ethnic

cohesiveness, and they can draw upon the social capital or resources of their ethnic group (Portes, 1995). Culture and identity, therefore, play important roles in whether groups achieve or not. In some versions of this narrative culture is primary while in others culture is secondary.

This dissertation makes the case that this success narrative of Cuban immigrants is incomplete and therefore misleading because it is based upon the homogenization of Cuban immigrants. How differently might we understand Cuban immigrants if black Cubans, and through them race, were factored in? Also, how differently might we understand the basis of group social mobility if black Cubans were a part of the Cuban narrative?

Because black Cubans belong to a multiracial group, a study of their lives can shed light on the roles of racism (as a structural factor), and of ethnic traditions, values and mores (cultural factors) in group success or lack thereof. If race is not a serious barrier to social mobility, black Cubans should be doing about as well as their white counterparts. As Cubans and immigrants it is safe to assume they possess at least some of the attributes and resources, which are said to account for the success of Cubans. For instance, as immigrants they can be assumed to have the “effort optimism” associated with immigrants: they belong to an ethnic group described as possessing strong family values, an entrepreneurial tradition and ethnic cohesiveness; and they belong to an ethnic group with a thriving enclave, which ought to give them access to the social capital that is theorized for ethnic enclaves. However, the existing statistical data, albeit limited, on the

socioeconomic status of Cubans suggest that on all socioeconomic indicators black Cubans are not faring as well as white Cubans. What might explain this disparity? This study uses qualitative methods to address that question. It sheds light on some of the social behaviors and structural factors that underlie this disparity, and raises questions about the causal role attributed to culture—attitudes, values and mores— in group mobility.

This study found that one important factor in the socioeconomic status of black Cubans, is the discrimination they experienced from some of their white co-ethnics. Both the ethnographic and statistical data suggest that black Cubans who live in Florida, with its strong Cuban enclave, do not benefit from the Cuban enclave. It seems, then, that as a group black Cubans may be less able to draw upon Cuban social networks, and that the ethnic path available to their white co-ethnics might be less available to them. The discrimination they experience from some white Cubans also means they are thrown into the dominant society where they face the discrimination in the labor and housing markets that other studies document for black immigrants (Vickerman, 1999; Foner, 2005; Waters, 1999).

Ethno-Racial Identities

There is a good deal of research interest in the ways in which black immigrants and their children negotiate life in the United States, and the effects of the society's social structure on the types of identities they construct. Are they assimilating? If so, into which sector of the society are they assimilating? If they are not assimilating, what other forms of

identities are they developing? What do their integration patterns say about the nature of U.S. society? How will their integration patterns impact on group relations and on the social hierarchy of the country?

Several scholars who study black immigrants point to the salience of race in the lives of these immigrants, and the role this plays in the types of identities they develop (Foner, 2005; Waters, 1999; Vickerman, 1999). Black immigrants respond in a variety of ways to their racialized experiences: the majority take the ethnic path, cleaving to their ethnic or national group and distancing themselves from African Americans, while a minority identify with African Americans and adopt the cultural values and attitudes of that group. The dominant explanations given by scholars for these different forms of identities emphasize racism. For example, some of these immigrants respond to racism by seeking refuge in their ethnic group and holding on to their traditional values and attitudes, while others respond to racism by becoming “racial” and feeling allied with African Americans (Vickerman (1999), Waters (1999) and Foner (2005).

This study concurs with some of these findings and explanations. I too found that racial discrimination was a significant aspect of the lives of the study’s participants, and that whereas some informants emphasized their ethnic or national identities and sometimes distanced themselves from African Americans others emphasized their racial identity and were “racial.” I also found that racism played a significant role in their identities. Some dealt with racism by asserting their Cuban identity, while racism led some to emphasize

their racial identity.¹

My findings, however, depart from these studies in several respects. One departure concerns the role of racism in the identities and political perspectives of immigrants. I found that even though racism was important in the identities of the participants, their exposure to African American political culture and philosophies was even more important. The public nature and wide media coverage of the black liberation struggles of 1950s, 1960s and 1970s brought African American political culture and philosophies to a mass audience. Consequently, those individuals who were in the United States at the time of the liberation struggles held different views than did those who were either not in the country at that time, or were here but did not speak English. These experiences shaped their understanding of, and responses to, racism; it especially affected how they understood the plight of some African American communities and racial inequality in general.

This study also departs from previous studies in finding that intra-ethnic tension plays a significant role in shaping the participants' identities. Unlike most other studies that paint an undifferentiated picture of immigrants, this study approaches Cubans as a heterogeneous group. For instance, West Indians are often represented as racially homogeneous and coming from black majority societies. Yet, this is obviously not the case for Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana where blacks and Indians are about equal in

¹ This study does not speak directly to second-generation patterns since all participants were born in Cuba. However, it speaks indirectly to those patterns because several came to the United States as children or in their early teens (1.5ers). Their identities were significantly different from those who arrived here as adults or as older teens; the 1.5ers were the most African American identified and assimilated into African American communities. They also saw their children as African Americans of Cuban ancestry.

numbers and where there is a great deal of racial tension (Williams, 1991). Less noticeable are color cleavages in Jamaica where the color line waxes and wanes in political saliency, affecting the political perspectives of the population, and consequently these immigrants (Robotham, 1998).

The racial cleavages are even more evident among Latin American immigrants. Black Latinos come from white majority and/or white-dominated societies with long and subtle, but no less pernicious, traditions of racial oppression (Wade, 1993; Hanchard, 1994). Within the United States intra-ethnic racism is rarely acknowledged by social scientists, who assume ethnic cohesion. But they are very real for the populations involved, often alienating them from their ethnic group. Though penned in 1976, Ángela Jorge's (1996:136) essay, "The Black Puerto Rican Woman in Contemporary Society," still speaks to the racial cleavage among Latin American immigrants.

If the Puerto Rican is so integrated, and if miscegenation had solved all the problems associated with identity crisis, then Eduardo Seda Bonilla² (a reference to a social scientist who worked on Puerto Rican race relations) would not have found that the Black Puerto Rican in the United States tends to adapt and progressively assimilate into society as black. For many, the assimilation is so complete as to affect their speech in English to such an extent that they...speak English with a southern accent.³

Racial cleavage is also evident among Cuban immigrants despite the dominant narrative of Cuban racial fraternity. Black Cubans are from a white-dominated and white-dominant society, and Cubans of African descent must negotiate life with their white co-ethnics in Cuba and in the United States. The vast majority of this study's participants told me they

² Her reference: Eduardo Seda Bonilla, *Requiem por una cultura* (rio Piedras, P.R.: Editorial Edil, 1970)

³ See Marta I. Cruz-Janzen's essay, *Latinegras* (2001) for a similar perspective.

experienced racism from their white co-ethnics and that this experience was profoundly alienating. Their estrangement from their white co-ethnics is manifested in a hyphenated identity, or a double consciousness (DuBois, 1899; 1961); they are Cubans, but Cubans of African descent. Their alienation is also manifested in their social, spatial/residential and political separation from their white co-ethnics, which this study documents.

In some cases, the racism they experienced from some of their white co-ethnics pushed them to make other alliances and to seek out other communities. Many described a push/pull experience; pushed away by their white co-ethnics, they sought out and found acceptance from other groups, including African Americans, West Indians and Afro-Latino segments of Latin American groups in the United States.

Another departure from some studies of black immigrants relates to the tendency in the popular media and in some scholarly writings to portray the relationship between native born-blacks and immigrants in a negative light. For example, some scholars argue that immigrants who associate with and/or identify with native minorities (a group including African Americans, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans) adopt these groups' "oppositional culture" or their "adversarial attitude" toward mainstream norms and values.

"Oppositional culture," according to this perspective, underlies the low socioeconomic and educational achievement of native minorities (Portes et al, 2001; Min Zhou et al, 1996; Waters, 1999). Another type of "negative" rendition of the relationship between native and foreign-born blacks is the impression of a schism between these populations. Some studies suggest that this occurs as a result of their emphasis on the ethnic pride

most black immigrants assert as well as the tendency of some black immigrants to hold negative views of, and distance themselves from, African Americans (Waters, 1999; Green et al, 1992). Some media reports also convey the impression of a schism when they emphasize conflict and de-emphasize points of unity between immigrants and African Americans (Green et al, 1992; Jean Kim, 2000; Jaynes, 2000; Park, 1996).

With regard to the oppositional culture perspective, I did not find that an association and identification with African Americans had any “negative” effect on socioeconomic and educational achievement or that identification with African Americans means a rejection of mainstream values and norms. Though no participant identified *as* African American since they were not born in the United States, many had developed an affinity with African Americans and shared the politicized racial consciousness of African Americans. These individuals’ identification with African Americans did not hinder their social mobility. Significantly, these individuals were primarily middle-class professionals. Some of them gave credit to African American traditions for their socioeconomic achievement, for the affirming feeling they had about being black and for their ability to negotiate racism in the United States. To see African American culture as promoting achievement, however, would require a more nuanced perspective of African American culture and not one limited to the oppositional paradigm.

Intra-Black Relations

I also did not find the schism that is sometimes implied between native and foreign-born blacks. Many of the study’s participants did distance themselves from African Americans

and emphasized an ethnic or national identity. I argue, however, that ethnic affinity does not necessarily mean a schism— especially along political lines— between foreign and native-born blacks. The situation is more complex. As some scholars note in the case of West Indian immigrants, those participants who distanced themselves from African Americans did so to escape the enormous stigma attached to African Americans and to take advantage of the higher prestige of their ethnic group over African Americans. I will also argue that the ethnic pride some immigrants express might be “cultural” rather than “political.” For the majority of informants, being Cuban was a matter of cultural comfort and pride in origin. They were proud to be Cuban. At the same time, they also expressed pride in blackness and a sense of belonging to a pan-African community that includes African Americans. Most also were concerned about some of the same issues African Americans are concerned about, for instance inequality in education and employment, and they supported many of the strategies and perspectives that many African Americans support. Their ethnic identity or affinity, then, had little political significance.

My Journey

This study is in some ways a personal journey. I too am a black immigrant, and I too have been negotiating the “crosscurrents” (Vickerman, 2001) of race and ethnicity, constructing an identity out of my experiences here in the United States. I arrived in the country as a twenty-three-year-old Jamaican immigrant. I came to join my mother and sisters, bringing with me my two young children; my husband joined us a few months later. My initial understanding of race relations and the different groups around me came most immediately from my family and friends, all of whom were Jamaicans. From them I

quickly learned the negative stereotypes of African Americans and Puerto Ricans that pervade the society. These stereotypes colored my attitudes toward these groups, and in some way the sorts of social policies I supported. One day in a discussion with Ben Rudner, a Jewish man who was then my employer and who later became my dearest friend/supporter/advocate, I was commenting on how lazy African Americans are and that they all want to be on welfare—the typical immigrant understanding of the plight of African Americans. Ben responded simply that I knew nothing about the history of African Americans, and that it would be a good idea to learn some of that history before forming my opinions. I was actually deeply ashamed of my ignorance, but most important I was motivated to better understand the society in which I was to live and raise my daughters. I enrolled in Lehman College, beginning on a path which took me to doctoral studies in anthropology. Along the way I learned a lot about African American social history and social processes in general. This knowledge deeply impacted my worldview, changing the way I see myself and the relationship I have with people around me. My identity, one might say, has shifted, and the sorts of social policies I support have also shifted. I now reject the stereotypes of African Americans that my family members continue to hold on to, and I now see the need to join with African Americans and to support cross-cultural struggles for social justice. To be clear, though, I continue to love Jamaican music, food and especially sitting back with a bunch of Jamaicans and “talking patois.”

I have also watched and participated in my own children’s negotiation of the ethnic and racial landscape of New York City. As second-generation immigration, their perspectives

have been primarily formed here in the United States. They did not come with the “cultural baggage” I have. Whatever baggage they have, they have acquired here. And of course they are constantly being bombarded with the negative images of African Americans, blacks in general, and other minorities that flood our society. I see how seductive it has been for them to identify as Jamaican, to be ethnic. Being Jamaican and ethnic has a certain cachet, especially among their white peers. They are exotically linked to Bob Marley, reggae music and such things. The embarrassment they felt when they were young and I served oxtail and curried chicken to their friends has now given way to ethnic pride. They have culture, you see. They are the envy of their white friends, who research tells us, are so assimilated that they have become “bland” Americans and are seeking to resurrect ethnicity (Waters, 1996; Gallagher, 1997). But my children also have a depth of knowledge of history and of social processes, which deeply affects their worldview. They both graduated from liberal arts colleges in the United States, and we have had many discussions about social issues. They do not subscribe to the popular stereotypes of African Americans and they negotiate the crosscurrents between their ethnic and racial identities in a way that does not support ethnic chauvinism. Yes, they will tell a researcher they are Jamaican and not African American (they were born in Jamaica, they would say), and they do see themselves as having some different cultural traditions from African Americans, but they also have a racial and social consciousness that links them to all blacks, and for that matter, to all oppressed peoples. Their ethnic affinity is not insular and does not preclude alliances.

My own misperceptions and stereotypes were disturbing but perhaps understandable. I

was new to the country and had not been formally educated here, though I had been exposed to some amount of American culture through film and news media. What is even more disturbing to me, however, is that some African Americans subscribe to some of these same stereotypes. Here I am speaking specifically about the young African American students I teach. Many repeat the stereotypes of African Americans, which they feel they have a special right to do because they have relatives, friends or neighbors who are lazy, sell or use drugs, are pregnant or on welfare. Some acknowledge racism, but have no understanding of systemic racism, the links between institutionalized racism and the devastation of inner-city communities, and the economic and political policies which limit the opportunities of poor and minority populations. Like some white students these African Americans engage in scapegoating immigrants and in blaming the poor for their plight. Many of these students are also astonishingly unaware of the social history of African Americans and the United States in general. They have very little knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement, save for Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and some myths about Malcolm X. On one occasion when I assigned the *Eye on the Prize* documentary series on the Civil Rights Movement, a thirty-year-old African American female student told me she watched it with tears in her eyes because she never knew of the struggle African Americans had waged for school desegregation. Too often I have had to revamp my lesson plan to educate students in the basics of U.S. history. This lack of historical knowledge is truly alarming, especially for a political system based on citizens making informed decisions. Apparently not only are our young being misinformed but there also is so much that is simply omitted.

Also very troubling is the role academics play in perpetuating misinformation and stereotypes and the sense there is an intractable schism between native and foreign-born immigrants. They do this in at least two ways: 1) the literature rarely included my experience, which was that of a black immigrant who had come to respect and admire African Americans, and to see the need for a collective struggle in assuring social justice. Instead, the literature was filled with the narratives and views of immigrants who based their opinions on the media and their very limited personal experiences, and who pass on their folk theories to newcomers, as happened with me; and 2) the literature also reinforced the folk theory that culture—mores and values—explains whether a group succeeds or not.

The chauvinism exhibited by many immigrants and their demonization of native minorities are repeated in theories like John Ogbu's "oppositional culture," William Julius Wilson's "underclass" perspective, Alejandro Portes' "segmented assimilation," and in the various narratives about the superiority of immigrants' culture. Indeed some social scientists not only reinforce these ideas, but are also sometimes the source of these ideas. The works of all these social scientists are regularly assigned to students, shaping their understanding of social life and informing the social policies they support. These discourses that serve to ignore racial and class inequalities or that blame the victims of structural inequality must be challenged. James Jennings (2002:72) has charged black intellectuals with a special responsibility to challenge "any perspective on Black inequality that ignores the roles of wealth and power in maintaining race, class and gender disparities in our society."

Participants and Methodology

Thirty black Cubans took part in this study (see their profiles below). The majority was from Florida and the New York area and one person was from the West Coast. Altogether eighteen persons from South Florida took part in the study. Fourteen Floridians were college-educated middle-class professionals in the fields of education, private and public sector administration and health care. The other four worked in the low wage sectors. Eleven participants lived in the New York area. Five of the New Yorkers were college-educated professionals working in education, health and private sector administration. The majority of New Yorkers did not have a college education. Altogether thirteen men and seventeen women took part in this study. Participants ranged in age from thirty to seventy five years old. The majority of participants—twenty-one—migrated to the United States before 1980 and nine arrived between 1980 and 1996. Three migrated before the Cuban Revolution in 1959; twenty-five arrived throughout in the three waves of immigration: 1959-1963; 1965-1973; 1980; two arrived after 1980. The sample includes persons who arrived in the United States from as young as five and as old as forty-six. The participants, therefore, varied in terms of gender, age, period of migration, social class and place of settlement.

Profile of Participants from New York and the West Coast

| Pseudonym | Age at Migration | Year of Migration | Place of Initial settlement | Education | Employment Type | Skin Color ⁴ |
|-----------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Filomena | 22 | 1949 | East Harlem | HS | Clerical | Dark Brown |
| Beatriz | 21 | 1971 | South Florida | College | Professional | Dark Brown |
| Dalgis | 22 | 1954 | Bronx | HS | Medical Technician | Dark Brown |
| Juan | 16 | 1967 | South Bronx | College | Medical Technician | Dark Brown |
| Santiago | 45 | 1980 | South Florida | HS | | Dark Brown |
| Jasmin | 9 | 1962 | South Florida | College | Professional | Medium Brown |
| Mercedes | 20 | 1964 | New York City | College | Professional | Medium Brown |
| Digna | 22 | 1930s | New York City | HS | Service Sector | Medium Brown |
| Roberto | 46 | 1980 | New Jersey | HS | Self-employed | Dark Brown |
| Fernandez | 43 | 1980 | New York City | HS | Self-employed | Dark Brown |
| José | 11 | 1962 | South Bronx | College | Professional | Medium Brown |
| Maria | 5 | 1963 | California | College | Managerial | Light Brown |

⁴ These are my own classifications of informant's skin color; it does not include other features such as hair texture or facial features. The descriptions do not refer to how informants are classified according to Cuban racial classification. For instance some individuals who I describe as "medium brown" and who I would classify as "mulatto" told me that according to Cuban racial classification they would be "negro."

Profile of Participants from Florida

| Pseudonym | Age at Migration | Year of Migration | Place of Initial Settlement | Education | Employment Type | Skin Color |
|-----------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Omar | 15 | 1969 | Brooklyn, New York | College | Managerial | Dark Brown |
| Angela | 17 | 1971 | Chicago | College | Professional | Dark Brown |
| Denise | 11 | 1969 | Brooklyn, NY | College | Professional | Dark Brown |
| Josefina | 12 | 1968 | Brooklyn, NY | College | Managerial | Dark Brown |
| Marisol | 8 | 1980 | New Jersey | College | Professional | Dark Brown |
| Miriam | 16 | 1967 | South Bronx | College | Professional | Medium Brown |
| Margarita | 31 | 1980 | New Jersey | HS | Low wage/informal | Dark Brown |
| Liliana | 10 | 1963 | New Jersey | College | Professional | Light Brown |
| Ramon | 13 | 1962 | South Florida | College | Managerial | Medium Brown |
| Sergio | 37 | 1995 | South florida | College | Service Sector | Light Brown |
| Ana | 16 | 1971 | South Florida | College | Managerial | Dark Brown |
| Nicolas | 42 | 1980 | Bronx | College | Professional; Self-Employment | Dark Brown |
| Pablo | 19 | 1975 | New York City | HS | Service Sector | Dark Brown |
| Adolfo | 27 | 1979 | South Florida | College | Unemployed | Medium Brown |
| Máximo | 45 | 1988 | South Florida | College | Self-Employment | Medium Brown |
| Samuel | 22 | 1966 | Texas | College | Service Sector/high wage | Dark Brown |
| Belkis | 28 | 1976 | New York City | HS | Service Sector/Low wage | Dark Brown |
| Rosanna | 30 | 1978 | South Florida | HS | Service Sector/Low wage | Medium Brown |

This research is a multi-sited one in several respects. First, it is multi-sited because it is research on an immigrant population. Much of the work on immigrant populations is transnational in approach as researchers literally and intellectually follow their subjects back and forth between sending and host countries. The ties that participants in this study had with Cuba were less intense than those described for other transnational immigrants (Basch, et al, 1994). Travel to Cuba, for example, is difficult. However, some were deeply affected directly and indirectly by issues in Cuba as well as by geopolitical processes involving Cuba. For instance, policies within Cuba and the United States determined whether they could travel to Cuba or not, and the extent to which they could keep in touch with, and even send financial support to, their relatives. Cuba was also important because they had lived in Cuba, and this experience contributed to their perspectives and ethno-racial identities. This also means the study was comparative, analyzing the differences between the United States and Cuba. The participants themselves, particularly those who left Cuba as adults, made these comparisons.

This research was also multi-sited and comparative in the sense that I interviewed and observed black Cubans living in the New York metro area as well as those in South Florida. For me, this meant traveling between these two sites and developing methods for long-distance data collection. The difference between Miami and New York was striking. My own experiences in Miami allowed me to understand some of the issues my informants, especially the women, talked about. As I moved through Miami's Cuban neighborhoods, whether shopping in supermarkets and clothing stores, eating out, doing my laundry at the local laundry mat or visiting informants, I was struck by the "Latin

flavor” of the place. Besides the dominance of Spanish, the most notable feature was the near-absence of black people. Indeed, in one conversation with a white Cuban American researcher, I shared the complaint of most of my informants that when white Cubans meet them they automatically think they are African American and express surprise they are Cuban. Her response was that white Cubans are not used to seeing middle-class black Cubans, and so when they meet a middle-class black person they assume them to be African American.

The way I was received in Miami also gave me an understanding of the pressure some of my female informants felt to signal being “Cuban.” I, for instance, was never seen as Cuban, even though I could be taken as Cuban in that my phenotype conforms with what my informants identified as a *mulata*. However, I did not fit the typical image of a Latina since I was often wearing flip-flops, was without makeup and carried a backpack. At dinner or lunch meetings my informants were always very well dressed and coiffed, while I was not. While I did not experience any of the more overt acts of discrimination some of my informants talked about, I was virtually ignored compared to my informants. For instance, waiters seemed to automatically address them.

For my New York informants Miami represented a site, which in some sense was just as important in their lives as was Cuba. For most New Yorkers, Miami was a place to avoid, and Cubans in Miami were one of the groups against whom they tended to define themselves. For many who lived in Miami, the Cuban areas of Hialeah and Little Havana constituted the places to avoid. Most followed the political organizing and policies of the

dominant Miami community, which they felt affected how the larger society viewed and treated all Cubans, including themselves. They were particularly concerned about the effects of the Miami Cuban community on U.S. policies toward Cuba, and how these policies might affect their ability to travel to Cuba and their relatives living in Cuba.

A few participants had lived in both cities, first in New York and then in Miami. Three eventually returned to their cities of origin. The only participant in the study who lived in California relocated to Miami as an adult, but then returned to California after a few years. Their insights into the differences between the cities were invaluable.

It was initially difficult to recruit subjects for this project; there were no identifiable communities or neighborhoods where black Cubans cluster, or organizations that were easily available. I therefore used snowball sampling, a method “useful in studies of small, bounded, or difficult-to-find populations” (Bernard, 1995:97). One entry into the “community” came through Rosa Reed. The *New York Times* ran a story in 1997 on black Cubans, and Rosa’s experience was included. A search on the Internet yielded contact information for her. Rosa was eager to help, and gave me the names and contact information for several black Cubans in South Florida. These were all college-educated professionals, the majority of whom were women. The Miami sample, then, was skewed toward middle-class professionals.

I found that being a black woman, a Caribbean immigrant and of a certain age (forty four at the time of research) was helpful to me with this group of informants. The women in

particular felt I could understand their experiences, having had, they reasoned, similar experiences myself. Some women commented on how different it would have been had I been a white woman. On one occasion when I got together with a group of four women over pizza to talk, one of them remarked that this was a safe space.

Though it was never overtly expressed, I also suspect that some felt comfortable repeating stereotypes of African Americans since I am Jamaican and not African American. This was especially the case with those informants of West Indian descent.⁵ These participants related to me as someone who shared their cultural practices and their mores and values. They engaged in “we/they” distinctions along the lines of, “You know how we Jamaicans value education.” This “insider” status, however, allowed me to probe some of their claims to cultural superiority, including those times when they asserted their superiority over non-West Indian black Cubans.

It was extraordinarily difficult to not challenge their stereotyping of other groups. This meant I sometimes was not a neutral listener, especially in follow-up conversations. I questioned their assumptions and revealed my own point of view. The debates were lively and mutually informative, but more important they revealed the inconsistencies and complexities in their thinking, which ultimately allowed me to see the contextual and fluid nature of their identities.

My gender was also a handicap, however. Early in my research I was referred to a male informant who was linked to a whole network of other men. This group proved difficult

⁵ Many West Indians migrated to Cuba at the turn of the 20th century.

to work with for several reasons. Some were *marielitos* (the highly stigmatized group of Cubans who migrated in the Mariel boatlift (discussed in Chapter 1) who were reluctant to talk about their experiences and even to admit to being *marielitos*. The stigmatization had left its toll. They were also inclined to be suspicious of my motives, perhaps because of their experiences in post-revolutionary Cuba. A few people told me point blank that they did not trust me, and one man had spread a rumor that I was a communist sympathizer. A major problem for a few of them was that I had spent time in Cuba studying Cuban Spanish and familiarizing myself with the country. I naively assumed that they would view my visit to Cuba as an expression of my interest in their lives, and my familiarity with some of their experiences and their cultural references.

Another problem with this group of male informants was that they were all men. It was difficult to convince some that I had no romantic interest in them. A good part of the social world of some of them was Afro Cuban music and a weekly *rumba* (party) in a club in Jersey City. I went several times and initially thought it a terrific research site since it was a social network of, and support system for, black Mariel émigrés. Many of the patrons had known one another in Cuba or had met during the boatlift and in the refugee camps. However, the gender issues were intense: who to dance with, the meaning of dancing with one or another man, unwittingly making a woman jealous by dancing with her man. Learning the correct social protocol, gender norms and ways to negotiate male/female relationships from an unfamiliar culture is a study in itself. The stickiest situation for me was that I often went to the club with a particular informant, which seemed to have conveyed the message that I was his woman or that we were interested in

each other. It did not help matters that I tended to dance with him exclusively since nobody else would ask another man's woman to dance (except if they are friends), and a woman just did not ask a strange man to dance.

Ultimately, then, while being a woman could get me "in" it also had its drawbacks. In fact, I have come away with the impression that some of the stories these men told me were embellished to impress me. This of course is not unusual; anthropology has long identified the tendency for informants to embellish to impress, and to tell the researcher what they think she wants to hear. The discipline has correctly insisted on participant observation and on a long-term basis as a counterbalance.

Without a real "community," a neighborhood where I could live in and observe as I participated, though, this form of participant observation was not possible. Instead, I tried other ways of participating in the lives of my subjects. I attended events such as parties and dinners, Santeria ceremonies, concerts and nightclubs, and I visited some participants in their homes where I met some of their relatives and friends. I also conducted the research over a year, interviewing my key informants multiple times and in as many social situations as possible. This is a time-consuming method, and one which ultimately limited the number of subjects in my study. My sample, then, is considerably smaller than some recent studies of immigrants. For example, Mary Waters' study included 202 subjects and Milton Vickerman's 106. Although these studies reveal valuable information about a large sample of immigrants, they were primarily interviews done over a short period of time and therefore might not capture the same kinds of dynamics that multiple

interviews and participant observation over a year can capture (Bernard, 1995).

The initial interview with most participants was one-on-one. The majority of interviews were conducted in English, though participants often used Spanish language expressions.⁶ I employed an informal interview technique, collecting basic demographic data including age, time of arrival in the United States, place of residence in Cuba, employment and educational history. I asked them to recount their immigration history, their work and school experiences and to tell me about their families. I sought information about their experiences as people of African descent in Cuba and in the United States and about their relationship with other groups in their environment. These interviews generally lasted two hours and more. I did follow-up interviews with the majority of the participants, seeking clarification and asking them to expand on issues raised in the first interview. In these follow-up interviews we discussed a wide range of topic, which gave me insight into their views and their everyday experiences in the United States. I had many individual conversations, and in several cases group conversations with participants who knew one another. The group conversations were rich in information, as participants debated and supported one another. We talked in kitchens, restaurants, at parties, on the telephone and via e-mail. Our conversations over the research year allowed me to get to know them in their role as parents, daughters and sons, employees, friends, lovers, people looking for an apartment, moving from one job and one city to another, and as they responded to the presidential election, the war in Iraq and the September 11 World Trade Center attacks. I developed relationships where I felt

⁶ All translations are mine, except in the case of Cuban colloquialisms which my informants translated for me

comfortable and secure enough to probe their inconsistencies and contradictions, and to sometimes reveal myself and hear them respond to me as Michelle, not solely as a researcher.

I also collected life histories of eight participants. These life histories were critical in helping me to see the intimate links between their everyday life experiences in Cuba and the United States—the schools they went to, the neighborhoods they lived in, the people they worked with, where they shopped, their family dynamics—and their perspectives and identities. Though life histories are an excellent method for getting at the intimate domains of an individual's life, they are limited in that the data is not representative of the whole group. One way of correcting for this is to compare the history of individuals with a broader base of material. I was able to compare individuals' life histories with other research on black and Latino immigrants. Another concern is that the quality of life histories can be affected by the relationship between the interviewer and the informant as well as the subject position of both. In other words, in addition to issues of trust, for example, variables such as the sex, age and the race of both the researcher and the subject can affect the information. I tried to address these drawbacks by varying the subjects in terms of sex, age, educational level and time of arrival in the United States.

An important part of my methodology was my use of my informants to help me interpret my data.⁷ I feel particularly strongly about the importance of this component because historically the voices of black Cubans have been so silenced. As I wrote up my findings I distributed copies of my analyses and conference papers to some participants for their

⁷ I am indebted to Dana-ain Davis for introducing me to this approach.

feedback. I also distributed transcripts of recorded interviews to several participants to allow them to change any response they wished or to further elaborate on any issues they desired. None have either changed their interviews or disagreed with my analysis.

Qualitative research—participant observation, intensive open-ended interviews and life histories—limits the possibilities of generalizations because it is so time-consuming and research subjects are generally not randomly chosen. However it is an “effective way to understand the configuration of social, economic, political, and ideological forces from the perspective of the people who experience and shape those forces” (Mullings, et al 2000:13). In a sense, what is lost in breadth is gained in depth. This study, in particular, lends itself to qualitative methodologies. Cubans of African descent are a small and historically ignored group, particularly in the United States. They are easily overlooked by aggregate data. The topic— identity, experiences of race and racism and responses to race and racism— also lends itself to a qualitative approach. While statistical analyses give us generalizable information, they are less helpful in capturing facets of life that are in flux and situationally determined. It is through intensive involvement, for example, that I was able to see participants’ shifting alliances in response to everyday events, the differences between what they said and what they did, and the subtleties of their racialized experiences.

While my method was primarily qualitative, I also include a statistical analysis of the socioeconomic status of black and white Cubans in New York and Florida. To do this, I analyzed the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) taken in the 2000 Census. This is a

one percent sample of the population that allows researchers to tabulate self-reported race and ethnicity with many social and economic characteristics, for example home ownership, home value, educational level, poverty level and employment.⁸ I identified black Cubans as those people who indicated they were Cuban or of Cuban ancestry, and who also selected “black.” I identified white Cubans as those people who indicated they were Cuban or of Cuban ancestry, and who also selected “white” and no other racial category. From this data, I was able to compare the socioeconomic status of black Cubans with their white counterparts in New York and Florida. I also compared black Cubans in Florida with black Cubans in New York as a way of examining the possible effects of the Miami enclave on the socioeconomic achievements of black Cubans.

The statistical analysis allowed for some generalizations. However, it also has limitations. First, it is a small sample size. Even more problematic, is that it relies on self-identification, which as I learned from my interviews, miss those black Cubans who did not so identify on the census. For example, many participants told me they do not select “black” on questionnaires because next to the category “black” is written “African American.” They reasoned they are not African American since they were not born in the United States. Thus, even though they considered themselves black they did not choose that category. Similarly some participants who lived in Florida told me they did not check “Hispanic” because in Florida Hispanics are seen as white. The results of my analysis, however, are similar to the findings of other studies on Latinos that use larger samples, and which are discussed throughout the body of the dissertation.

⁸ There is also a larger five percent sample, but this was not available for public use at the time of my research.

Nomenclature

Nomenclature presented difficulties. When I began this research I used the term “Afro Cuban” exclusively. This is the term other researchers use, and the one used popularly in the United States. The term, however, is problematic. It was originally used by an anthropologist in 1906, in a study that linked crime in Cuba with black Cubans (cited in Greenbaum, 2002)). The *afrocubanismo* movement in Cuba in the 1920s and 1930s might have popularized the term. In his text, *Nationalizing Blackness: AfroCubanismo and the Artistic Revolutions in Havana, 1920-1940*, Robin D Moore (1997) describes the valorization of Afro Cuban cultural forms by some Cuban nationalists as they struggled against the U.S. occupation of the island. Moore does not, however, indicate whether black Cubans used the term as a form of self-identification. My own observations are that it was not commonly used during this period of which Moore writes. For instance, I examined copies of the black Cuban journal *Adelante*, from the *sociedad negra* (black society) of the same name, and which was published throughout the 1930s. In none of the articles I read was the term “Afro Cuban” used. The references were to “negro,” “*gente de color*,” and “*la raza negra*” (“black”, “people of color” and “the black race”). Also, significantly, the title of the only Cuban political party to have been founded by blacks, the Partido Independientes de Color (1912), does not contain the term Afro Cuban. I was not able to determine its use in contemporary Cuba, but the black Cubans in Cuba with whom I interacted did not refer to themselves and other people of African descent as Afro Cuban. They used “negro.” Afro Cuban seems to be most commonly used in reference to music and religion, as in “Afro Cuban music” and “Afro Cuban religions.”

In the United States Afro Cuban is commonly used, though Greenbaum (1988), who studied black Cubans in Tampa, found that none of her subjects liked the term Afro Cuban. Shortly after I began this research I too began to find that some participants did not like the term, or that they also used the labels Negro-Cubano (Black Cuban) and Cubano Negro (Cuban-Black). Negro-Cubano signals race before nationality while Cubano-Negro signals nationality before race. The first time these labels came to my attention was when a participant, Ramón, told me about an occasion when he was a guest on a Spanish-language radio station in Miami. During the program he referred to himself as a Negro-Cubano, signaling race before nationality. This generated a call from a white Cuban who accused him of being unpatriotic because he put “black” before “Cuban.” Ramón explained to me that he is first and foremost a black man, and that the only difference between him and a black person from any other country is that the slave ship dropped off his ancestors in Cuba, while others were dropped off in Virginia, Jamaica and so on. Ramón expressed a strong affinity with African Americans, supported the social policies supported by many African Americans, and felt alienated from the white Cuban community in Florida. Clearly, the terms expressed some people’s political views and their relationship with other groups (I develop this in the body of the dissertation).

Thereafter, I began asking respondents if they had a preference between Negro-Cubano, Cubano-Negro and Afro-Cubano. Some people were unfamiliar with the differences. When I explained the terms to them, some expressed strong feelings about their preference, while others did not. One woman’s response was: “It doesn’t matter where

you put the ‘black,’ to the white man you’re still black.” Another woman asked me very pointedly to document that she did not want to be identified as Afro Cuban because white Cubans are not called Ibero-Cuban. And Samuel changed his initial response when I explained the terms to him. At first he rejected the terms as “labels” and therefore “ridiculous,” but after I described the terms to him he decided that the Black-Cuban label made sense for him. As he argued, “I can stop being Cuban tomorrow but I can never stop being black.” Ultimately, though, in their ordinary everyday lives they did not give the terms much thought. In fact, it is evident in the excerpts of our conversations included in this dissertation that they used the terms interchangeably, particularly Black-Cuban and Afro-Cuban. The labels were primarily relational, and most meaningful in “political” situations, for instance when they were staking out a position vis-à-vis their white co-ethnics or African Americans.

In this dissertation I use the terms primarily as a conceptual tool, which allows me to discuss some differences I found in my informants’ political views and in their relationship with the different groups in their environment. Thus, following Ramón’s formulation I use the label “Negro-Cubano” (Black-Cuban) to refer to those participants who expressed views that privileged race over nationality and who expressed a strong affinity with African Americans and other groups of African descent; I use the term “Cubano-Negro” (Cuban-Black) for those for whom nationality was primary. For those participants who staked out a position that set them apart from both their white co-ethnics and African Americans I use the label Afro-Cubano (Afro-Cuban).

The categories or labels are limited in their use, however, because they do not adequately capture the multiple, contextual and shifting nature of the identities and political perspectives of some of my informants. Hence, while the categories worked well for informants whose affinities and perspectives were stable, they were problematic for others. Also, the label that some informants chose did not always match their views as I interpreted them. This is most evident with Nicolás who chose the label Cubano-Negro because, as he explained it, though it was purely an accident that he was born in Cuba the fact that he was born there and socialized there is very important to him. Nicolás, however, held views that are very similar to Ramón's who self-identified as Negro-Cubano. Like Ramón, Nicolás expressed a strong affinity with African Americans and all people of African descent, had warm relations with African Americans, was involved politically with issues throughout the African diaspora and on the continent, and was very critical of the white Cuban community in Florida.

I will use the terms in the following manner: whenever I refer to the participants in generic terms I use "black Cubans" (black with a lower case "b") or "Cubans of African descent." I use the terms Afro-Cuban, Black-Cuban and Cuban-Black (black with an upper case "B") as labels or categories to describe the different perspectives, and in some sense identities, of the participants. I reiterate, however, that these labels are primarily used to manage the different perspectives I found.

Guide to the Text

This dissertation is organized as follows: In Chapter 1, I examine some of the key theoretical perspectives in the social science literature on the socioeconomic adaptation

and the ethno-racial identities of immigrants. Because researchers frequently compare immigrants with native minorities, this chapter also contains a discussion of some of the influential paradigms in the social science literature on native minorities. Chapter 2 discusses the historical background and the social context of Cuban immigrants in the United States, particularly those Cubans who arrived in the country after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. It also discusses the nature of race relations among Latin American populations in general and Cubans in particular, and begins to describe and analyze the relationship between black Cubans and their white co-ethnics. In these pages, I also underline some key issues in African American political culture; African Americans being the other group that was central to defining the life experiences, and consequently the ethno-racial identities and political perspectives of my informants. The next four chapters present ethnographic data about the lived experiences of the study's subjects, and the impact of these experiences on their ethno-racial identities and political perspectives, as well as on their socioeconomic achievements. Chapter 3 discusses the discrimination this study's participants reported experiencing from their white co-ethnics, and the effects of this discrimination on their ethno-racial identities as well as on the social mobility of black Cubans as a group. Additionally, contained within this chapter is a statistical analysis of Cuban immigrants using U.S. Census data for the year 2000. Chapter 4 explores the nature of black subjectivization in the United States, and sheds light on the construction of black identities. Chapter 5 continues to explore ethno-racial formation by closely examining the ordinary, everyday life experiences of eight of the men and women who took part in this study. Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the political implications of the ways in which my informants identified themselves. In

particular it pays attention to the implications of their political views for cross-cultural alliances in the struggle for social justice. The Conclusion summarizes the research findings within the context of the current ideological climate that denies the role of racism and other structural factors in generating socioeconomic and political inequality.

Chapter 1

Migration, Differential Subjectivization, Racial Oppression and Resistance

This chapter provides background information important for understanding the context of the lives and the identities of black Cubans living in the United States. The chapter is divided into several sections. The first three sections describe and analyze three distinct cohorts of Cuban immigration, detailing the nature of each group of immigrants and their socioeconomic adjustment. I then introduce the subjects of this dissertation, particularly the relationship they have with their white co-ethnics. In the next two sections I discuss the racial practices and ideologies, which Cuban immigrants bring with them to the United States, and the racialized experiences of black Cubans in the United States. The final section sketches out the political culture and philosophies of African Americans, which I found to play a significant role in their identities.

Cuban Immigration, Pre-1959

Cubans began migrating to the United States in significant numbers in the last third of the 19th century. They came primarily to work in the cigar industry that sprang up in Florida, New York and New Jersey after the United States imposed a tariff on imported cigars. Some also came to escape political turmoil on the island, or as members or supporters of deposed governments (Poyo 1989; Boswell and Curtis 1984; Greenbaum,1985).

These migrants eventually came to number approximately 124,000. In Florida, the major areas of settlements were Key West and Ybor City. Most were working class, with the

majority (70 percent) employed in the cigar industry (Poyo 1980; Mormino and Pozzetta 1987). Early Cuban American communities were racially heterogeneous, with approximately 20 percent being black or mulatto (Greenbaum, 1985; Poyo, 1985). Most Cubans of color worked in the cigar industry, or as laborers and cooks. Before 1900, black and white Cubans worked alongside each other and belonged to the same Cuban patriotic organizations. Black Cubans, however, lived in their own communities, had their own social clubs, and even founded their own educational institutions (Poyo 1985; Greenbaum 1985). After 1900, with the institutionalization of Jim Crow in the South, inter-racial alliances came to a virtual end. Black Cubans began moving north to New York where they found a more favorable racial climate. The decline in the cigar industry in the 1930s intensified the northern migration, so that in Tampa, for example, between 1930 and 1940, the black population declined by more than one half (Poyo 1985; Greenbaum 1985).

Early Cuban immigrants to Florida were racialized and not allowed to assimilate into the dominant society. In Tampa, as members of the “Latin race” (which includes their Italian and Spanish neighbors) they were kept out of certain beach areas and picnic spots by posted signs, which proclaimed “No Dogs or Latins Allowed.” They were stereotyped as having “a proclivity toward excessive emotionalism, romantic violence and un American values” (Mormino and Pozzetta, 1987). White Tampanns expressed their disgust with what they saw as Cuban culture—cock-fighting, drinking, partying, gambling— which deviated too much from Anglo-Protestant Southern values. To white Tampanns, Cubans were “niggers” or “Cuban niggers.” Within the Latin enclave, Cubans were also

racialized and stereotyped as fun-loving, irresponsible, transient, fickle, lazy, fractious, undependable, and were to be blamed for Tampa's turbulent strike history (Mormino and Pozzetta, 1987).

Cuban Immigration, 1959 to 1973

The Cuban population grew dramatically after 1959 with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Between then and the time of this research, close to one million Cubans have settled here. These post-Castro migrants came in three groups. The first group came between 1959 and 1963, and consisted of approximately 215,000 people. Immediately following Castro's assumption of power, those loyal to Fulgencio Batista left. They were followed very closely by Cuba's political and economic elites—professionals, semiprofessionals, managers and executives. These migrants were generally well acquainted with the U.S.'s economic system. Some had attended college in the United States, had been employed by U.S.-owned companies in Cuba and had business contacts in the United States. They made up about 36 percent of the first group. The other 64 percent were from the middle classes, including middle-level professionals, landlords and a considerable number of skilled unionized workers. A few came with millions of dollars but most arrived without money (Boswell and Curtis 1984; Portes and Bach 1985; García 1996).

The second group of 297,000 migrants arrived between 1965 and 1973. In response to attempts by some disaffected Cubans to leave on rafts, Fidel Castro opened the port of Camiroca and invited exiles in the United States to fetch their relatives. Some exiles

excitedly accepted the offer, and set sail for Cuba. The U.S. government, concerned about an uncontrolled entry of aliens, negotiated the Memorandum of Understanding that allowed for the orderly entry of relatives of Cubans already in the United States. Castro prohibited young men of military age fifteen to twenty six and certain professionals, and technical and skilled workers from leaving. Most of this second group was working class and petit bourgeoisie— independent craftsman, small merchants, skilled and semiskilled workers. Fifty seven percent were blue-collar workers, while 12 percent were professionals or managers. Females, as well as males under fifteen and over twenty-six were over-represented because of the restrictions placed upon men of military age (Boswell and Curtis 1984; Portes and Bach 1985; García, 1996).

The vast majority (96 percent) of these first two groups was white, in part because Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) policy gave preference to those with relatives already in the United States. Whether intended or not, this policy favored whites since they came in much greater numbers initially (Boswell and Curtis 1984; García 1996; Aguirre 1976). Also contributing to the overrepresentation of white Cubans was the restructuring of Cuban society. The Revolution made the island more appealing to black Cubans than a racist United States by dismantling the racial and class barriers that had historically kept blacks subordinated (Boswell and Curtis 1984; García 1996; Aguirre 1976).

These two groups of immigrants arrived in an economically depressed Florida. Tourism, upon which Florida had relied for a number of decades, had declined dramatically when

jet service made the Caribbean more accessible to North Americans as a vacation spot. As George Gilder (1984:44) described it, the situation in Miami was grim— “more than 1,000 homes with FHA mortgages had been vacated, and many more vandalized...local shops gasped for customers and went broke; forty-four-year old Burdine’s, the chief downtown department store, was languishing helplessly as its clientele moved toward the suburbs.” An undetermined number of the exiles who managed to leave Cuba with money and those who could call upon business contacts in the United States and South America were able to establish businesses. Most of the exiles, however, were without money, relatives or business contact. Many were unskilled and female. Those who were educated and skilled were initially unable to practice their professions in the United States in part because they were not able to prove their credentials, but also because most professions required U.S. certification. These professionals initially took jobs as gardeners, janitors and dishwashers. Women found jobs more easily than men as seamstresses in Florida’s expanding garment industry, and as cooks and domestics (Pedraza-Bailey 1985; García, 1996).

The émigrés also faced a great deal of hostility and resentment, especially from low-income Miamians (García, 1996; Cortes, 1980). Complaints about the refugees began almost from the start of the exodus, and eventually led the Subcommittee on the Refugees of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee to hold hearings throughout December of 1961. Local residents and officials were able to testify before the subcommittee. One person who testified, Arthur Patten Jr., member of the County Commission, Dade County, reflects the sentiments of many native-born Miamians at that time:

I think the government should immediately investigate to determine what percentage of those who are now arriving in the United States from Cuba are in reality political refugees. I believe in the early stages of the Castro regime, many of the professional and business people who came over here were escaping Castro or escaping communism. Having been to Cuba on numerous occasions, I am aware of the fact that Cuba has some of the most abject poverty of any place in the hemisphere. I am also under the distinct impression now, as a result of talking to large numbers of Cuban refugees and other Latin people in the community, that many of those who are leaving Cuba today and coming into this area, are not in reality political refugees at all, but are taking advantage of an opportunity to better themselves economically. The word has seemed to spread all over Cuba that if you will leave Cuba and come to the United States, Uncle Sam will provide you with \$100 a month. You will have a nice apartment and a rug on the floor and you will be in one of the finest tourist cities in the world” (quoted in Cortes 1980:49).

WTVJ Miami produced a documentary for the purpose of visually demonstrating to the subcommittee some of the problems encountered by the Cubans. One native-born Miamian in the documentary stated the following:

In my opinion...this is not my opinion only, of course...a good many people with whom I have talked, we resent them very much. We consider them arrogant, belligerent, noisy, and I think they are a detriment to our city. We hope that they soon will be relocated or returned to Cuba (quoted in Cortes 1980: 59).

The Eisenhower administration hastened to assist these refugees. First, the administration awarded them refugee status on the basis that they were political as against economic immigrants. In granting them refugee status the Eisenhower administration was following what had become the established policy since the end of WWII: the admission of immigrants from communist countries as refugees. As with the Hungarian refugees,⁹ the Cuban exodus was an opportunity to score against communism (Masud-Piloto 1988;

⁹The Hungarian refugees were a precedent for the way in which the Cubans were treated by the U.S. government. In 1956, President Eisenhower agreed to accept 21,500 refugees from Hungary after the Soviet Union invasion. As part of Cold War struggles, the refugees were welcomed with great fanfare, as the U.S. government tried to wring as much political mileage out of their arrival as possible. According to Masud-Piloto (1988:35), “the white house always made sure that the media always had enough ‘horror stories’ of life under communism.... Tracy Vorhees (who headed the program) also chose strong anti-Communist language to explain the meaning of the refugee relief operation.”

Croucher 1997).

The émigrés themselves were quite aware of their importance in the Cold War battle.

Cuban refugee Manolo Reyes stated as much to the senate subcommittee investigating the refugee problem:

Upon Miami and its surrounding areas has fallen the job of safe-guarding and maintaining the prestige of the United States with the treatment given these displaced persons, since today Miami is the focal point of the cold war, as Vice President Lyndon Johnson said during a visit to the city, and the eyes of the Latin American people, as well as the eyes of the entire world, are on Miami. We understand that the people of Miami have known well how to comply with this historic task, and that the Cuban exiles have known how to carry out their historic duty also (quoted in Cortes 1980:142).

President Eisenhower established the Cuban Refugee Program (CRP) to assist the émigrés' adjustment to the United States. Through the CRP, the refugees were automatically eligible to receive a monthly relief check, health services, government surplus food, economic assistance in relocating from Florida, airfare from Cuba to Florida and special student loans for undergraduate and graduate studies. The program also provided job training for women, along with baby-sitting and car-fare to facilitate this training. An important part of the CRP was its job placement program. It compiled a list of individuals and their skills, located jobs around the country to match with individuals' skills, arranged for telephone interviews, paid for the relocation of individuals to their job sites and ensured continued economic assistance if the job did not work out (Pedraza-Bailey 1988 or 1985; García, 1996).

The CRP also assisted Dade County to establish the first bilingual public school program in the United States in order to accommodate the thousands of refugee children. Cuban adults were trained and given the opportunity to work in the schools. A retraining program for professionals was also established to assist them in meeting licensing and certification requirements. This program trained lawyers to become teachers, and permitted Cuban teachers to obtain provisional certification for teaching before they obtained citizenship (Pedraza-Bailey 1988; García 1997).

The U.S. government also launched a public relations campaign on behalf of the refugees to facilitate their acceptance by the public and to ease their adjustment. The reason behind such a campaign is illustrated by Bishop Coleman F Carroll's (Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Miami) statement to the subcommittee. The Bishop reminded the subcommittee that the resettlement of the 34,000 Hungarian refugees was successfully accomplished because of "a public relations job done by the authorities, whereby this question was put in a good light before the American people throughout the country." Without "a professional job making this (the refugee situation) known to the people throughout the United States," the Bishop argued, "there will not be willingness on the part of people throughout the country to accept the Cuban people as they did accept the Hungarian people"(quoted in Cortes 1980:17-20).

One component of the public relations campaign was directed at ensuring that prospective employers saw the refugees in a positive light. The following is García's (1996:36) account of this effort:

Brochures, “fact sheets” and information packages were sent to service clubs, chambers of commerce, business and industrial associations, and church and civic groups around the country, as well as to newspaper editors and television and radio personnel. The CRP mounted displays about the refugees at business conventions and loaned specially made films such as We Shall Return (Cari, 1963) and Force of the Wind (United International, 1962) to civic and community groups.

The campaign, then, also aimed at influencing prospective community members so that they would welcome the refugees in their communities. As Croucher (1997:109) wrote:

The Federal government made a concerted effort to persuade the American public to welcome the Cubans with open arms. The Cuban Refugee Center printed and widely disseminated information about the tragic plight of the refugees, and encouraged U.S. citizens to ‘help the worthy Cubans help themselves.’ Various federal officials, such as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Abraham Ribicoff, made frequent pronouncements encouraging every citizen to ‘help your country aid the cause of freedom everywhere by supporting the refugees’ (Our Refugees, 1962).

The media was a critical part of this campaign. They published many stories portraying the refugees as worthy and successful. One *New York Times* (Oct. 1 1961) article filed from Miami entitled “Refugees Called an Asset to Miami” reported that “A study by the University of Miami has concluded that Cuban refugees in the Miami area have been an asset to the community ‘far outweighing problems caused at the beginning by their heavy influx.’” One of several articles, which appeared in *US News and World Report* (1967) entitled “A Cuban Success Story in the United States,” proclaimed

Fidel Castro’s loss is turning out to be America’s gain....No longer are most Cuban refugees on relief, as they were in the early years. Instead, thousands who were unfit to hold jobs when they arrived have learned English, gone through trade schools, and are now employed all over the US. Cuban professionals and laborers are in such demand that major American corporations keep recruiters in the Miami area where about 120,000 Cubans still live.”

The public relations campaign had concrete advantages for the refugees. It made them

acceptable to Americans, thereby contributing to their ability to obtain jobs, to get better housing, to obtain financing and to generally pursue their dreams with fewer barriers. Their socioeconomic success in turn helped to ensure their continued positive image and acceptability, and therefore their continued access to jobs, housing and other resources.

Cuban Immigration, 1980

In 1980 a third group of Cubans arrived in what is referred to as the Mariel boatlift. The migration began in April 1980 when a Cuban bus driver crashed his bus through the gates of the Peruvian embassy in Havana in search of asylum. Within days thousands entered the embassy also seeking asylum. When President Jimmy Carter declared them welcomed in the United States, Fidel Castro once again opened the ports and invited Cuban exiles to get their relatives. Thousands of boats traveled the ninety miles to Cuba to bring back relatives. They returned with many non-relatives who wanted to leave Cuba, as well as many who the Cuban government wanted to get rid of. Over a six-month period some 125,000 Cubans arrived in the United States (Fernández, 1982; Portes et al, 1985; García, 1996; Bach et al, 1982).

The Mariel boatlift marked the first time that a large group of black Cubans, estimated to be 30 to 50 percent of the boatlift, migrated to the United States. The socio-economic status of the Mariel exiles was considerably different from those who came in 1959 to 1963, but similar to those who came between 1965 and 1973. The Mariel boatlift also brought a greater proportion of young single men than in the earlier groups of refugees (Bach, Bach and Triplett, 1982; Portes and Bach 1985; García 1996).

The Mariel émigrés have not fared as well as the first two groups of exiles. Despite the fact that Mariel exiles share a similar socioeconomic profile with the bulk of the early émigrés—similar levels of education and English language proficiency for example; more Mariel émigrés actually had professional and managerial backgrounds—and like the second wave came from communist Cuba, their incorporation differs significantly. Portes et al's (1985) comparative study of refugees living in Dade County (Miami, Miami Beach and Hialeah) who came in the 1970s with those who came in 1980 provides some data on the economic adjustment of the Mariel group. These authors surveyed the 1970 cohort of immigrants five years after their arrival, and the Mariel immigrants three years after their arrival. They found that Mariel immigrants fared worse on every socioeconomic indicator: They were many more times likely than the 1970 cohort to be unemployed, to suffer long periods of unemployment and to be self-employed. Their self-employment was not in established businesses either, but in “invented jobs”—odd-jobbing and street vending. Apparently they were also not benefiting from the enclave; they were ten times more likely than those who came in 1970 to be employed in the enclave, but earned less than their 1970 cohort. Mariel immigrants' households earned approximately \$800 less than those who came in the 1970s even though the latter had only one wage earner. Also a quarter of Mariel immigrants lived below the poverty line, a figure three times greater than earlier immigrants.

The different socioeconomic profile of the Mariel exiles is partly a result of the very different treatment by the Federal government. They were denied refugee status and

instead granted the status of “entrants”, that is, undocumented aliens who illegally entered the United States in search of asylum. As “entrants” they were initially not eligible for federally reimbursed refugee benefits, so the burden of settling and supporting them were on local governments. This situation fostered intense local resentment against the refugees. After resentment had mounted to a feverish pitch President Carter awarded them refugee-level *benefits* (Rivera 1984; Bach, et al 1982; García, 1996), though not status.¹⁰

Neither was there a public relations campaign on their behalf. In stark contrast to the earlier refugees, national and local government officials, the news media and social scientists demonized the immigrants. Siro del Castillo (1984:7) has argued that “the media and the academic research community took on the task of informing the U.S. public about the Cubans.... The researchers—each rushing to be the first to publish a study about the arrivals—jumped to conclusions based on preliminary information which in most cases was obtained in a disorganized and chaotic manner.”

Government officials repeatedly made statements about *Mariel* immigrants that were often premature, negative, exaggerated and false. There is evidence that the government also either withheld information from the public or did not act aggressively enough to correct erroneous information. For example, in one instance, a government official erroneously stated that “Thousands of homosexual Cubans came to the United States in the recent seelift, and as many as 20,000 of them are still in refugee camps awaiting

¹⁰The Refugee Education Assistant Act of October, 1980, awarded them the same benefits as the earlier exiles.

resettlement (*Los Angeles Times*, 1980). The number of homosexuals in the boatlift was drastically reduced to 1,000 a month later by a Cuban-Haitian Task Force spokesperson (Hufker and Cavender, 1990).

More common were the sweeping statements made by officials that condemned the entire group, and alarmed the public. The Deputy Director of the National Institute of Mental Health declared that, “Castro just swept the street of Havana and sent us all the undesirables” (*Washington Post* Oct. 13, 1981); a White House spokesperson warned that, “Castro is emptying his prisons. We will not permit our society to be used as a dumping ground for criminals who represent a danger to our society” (*Washington Post*, May 15, 1980).

Statements that were exaggerated or untrue continued to come from public officials long after 1980. A *US News and World Report* (1984) article, “Castro’s ‘Crime Bomb’ Inside US,” was filled with comments by officials about the immigrants’ criminal activities. The article first established the 125,000 Mariel exiles who “came with tattered clothes and soiled reputation” as “the most despised immigrants in this nation’s history,” then faulted both the Carter and Reagan administrations for their indifference, and for permitting Castro to “flush his prisons on the US.” It then went on to quote various officials on the nature of the criminal element which came with the boatlift: A New York City detective who said that “Letting in the marielitos was like Custer calling for more Indians;” a Los Angeles detective who described them as “absolutely the meanest, most vicious criminals we have ever encountered;” and “the police” who said that they were so vicious “that

even hardened American criminals were terrified of them.”

Claims about their criminality abounded despite the early findings of the FBI and INS that of those who had been incarcerated in Cuba, less than 1 percent had committed a serious crime; the vast majority having been imprisoned for crimes that would not have been considered as such in the United States. Most were involved in black market activities or were political prisoners (Bach 1982; Aguirre et al, 1997; Portes and Stepick, 1993)

The Carter administration also contributed to their demonization by its decision to hold them in refugee camps for FBI clearance and sponsorship by a relative or prospective employer. Though close to 70 percent were screened and released within a few weeks to their families and employers, the balance spent many months, often close to a year, in internment. Those who were never sponsored eventually were incarcerated in prisons rather than in camps. For many, life in the refugee camps was demoralizing, dehumanizing and ultimately detrimental to their chances of obtaining sponsorship (Aguirre et al, 1997; Castillo, 1984). The days spent in the camps awaiting sponsorship and FBI clearance passed in a cloud of unemployment, boredom and uncertainty (Aguirre et al, 1997; Castillo, 1984). For camp interns, the hope of a warm welcome and the extensive economic assistance received by the earlier émigrés was dashed.

Young black males were disproportionately represented in the camp population (Hufker et al, 1990). As blacks they had fewer families to act as sponsors because relatively few

blacks had migrated earlier. They were also the least attractive to the public, precisely because they were black. One *New York Times* article (Dec. 21, 1980), which detailed the difficult life led by the 6,200 Mariel immigrants at Fort Chaffee, quoted a camp coordinator who complained that potential sponsors did not want to sponsor these men: “There are people who call up and request a white, college-educated Cuban who can speak English.”

The reaction of the earlier émigrés also contributed to the difficulties the Mariel exiles have faced. The early émigrés were initially supportive of the new exiles, but eventually came to reject them. As the boatlift progressed and Mariel émigrés began to enter the community, some of the early refugees began to complain about the many blacks and mulattos among the arrivals, and to argue that the new arrivals were different, “*los productos de la revolución*” (products of the revolution), and as such lacking in family and religious values and a work ethic suitable to living in the United States. Some also resented Mariel émigrés for not having left Cuba before. They contended that the arrivals had remained in Cuba because they benefited from the revolution (Dixon, 1983). The following comment made by a white émigré to Portes and Stepick (1993:21-32) in 1983 typifies the response of these earlier exiles:

Mariel destroyed the image of Cubans in United States, and in passing, destroyed the image of Miami itself for tourism. The marielitos are mostly Black and mulattos of a color that I never saw or believed existed in Cuba. They don't have social networks; they roam the streets desperate to return to Cuba.

Black Mariel émigrés appear to have suffered even more than their white counterparts.

According to statistical evidence, they are more likely than their white counterparts to be

incarcerated (Aguirre et al 1997); poor and under and unemployed; and less likely to be employed in the Miami Cuban enclave (Portes and Stepick, 1985; Skop, 2001).

Black Cubans

Black Mariel émigrés joined the small group of black Cubans already in the United States. To date there has been one ethnographic study of these Cuban immigrants: Suzanne Greenbaum's (2001) ethnography of black Cubans in Tampa, Florida: *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa*. In her ethnography Greenbaum describes and analyzes the evolution of the identities of black Cubans who began migrating to the United States at the turn of the 20th century, many of whom came to work in Tampa's cigar industry. She identifies a three-step, three-generational process of identity formation in which black Cubans moved from being Cubans in camaraderie with white Cubans, to being Afro Cubans separate from white Cubans and black Americans, to being African Americans. Critical to this process are the structural conditions under which they constructed their identities. Jim Crow segregation represents the single most important factor in the reshaping of their identities.

The institution of Jim Crow segregation in Florida changed the racial dynamic among the early Cuban immigrants. Though never racially integrated, there was a degree of racial unity among the immigrants, to a certain extent because of their nation-building concerns. Jim Crow pushed racial segregation to the extreme by providing incentives for white Cubans to disassociate themselves from their black compatriots. Jim Crow also sent many black Cubans north to its friendlier racial climate. Initially those black Cubans who

stayed in Tampa created an Afro Cuban community. Hoping to capitalize on the higher social status of Cubans, Greenbaum (2001) wrote, they tried “to neutralize their blackness” by distancing themselves from African Americans. Their associations and clubs were critical means by which they established their identity as Afro Cubans.

Eventually, however, racial segregation and one of its effects—their reduced numbers as a result of the northern migration—threw black Cubans and black Americans together. It was in segregated schools and communities that both groups began mixing and intermarrying. And it is the shared experience of racism, and their socialization by “black informational networks” (churches, media, schools) that eventually led the second and third generations to begin sharing the political struggles, interests and ideologies of African Americans.

Just as significant in the ethnography of the identities of the black Cubans Greenbaum worked with is the story of those who left for New York City. Though the New Yorkers are not the focus of Greenbaum’s (2001) research, she found that they had different identities from their Tampa counterparts. The New Yorkers tended to identify as Latinos and with other Spanish-speaking groups. At least two factors account for this: 1) the New York contingent of black Cubans was larger, initially enabling them to sustain a separate and distinct Afro Cuban community; and 2) the presence in New York of large, established and friendly Spanish-speaking communities consisting primarily of Puerto Ricans. The children of the early immigrants to New York socialized with, and eventually married into, these groups.

Greenbaum's work documents the lives of those Afro Cubans who migrated to the United States at the turn of the century. This dissertation is an ethnographic study of those black Cubans who came later, the majority with the mass migration of Cubans following the Cuban Revolution. As with the early black Cuban immigrants, some of those who came after the Cuban Revolution settled in and around the Cuban enclave in Miami while the majority appeared to have settled in New York. Those who settled in New York did so because there was less racial hostility than in the segregated south of the early 1960s. One participant in this study told me that the immigration officer advised his family to move to New York because it was friendlier. Several others who initially settled in South Florida told me how difficult it was for them as black people, and that they faced discrimination from their white co-ethnics as well. This caused several to leave for New York.

Those who settled in New York tended to live outside of the Cuban enclave that developed in Washington Heights (this enclave has declined significantly). Only one of the eleven New Yorkers I interviewed lived among white Cubans. The majority tended to live in West Indian, African American and/or Hispanic communities, which were often contiguous or the same communities. Those who settled in Miami were also segregated from white Cubans. They, along with other black Hispanics, settled either in African American communities or in Allapatah, a community between the African American community of Liberty City and the Cuban community of Little Havana. Both New

Yorkers and Miamians, then, found themselves residentially segregated from white Cubans.

The majority of this study's informants talked a great deal about the discrimination they experienced from their white co-ethnics. It was a major source of intra-ethnic conflict, constituting the primary reason most felt alienated from their ethnic group, and why they searched for other communities and forms of identities. What is the nature of race relations among Cubans in the United States? Cuban race relations mirror in many ways racial practices in Latin America. In the following section I examine the nature of race relations in Latin America and then in Cuba. This provides the context to explore the nature of race relations among Cubans in the United States.

Race in Latin America and the Caribbean

Some scholars have argued that a myth of racial democracy exists across Latin America. The ideology of racial democracy has played a role in the maintenance of white supremacy in Latin America. Michael Hanchard (1994), for one, argues that Brazil has achieved the oppression of blacks through the hegemonic ideology that there is no racism in Brazil.¹¹ The myth achieves racial oppression because it has widespread acceptance. Winddance Twine (1998), who has looked at ordinary everyday forms of racism among Brazilians, found that though elite generated, the myth that there is no racism operates at all levels of the society, across class, race and color. Brazilians express faith in this myth

¹¹ The overall conclusion of the UNESCO studies of race relation in Brazil, which began after World War II, was that Brazil was not a racial democracy and that there was racial prejudice and discrimination. The view of Brazil as a racial democracy was promoted by Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s, but it gained acceptance by many, including African Americans, impressed with the absence of Jim Crow-type segregation.

even though structural racism—white supremacy and black oppression—is obvious. One of the ways in which ordinary Brazilians, including blacks, defended their faith in racial democracy is by holding up the idea of *mesticagem* or race mixture: The claim that Brazilians cannot be racist because everybody has some black blood in them, and that Brazilians are not racist because they are willing to enter into interracial love and marriage. Because black Brazilians accept this myth they do not mobilize to challenge it.

The ideology, practice and social policy of *mestizaje* is a crucial component of white supremacy in the region. In many Latin American and Caribbean countries, the nation is imagined to be and represented as *mestizo*, a genetic and cultural mix.¹² On the surface this sounds inclusive, but Wade (1993) and Whitten (1998) have argued that the *mestizo* ideal is really exclusive since it excludes those who are not mixed, particularly blacks and Indians. It is also a social policy, and one that can be seen as racist in its intent. From its inception *mestizaje* was advocated as a means of erasing blackness, with the notion that the weaker (read black and Indian) races and cultures will be absorbed by the more powerful (white) race and culture¹³. The *mestizo* ideology also leaves intact the poles of whiteness and blackness, with whiteness always understood to be the ultimate goal. This outlook continues to animate the body politic across Latin America, as Miriam Jiménez Román (1996:8) explained for Puerto Rico:

Juxtaposed to this *mestizo* construct is a widely accepted belief in the superiority of ‘whiteness,’—and its corollary, the inferiority of ‘blackness’—popularly

¹² For Jamaica, for example, Don Robotham wrote that the national motto, “Out of Many, One People” captures the hegemony of brownness and cultural Britishness, since it actually suppresses “the fact that at least 80 percent of the population was ‘pure’ black and another 15 percent of African descent.”

¹³ At the height of the early 20th century eugenics movements, Latin American countries encouraged the immigration of Europeans and excluded the immigration of blacks. They were explicit in their goal to whiten their countries.

expressed in the notion of '*mejoramiento de la raza*' (improvement of the race). Thus in 1995, on the occasion of the 122nd anniversary of abolition, Luis Díaz Soler, author of the only comprehensive study of slavery on the Island emphasized the small population of 'negros' (sic) during the 19th century and the Spanish 'tolerance' for intermarriage which encouraged widespread *mestizaje*, and breezily predicted that 'in two centuries, there will hardly be any blacks in Puerto Rico.'

The ideology of *mestizaje* allows national elites to deny the existence of racism. Their denial, Hanchard (1994) noted, makes it nearly impossible to talk about the reality of racial difference, since according to *mestizaje* ideology there are no racial differences. By giving higher social status to *mestizos*, *mestizaje* also encourages whitening as a way of achieving social mobility, and discourages blacks from thinking of themselves and acting as a collective (Hanchard, 1994; Skidmore, 1993). Instead blacks seek individual mobility by whitening. Their premise is that mulattos are awarded higher social prestige and given more economic opportunities, what Degler (1971) referred to as the "mulatto escape hatch." Several researchers have challenged the existence of a mulatto escape hatch. For instance, in Brazil, Carlos Hasenbalg (1979), Nelson do Valle Silva (1978) and Lovell and Wood (1998) analyzed census data and concluded that self-identified *pardos* and *pretos* (roughly mulattos and blacks) have similar socioeconomic status, and that both were similarly disadvantaged relative to whites. In addition, Lovell et al (1998:104) argue that human capital achievements (the "class over race view"¹⁴) did not reduce this inequity: "Afro-Brazilians were paid less than similarly qualified whites."

¹⁴ The "class over race view" is that racial inequities in income are a function of class. Thus once blacks acquire education and other human capital skills they will get the same pay and career opportunities as whites.

In his examination of the mulatto escape hatch in Columbia, Peter Wade (1993) concludes that only a minority of blacks, and they are usually already middle class, has the opportunity to whiten culturally and physically. As a strategy, then, whitening only allows a small number of blacks to escape from under the yoke of racial oppression. Consequently, though a different system from the United States, its results are the same: the economic, political and cultural oppression of the majority of black citizens of Latin America.

Race in Cuba

There are important parallels between the racial ideologies and practices in Latin America and in Cuba. As in many countries in Latin America, the hegemonic ideology in Cuba has been that Cuba is a racial democracy (de la Fuente, 2001; Helg, 1995). As in Brazil, this myth also rests upon the ideology of *mestizaje*. *Mestizaje* is a well-developed theme in Cuba as an ideology, social policy and social practice (Martínez-Echazabal, 1998; Martínez-Alier, 1989). *Mestizaje*, as social policy, has its origins in the early 19th century when national figures such as Antonio Saco proposed the whitening of blacks as a way of preventing a Haitian-style revolution, while at the same time ensuring the continued importation of blacks for the sugar industry (Martínez-Alier, 1989).

Mestizaje as social policy continued into the early decades of the 20th century. Alarmed that blacks seemed to be outnumbering whites, many elite whites called for the immigration of white families, and the exclusion of black Antillean immigrants (de la Fuente, 2001; Helg, 1995).

Perhaps the variation of *mestizaje* that is deployed the most to block black Cuban progress is José Martí's nationalist creed. Martí, in an attempt to rally a national struggle against Spanish colonialism, urged Cubans to stop the interracial fighting, and recognize themselves to be Cubans first and foremost. Martí's rallying cry has become the basis upon which blacks can be silenced. Blacks who agitate for equality, those who raise the race question are often met with the accusation that they are unpatriotic and divisive (de la Fuente, 2001; Helg, 1995). Martí's creed, Carlos Moore (a black Cuban professor) has argued, gave white Cubans a tool to dominate blacks: White Cubans "iconize Martí, then hide behind Martí to dominate blacks...Martí gave them (whites) the bible for the domination of blacks. He said there is only one race in Cuba, and that's Cuban, and any black who tries to talk about black and white was a racist" (quoted in Steinbeck, 1998).

In the early decades of the Republic (1898-1959), conservative whites consistently used Martí's vision to claim that racial equality had been achieved; not that it is a goal yet to be realized. And they made this claim of racial fraternity and equality even while they were firmly committed to the idea that "whiteness was a precondition for stability and progress and lent support to racially defined immigration programs" (de la Fuente, 2001).

This conservative view, de la Fuente (2001) convincingly argued, existed alongside a radical popular one that was committed to racial democracy. Black Cubans were one of the main proponents of this "radical" view. Several researchers (de la Fuente, 2001; Helg, 1995) have documented black Cubans' appropriation of, and challenges to, the dominant claim of a racial democracy. Over and over again, and despite the many attempts to silence them, black Cubans have reminded the nation that Martí's creed is a goal yet to be

achieved. Particularly in those decades between independence and the Cuban Revolution, they kept up a steady drumbeat of accusations in the media and other forums about discrimination, and they made use of electoral politics and the system of patronage to claim their rightful share. Indeed their dissatisfaction led a group of black Cubans in 1908 to launch the first black political party in the Western Hemisphere, the *Partido Independientes de Color* (Helg, 1995; de la Fuente, 2001).

Racism, then, has long been an issue in Cuban social and political life. Researchers have documented the existence of racial discrimination both on a personal and institutional level in pre-revolutionary Cuba. De la Fuente, (2001: 155) for example, found that while some concessions were made to blacks because they voted, the middle class in particular faced severe discrimination:

(A)lthough the numbers of Afro Cubans with professional degrees increased further by 1943, they remained heavily underrepresented in the professions. The proportion of blacks among lawyers, nurses, pharmacists, engineers and physicians was less than half of what it should have been under conditions of equality...The social situation of black professionals was in fact precarious. Although education and 'culture' made this group eligible for middle-class status, their skin color, social origin, and financial situation, as well as white racism, kept them dangerously close to the world of poverty and manual labor that they were trying to escape.

This contradicts the popular notion that in Cuba class differences are more important than racial differences or that "money whitens." There is ample evidence that middle-class blacks were also excluded from many aspects of the social life of whites; money did not whiten them. These forms of exclusion were rarely overt, however. Whites were practiced in masking and muting their racism. One common practice for example was to

exclude blacks *and* mulattos from recreational areas by establishing “members only” clubs (de la Fuente, 2001).

When the Cuban Revolution triumphed in 1959 and Fidel Castro moved to desegregate these social areas, many whites objected strenuously. One white self-employed salesman explained his objection this way: “50 blacks can be working in a factory and 50 whites, and get along well, and be friends, and all that, but comes the time to share your house, no, no, you are black, and I’m white...I’m not in agreement with integration in its totality” (quoted in de la Fuente, 2001:265).

While only two informants told me there was no racism in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, some did feel race relations were more amicable than in the United States. They based this perception primarily on residential integration. Black and white Cubans lived together, they maintained. However, it appears that middle-class and well-to-do blacks might have had difficulty finding housing among their white counterparts. Thus some ended up living with lower-income whites. In fact, several of my informants whose families were middle-class in Cuba attested to that. For instance, one of the participants who told me there was no racism in Cuba, gave as evidence the fact that her white neighbors were always in and out of her house to use her family’s phone; theirs was the only phone in the neighborhood. She seemed unaware, however, that her middle-class family was living among low-income whites.

It is certainly true that there has never been a system of *de jure* racism in Cuba, and compared with the United States there has always been less residential segregation. However, the Cuban racial system, particularly in the period before the Cuban Revolution, might be more similar to the racial system in the United States than is normally acknowledged. Aline Helg (1995) has argued, for instance, that though early 20th century Cuba appeared like other Latin American countries to have had a tripartite system that distinguishes between mulattos and blacks, white Cubans often lumped both groups together as *gente de color* (people of color). Blacks and mulattos alike were excluded from whites' "members only" clubs. The color distinctions seemed to have been more meaningful to blacks and mulattos, who created separate social clubs, for instance. At the same time, however, blacks and mulattos saw the necessity to collectively mobilize as *gente de color* or simply as *los negros* to confront what an editorial in *Adelante*¹⁵ (March 1936) described as an *atmósfera asfixiante* (oppressive environment). José is one participant who shares Helg's perspective. José, who left Cuba in 1962 as an adolescent, suggests that there was hardly any difference between the United States and Cuba. I asked José to tell me what it was like for him as a black Latino. The following is an excerpt from his response:

José: I can give you two scenarios, Cuba and here. The one in Cuba was definitely black and white, and that is why black Cubans identify with black Americans than any other group. In Cuba there was no doubt about it, you're black and you're white.

MH: There wasn't the mulatto?

José: There's always been that mulatto stuff in there but they were with the blacks in terms of where they lived and in terms of the racism. Cuba was segregated like the South in terms of where you go and could not go. Granted, among the working class there was some mixing, but still very much *pelo bueno, pelo malo* (good hair, bad hair). People would not allow you to play with their kids because you were black. There were comments in the family and you get to believe these

¹⁵ The *Adelante* was the journal of the black Cuban society, the *Adelante*.

things. I was telling my wife about the study that was made for Brown versus Board of Ed and the kids picking out the white dolls. We would have done the same thing as kids in Cuba. We would have picked the white doll as being the best. There's no doubt about that, and I'm speaking from my own experience. I woulda picked the white doll.

As noted earlier, José's view is not the consensus of this study's participants. Many, however, could recount experiences with racial discrimination: being called "*negro*" in a derogatory way or not being invited to their white neighbors' parties. Participants who were young adults before the revolution remember incidences ranging from being denied a hair cut to not being allowed into certain places; a man told me a bartender, forced to serve him and his father some water, smashed the glass after they drank. One woman who told me she came to the United States with a strong racial consciousness, which her father imparted to her, recounted the following:

Josefina: He (her father) has raised me to be very aware of the race thing in Cuba...Ever since I was a little girl I would hear him, "hey, these white people. What do they think? Blah, blah, you know. You better study. If not, being a black woman and not studying, you know... like very aware. And we even had...I remember a couple...they would make like a comment like, "oh you need to marry white to advance the race"...

MH: Your parents would say that?

Josefina: No, no, no. If a friend visiting the house, like for example we had this lady. She had three daughters. She would say something like, "that Josefina, she's such a pretty girl. She has to marry white." Oh My God, he would fly off and tell her things, and you know "that's so stupid to say. What do you mean advance the race? To advance the race is to be a polished person, a person that has studied."

In some ways, then, the racial system in Cuba is similar to the United States. Both black Cubans in Cuba and black Americans have had to negotiate white-dominant and white-dominated societies that award them an inferior status. This has led both black Americans and black Cubans to support similar forms of political philosophies (for black Cubans,

see for example Pérez-Sarduy, et al 2000; de la Fuente, 2001; Helg, 1995; for African Americans, see Marable and Mullings, 2003; and Dawson, 2001). Also, in Cuba as in the United States, race has been highly politicized (Pérez-Sarduy et al 2000; Helg, 1995). In the section below I begin to examine the racialized experiences of black Cubans as they negotiate life among their white co-ethnics in the United States.

Racial Democracy Miami-Style

Because white Cubans arrived in such large numbers and are concentrated in an enclave, they were able to reestablish aspects of their cultural traditions, including their racial system. The dominant ideology of racial democracy, with its concomitant ideology of *mestizaje*, apparently also operates in the Cuban enclave in Miami. And as in Cuba there are severe sanctions against blacks who challenge the myth. For instance an article by Alfonso Chardy in the *Miami Herald* (1990) reported that black Cuban professor Carlos Moore came under harsh attack and was allegedly forced to flee Miami in 1987 because he repeatedly raised the topic of racism in Cuba and the Cuban diaspora. Moore's view is that white Cubans in Cuba and in exile are racist, but continue to deny it: "It's amazing how much a white Cuban in Miami resembles a white Cuban in Cuba...When it comes to politics, they differ. But when it comes to race, they have the same reflex: either to deny or downgrade its importance" (quoted in Steinbeck, 1998). One black Cuban woman interviewed by Fabiola Santiago for the *Miami Herald* (2000) referred to this tendency to deny racism and the existence of black Cubans as "the white silent noise."

The vast majority of this study's participants expressed the view that most white Cubans in the United States were racists and that white Cubans generally had poor expectations of blacks captured. This low expectation is captured by sayings such as, "*si no la hace a la entrada la hace a la salida*" (if he doesn't mess up on the way in, he will on the way out); "*el es un Negro, pero bueno*"; "*el es negro, pero tiene una alma blanca*"; "*el es negro, pero fino*" (he is black, but good; he is black but with a white heart; he is black, but good looking or cultured). As Miguel A. de la Torres (1999) succinctly put it, Cuban racial ethos is summed up in the Cuban phrase: "*juntos pero no revueltos; cada cosa en su lugar*" (together but not scrambled, everything in its place).

Several of my informants theorized that the United States provided fertile ground for an already existing racism, and especially in Miami. The early exiles, they explained, arrived at the cusp of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, and having escaped from a society in the throes of its own social revolution predisposed them to more conservative stance. But, my informants also pointed out that it was also in the best interest of white Cubans to disassociate themselves from local blacks, and even from their black co-ethnics. In the context of Jim Crow segregation, it was imperative they established their whiteness and draw boundaries between themselves and blacks. Suzanne Greenbaum (2002:108) has documented a similar process of differentiation and boundary drawing at the turn of the century, when black Cubans in Jim Crow Tampa founded their own organization—Marti Maceo— separate from white Cubans. She wrote that:

They (her Afro Cuban informants) indicate that white immigrants (Cubans) did practice active discrimination—that they often reflected subtle racist attitudes in their interactions, and gained certain obvious advantages from the exclusion of

blacks—because the setting both encouraged and permitted them to do so. It was part of learning to be an American, a prerogative attached to their white skin.

The consensus, then, was that white Cubans had become *more* racist in the United States.

In a story very similar to the one reported by Marta Ojito in the *New York Times* (June 5, 2000),¹⁶ one participant recounted to me the ways in which his lifelong friend had

changed since he migrated to Miami. He felt that in Cuba everybody was equal, but in

Miami things were different:

Sergio: When I was studying over there (in Cuba) the system make people, the kids coming up, say that everyone is the same. I date a lot of white girls and no problem. The family don't like it, but like the Americans say, "You bite the bullet;" The guy is good, he's going to work; I cannot create a problem, let my daughter try to run away with this guy. That was okay like that; *todo el mundo es igual*. But when they (white Cubans) reach over here now and they meet with these that came first, second, and third, they say, "Oh, but I am different from this guy because my eyes was covered, but my skin is clearer and their skin is darker. He have a bigger nose, and my nose is straight." So now they attach to the policy that these guys have over here, and when they go to drink coffee: "*Dame un cafecito Cubano mi hermano....mirando que los negros que estan llegando también*" (Give me a coffee my Cuban brother.... look how the blacks are coming here also). Oh, you say, "Wow." They say it in front of me!

MH: But they don't know you're Cuban?

Sergio: They know I'm Cuban also because I'm in the line to drink a Cuban coffee, but they don't care because they talking about black.

MH: Black American?

Sergio: It's *like* they talking about black Americans, but the black Americans are here. They're not *coming* over from Cuba! But they, "Look, the blacks are coming over." So, what that means? That the blacks are coming over also like the whites...So now, they look around and say, "I am white, that guy is black, we're going to keep a little distance." So all these guys that were calling me and talking to me and saying this and saying that, now they calm down a little bit and say, "This guy Sergio is my friend and everything, but if I go with him they going to say, if you keep on mixing with blacks, they going to bring you down. They are low-class."

¹⁶ Ojito focused on the close friendship between Joel Ruiz, who is black, and Achmed Valdes, who is white. Ruiz and Valdes grew up together in Cuba, but have grown apart since arriving in Miami. There they lived only four miles apart, but were separated by skin color. Skin color defines their lives in US, where they live, the friends they make, how they speak, and what they wear and eat.

My informants tended to talk a great deal about intimate forms of racism. They had numerous examples of white Cubans not acknowledging them as Cuban: White Cubans speaking English to them even when it is obvious they are Cuban; the comments white Cubans make about hair; the racial slights they experience in white Cuban-dominated spaces; derogatory comments made in Spanish about blacks in their presence because it is assumed they don't speak Spanish. Their everyday encounters with discrimination were constant and immediate, and therefore more painful, humiliating and stressful.

Middle-class, college-educated respondents complained much more than their working-class counterparts about discrimination from white Cubans. Like middle-class African Americans, some middle-class respondents spent most of their day with white Cubans and other Latinos, working, shopping or dining out. Several scholars have argued that because middle-class blacks and other minorities move in white dominant/controlled arenas they encounter prejudice and discrimination more directly than do low-income minorities (Neckerman, 1999; Feagin et al, 1994. See also Vickerman, (1999) on West Indian immigrants). These scholars document the encounters middle-class African Americans have with racism and the coping mechanisms these African Americans develop to deal with white dominant/controlled settings. Like their North American counterparts, black Cubans experience marginalization, and develop coping strategies. In their "combat stories" we hear of the indignities they experience.

Excerpted below is a conversation among several women and myself. These women met at the home of one of the study's informants to talk with me, but it quickly became a

“safe space,” as one of the women explained, for them to share, support and affirm one another. For me, the meeting provided rich data, which I had obtained in individual interviews. For instance, because the women were talking to one another they felt free to express feelings that they felt were shared and would immediately be understood. So though I had been told about the many permutations of racism, it is in this conversation that I learned about the intensity of their feelings and their strategies to deal with the daily indignities they faced. Here, the women talked about several aspects of their racial experiences, some of which are similar to those documented by Neckerman et al (1999) and Feagin et al (1994) for African Americans. Some of their experiences though are unique to black Cubans, especially the pain, stress and humiliation they feel as they deal with the tendency for some white Cubans to erase blacks from the Cuban national imaginary, and to deny their blackness or “essence” as one of the women said:

Miriam: The examples of racism in Miami is in house hunting, job hunting. I see it sitting in my office every week. I haven't even moved from my office, I'm sitting there and I have to deal with it. I have to say, "Miriam, let it run, baby."

Racism in my office, oh yes!

MH: From white Cubans?

Miriam: White Cubans walking in.

MH: What do you mean by racism?

Ana: First of all they don't think you speak Spanish. They forgot you speak Spanish because I've been in places and have them talking bad about us (blacks) and then I turn around, they go like, "where did you learn to speak Spanish." I say, "The same place you did."

Miriam: Exactly. I can be in the middle of a Cuban environment, go to the cafeteria, go for coffee just like everybody in that place, and I'm sitting there...I mean, who else is going to come to this hood to look for coffee? And they still won't accept you.

Josefina: Hasn't it happened that you speak to them in Spanish and they respond in English?

Liliana: That happens a lot, but you know it happens so many times that I'm over it.

Josefina: Me too. *Bueno*, (fine) I'm over it at this level, but I'm not over it at this level.

Liliana: No, of course not.

Ana: I keep talking to them in English and they have the worse time trying to talk back to me, and I let them go on...

Liliana: I find that they don't see me as a black, so they say things sometimes that are very insulting. I don't like *negrita* because of that.

Josefina: And the word is not as offensive as nigger but it borders on it because it has been used...

Miriam: But like the other day I had this experience in the middle of my class and the students were saying "*no, usted no es negra*" (no, you are not black), and I say, "*No, yo soy negra.*" (no, I am black). *Negra* is not a bad word for me. I will not adjust to any other word in this place.

Ana: Miriam when you call me *negra* it doesn't insult me, but a white Cuban calls me *negra* I know what he's referring to and all the baggage with it!

Josefina: So he better find another word. He better call me like everybody else. Because I am Cuban and eat rice and beans just like everybody else...

Miriam: You know something that we don't do, because I remember in this Cuban radio program I stop the car because I couldn't continue to drive because I was going to get into an accident, to hear the white Cubans say about "*nuestros negros*" (our blacks), I had to stop driving. And I swear to myself that if I ever get on the Cuban radio here I'm going. to say "*nuestros blancos*" (our whites) I swear. I'll never forget that line because we don't call them *blancos* either.

Ana: I know this woman, she used to work with me. We were at happy hour dancing one time. There were these two black guys, one of them trying to come over to dance with her. And she got insulted because she doesn't dance with black guys.

MH: And you were right there? And she didn't feel like she shouldn't say that in your presence?

Ana: No, because they were not Cuban... because to them it's like "You're my friend, you're Cuban, but you're different." What is the difference? And I get so mad.

Josefina: We (referring to an acquaintance) were talking about something, and I said something about, "no, because as a black woman..." and she said, "I don't see you as black." And I was so insulted. I must be doing something wrong then that you don't see me as a black woman. My color is right before your eyes.

There's something wrong here. And it is that lack of sensitivity, of awareness that Miriam was talking about, that I will ignore your essence as a human being because you just fit into my world as what I want you to be, that's it.

Working-class informants complained less about discrimination from white Cubans, though several had been discriminated against in housing. They, along with some middle-class informants, told me they would call ahead about an available apartment, but once they showed up and it was apparent they were black, the apartment was no longer

available. This was also the case for employment. One woman decided to never work with white Cubans after a white Cuban discriminated against her. She saw an ad for a job, called and was told to come in for an interview. When she got there and the white Cuban woman saw she was black, the job was no longer available. Sergio, who worked with white Cubans, told me the following:

MH: Being black has not been a problem?

Sergio: In some ways because for example I could be a full-time employee with (name of employer), but what happen is my color. White Cubans have the position and in my case the lady that is in front directing, she's a white Cuban. So she have a problem with black Cubans.

MH: How do you know?

Sergio: Because you could see it. White people got full-time job, part-time job and I'm still waiting on the list. My Haitian friend is still waiting on the list. So we stay back.

Black Cubans also had to cope with white Cubans' attempts to deny the existence of anti-black racism in pre-revolutionary Cuba *and* in the Cuban diaspora. My informants found these attempts insulting and painful. Denial took several forms. One popular form was to claim a black best friend or nanny:

Margarita: that was always the story, either my nanny or my best friend was black...ok you're telling me you used to play with your slave and I'm supposed to listen to you.

Marisol: When they tell you my best friend is like they want an award because the white family don't want their kids to play with black kids.

In his article, "Masking Hispanic Racism: A Cuban Case Study," de la Torres, who self-identifies as a white Cuban, uncovers the nature of this denial:

Our (exilic Cubans) first response to the accusation of racism is its denial. We may quote the Venezuelan proverb "*Aquí todos somos café con leche; unos más café, otros más leche* (Here we are coffee and milk; some more coffee, other more milk)." Yet *leche* has access to employment, state services, power, wealth and privilege, while *café* is disenfranchised. *Leche* is rich, civilized, intelligent and modern, while *café* is poor, savage, ignorant and primitive. The lighter the *café*,

the closer to becoming a *macho*. Such popular slogans, constructed to describe the Americas' multi-culturalism, mask an indigenous racism.

The occasion of a panel on black Cuban women that was held in Miami gave me the opportunity to observe white Cubans' denial of racism. The audience of approximately seventy was predominantly white, with eight persons who were obviously black, three from the panel and five in the audience. During the question-and-answer period some whites in the audience began challenging the argument made by some of the panelists that there was racism in pre-revolutionary Cuba, and that there is racism in the Cuban diaspora. They had three defenses, which my informants told me are standard ones for Cubans. These were raised by individuals in the audience, but the applause they received indicated they had support. One defense was to hold up an exceptional black as evidence there is no racism. In one case a woman angrily challenged the claim made by the panel that there was racism in pre-revolutionary Cuba since there had been a black president—former mulatto president, Fulgenico Batista. And the only white member of the panel deployed the same device to deny racism in the Cuban diaspora by proclaiming Afro-Cuban singer Celia Cruz to be the “mother of the exile community.” A second defense was that of innocence. One woman tearfully claimed she did not know racism was a problem. A third defense was the classic attempt to sanction the black Cubans in the audience who got up and talked about racism: To the loud applause of the audience a white woman recited José Martí's poem, “Our America,” in which he called for racial

unity,¹⁷ and then she read Nicolás Guillen's poem, "Ballad of the Two Grandfathers" in which he proclaimed and celebrated the *mestizo* nature of Cuban heritage and culture.

The women I accompanied to the meeting were very upset at these acts of denial. This, along with the moral support and prodding of one another, moved two of them to address the audience. One woman spoke very passionately about the need for whites to listen instead of reflexively denying, and another woman told of how she had been accused of being leftist because she founded a black Cuban cultural organization. The only other black Cuban in the audience, a man, also addressed the audience. With barely suppressed anger he told them nothing had changed since the 1950s when he first arrived, and then he abruptly left the auditorium. Their frustration and rage was palpable.

White Cubans, then, were able to reestablish aspects of their racial hegemony in Miami, but as in Cuba, the ideology does not remain uncontested. While some black Cubans acquiesce to the system in a manner reminiscent of the Brazilians described in Winddance Twine's (1998) study, some devise strategies of resistance and survival, and produce counter-discourses that white Cubans are forced to respond to. The overt confrontation I witnessed in the auditorium in Miami was unusual, however; rarely are white Cubans challenged in this public manner.

¹⁷ For example, in "Nuestra America" ("Our America"), 1891, Martí wrote: *The native-born half-breed (el mestizo autóctono), has vanquished the exotic creole... There can be no racial hate, because there are no races).*

These experiences of discrimination led the majority of participants in this study to think of themselves as distinct from their white co-ethnics, and to create other identities and communities. In Chapter 3, I discuss their responses to this discrimination, as well as the material effects of discrimination for this study's participants. Below I discuss the other group which was very important in their social experiences, their identities and their perspectives.

African American Political Culture

It is impossible to understand the experiences, identities and perspectives of this study's participants without considering their interactions with African Americans, and their exposure or lack thereof to African American political philosophies and cultures. African Americans are the group with whom they are most associated in the minds of the dominant society, and in their own minds as well. In this section I sketch out the aspects of African American political culture that are most relevant and the context in which my informants developed their identities and their political perspectives.

African American Political Philosophies

Scholars identify three major political ideologies and strategies in African American political culture, particularly in the 20th century: integrationism or inclusionism, separatism, and transformationism. Integrationism is best illustrated by the philosophy of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) as formulated by organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The basic strategy of the CRM was integration into the prevailing social order. They "were not social

revolutionaries. They did not want to destroy the system—they wanted to become fully assimilated in it” (Marable and Mullings, 2003). Liberal integrationists have consistently sought equality, including an equal share of the society’s resources in the economic, political and cultural realms. To this end, they embrace corrective measures such as affirmative action, which aims “at providing minimal guarantees that blacks and other racialized groups would achieve significantly greater opportunities and access to resources, employment, credit and capital” (Mullings and Marable, 2003:369).

Black nationalism constitutes a second paradigm. The black nationalist tradition is extremely complex and varied, but more often we find moderate expressions of nationalism. Moderate nationalists support the “construction of autonomous social, cultural, economic and political institutions and the struggle for black control of the public and private institutions in predominantly black communities” (Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, 1998:4). Conservative black nationalism is illustrated by platform of the Nation of Islam and Louis Farrakhan. They argue for black self-help, self-sufficiency and black economic development or black capitalism, and are “hostile to gender equality and civil liberties for gays and lesbians” (Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, 1998:4). These two groups of nationalists tend to privilege race over other forms of oppression, arguing that racial unity above all is critical for black empowerment.

The Black Panther Party, SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) and activists like Angela Davis, represent the revolutionary or radical wing of black nationalism. It is this revolutionary tendency Mullings and Marable (2003) refer to as the

third philosophy: transformationism. Proponents of this perspective view the economic structure—capitalism—as fundamentally exploitative and race as one of the means through which economic exploitation is achieved. They believe that black liberation can only be achieved through the global dismantling of imperialism and capitalism, including black capitalism.

It is not unusual for individuals to hold more than one of these perspectives, or to shift from one to another as the social climate changes. For instance, both Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X changed their positions; Martin Luther King from his advocacy of liberal integrationism and Malcolm X from his philosophy of conservative black nationalism. Both came to support an international and class-based philosophy, and to demand structural reform and the guarantee of the civil rights of all Americans. Ideological differences, though, makes a united struggle difficult.

African Americans' embrace of any of these perspectives is based on the political and economic climate in the country at large. Black nationalism, for instance, gains the most support when blacks are discouraged about gaining equality and fair treatment, while liberal integrationism gains the most support when the economy is doing well and whites are most generous, or are shamed into being generous (Dawson, 2001; Mullings and Marable, 2003).

Political Culture: 1950s-1970s

During the black liberation movements from the 1950s through the 1970s, African Americans embraced all three perspectives and strategies. They were influenced by a worldwide insurgency against imperialism and capitalism, and the African American movement in turn inspired the struggles of other oppressed peoples, including women, other racialized minorities, and homosexuals. Thus Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and Asians also mobilized for their civil rights and to redeem their heritage. The quest to redeem their heritage and to address the specific problems of each group led to the formation of separate organizations and agendas along ethnic lines.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the period also witnessed coalitions, alliances and ideological cross-fertilization between groups within the United States, and between North Americans and international struggles (Haney Lopez, 2005; Rodríguez-Morazzani, 1998; Oboler, 1995; Gilroy, 1993).

The 1950s to the 1970s was also a period of mass mobilizations, and acts of civil disobedience: demonstrations, teach-ins, sit-ins and the use of mass media to popularize the struggle. Through these means a mass audience was exposed to, and radicalized by, the black liberation movements' ideologies and strategies. For example, Puerto Rican youth, Rodríguez-Morazzani (1998: 37-38) wrote, "were influenced by the political and literary culture of African Americans to seek out resources for the exploration of their

¹⁸ For example, this is how Pablo 'Yoruba' Guzman, one of the founders of the Young Lords explained why they felt the need for an organization separate from the Black Panthers: At first many of us felt why have a Young Lords Party when there existed a Black Panther Party, and wouldn't it be to our advantage to try to consolidate our efforts into getting Third World people into something that already existed? It became apparent to us that that would be impractical, because we wouldn't be recognizing the national question. We felt we each had to organize where we were at—so that Chicanos were gonna have to organize Chicanos, Blacks were gonna have to organize Blacks, Puerto Ricans Puerto Ricans, etc. until we came to that level where we could deal with one umbrella organization that could speak for everybody. But until we eliminate that racism that separates everybody, that will not be possible (quoted in Oboler, 1995:50).

own identity.” Many young Puerto Ricans who lived in New York City heard Malcolm X speak at rallies in East Harlem. His denunciation of white racism and call for black pride resonated among them. These influences also moved them to form organizations like the Young Lords Party and the Puerto Rican Student Union so as to address their oppression and marginalization.

Several of this study’s informants talked about the inclusive nature of this period, the ways in which African American leaders and cultural figures spoke to their concerns as black and oppressed peoples, and the enormous influence the popular cultural forms of this period had on them. Even some of those informants who were strongly ethnically identified were so influenced. One woman whose English finally improved enough by the late 1970s to understand the black power, black is beautiful philosophy of the movement, remembered how she began to integrate “the positiveness of blackness” and to see herself as connected to all blacks.

Political Culture, Post-1970s

The 1980s brought some shifts in African American political perspectives and forms of struggle. These transformations have implications for the relationship between African Americans and Afro-descended immigrants, the forms of identification among those immigrants, and for the possibilities for a united struggle against racial oppression.

Several scholars observe that a more conservative nationalism is gaining popularity.

Central to this development is the rise of cultural pluralism, the model of ethnic and racial

incorporation which began to take shape in the late 1960s. Cultural pluralism is characterized by “competitive group empowerment,” by which groups are encouraged to mobilize as ethnic groups for resources, and politicians appeal to people’s ethnic allegiance. In this environment, people of color have become locked in a zero-sum political conflict in which the achievements of one group are seen as detrimental to another. This competitive approach to resources is further exacerbated by the recent economic crisis, which forces minority groups, including African Americans, to compete against one another for shrinking resources such as jobs, housing and federal aid (Basch et al, 1994; Green et al, 1992; Marable, 1994).

In this competitive environment some African American politicians mobilize their constituencies by highlighting what they see as their group’s unique needs (Basch et al; Green et al, 1992; Marable, 1994). Many engage in racial identity politics, utilizing racial consciousness—or the group’s collective memory and experiences—as the essential framework for interpreting the actions and interests of all other social groups” (Marable, 1994: 35). The main philosophy behind identity politics is liberal integrationism. Liberal integrationism, Marable (1995:4) argues, amounts to “symbolic representation,” which can be manipulated to promote the narrow interest of minority elected officials.

Liberal integrationism has led to a dramatic increase in the black middle-class and in black electoral officials. However, since the 1970s, the country has also witnessed an overall decline in the socioeconomic conditions of most blacks. The number of black

high school graduates has declined, as has college enrollment. Black income and poverty is increasing, as are the numbers of blacks in prison (Marable and Mullings, 1996).

The failure of liberal integrationism and the strategy of electoral politics to adequately address the entire black community have led to a sense of political apathy in some black communities, and particularly among the “hip hop generation” (Marable and Mullings, 1996; West, 1993). The failed policies of liberal integrationism have also led millions of working-class and impoverished blacks to reject integration, and to turn to a “quasi (black) nationalism” (Marable and Mullings, 1995) or “community nationalism” (Dawson, 2001). This brand of black nationalism operates with an essentialized notion of blackness and privileges race over gender and class oppression. These black nationalists do not acknowledge the real divisions among blacks and the multiple forms oppression takes.

The attraction to conservative black nationalism has also grown because of the support its proponents and policies have been receiving from the Republican Party. Beginning with President Ronald Reagan, Marable (1996: 99) argues, “the Republicans have been fashioning a black middle-class agenda,” which is supported by prominent black democrats, black conservatives and black nationalists alike. This agenda includes federal government support for black-owned banks and entrepreneurship, criticism of social-welfare programs, endorsement of all-black male public schools and a discourse of ‘self-reliance,’ the position of influential black nationalist conservatives like Louis Farrakhan. At the same time “neo-accommodationist” and conservative black spokespersons (such as

economists Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams; journalists, Tony Brown; and Glenn C. Loury, professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government) are being promoted in the national media (Marable, 1996; Dawson, 2001).

These perspectives and strategies do not bode well for a politics of coalition, or indeed for a pan-African struggle against oppression. For instance, Manning Marable (1994), Paul Gilroy (1992), and Angela Davis (1992) arrived at the same conclusion that those African Americans who subscribe to a conservative black nationalism or to liberal integrationism are less inclined to see non-blacks and even black immigrants as allies.

Not only have there been changes in African American political perspectives and strategies, but access to these perspectives has changed as well. Dawson (2001) has argued that far from being inherent, black political ideologies are learned, and African Americans' opinions are shaped by black information networks—news media, black magazines, schools, churches—that are different from mainstream information networks, and constitute “black counterpublics.”¹⁹ Hence, he found that African Americans with the most access to black information networks were more likely to subscribe to black political ideologies. The same can be said for the importance of black informational networks in socializing immigrants. In the narratives of my informants, it wasn't only the inclusive nature of African American political ideologies during the black liberation

¹⁹ The autobiographical writings of African American leaders and activists of the black liberation struggles at mid-century demonstrate the influence of black information networks—literature, leaders, involvement in organizations, study groups, teach-ins—on their awakening and on transformations in their thinking. These networks were often international in origin and scope. For instance, Kathleen Neal Cleaver (2002) wrote about the impact of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* on her political awakening and perspective.

struggles of the mid- 20th century that led them to a racialized consciousness, but also their access to these ideologies. The popularization of the black liberation struggles through popular culture, the news media and the mass mobilization style of the movement's leaders gave these informants access to the movement's philosophies. This was the case even for the two respondents who had a politicized racial consciousness, but who arrived in the United States after the 1960s and 1970s. One man had followed the movements very closely from Cuba, and the other had followed them from Jamaica.

According to Dawson (2001), there has been a change in black information networks, with implications for both native and foreign-born blacks. For one, the tactics of the Civil Rights Movement have given way to electoral politics. Many African American leaders now eschew the mobilization tactics of the black liberation movements of the 1950s to 1970s— sit-ins, boycotts, strikes and demonstrations— which so popularized black political ideologies and raised the consciousness of the nation. Now, many African American politicians downplay race in order to court white voters, and the African Americans with the most support from the mass media are neo-accommodations and black conservatives. The most influential source of black political ideologies in the 1990s, Dawson argues, was rap; and rap, he feels, supports the tenets of community nationalism: “those who approve of rap are more likely to adopt community nationalism.” Immigrants who arrived after the 1960s and 1970s, then, do not have the same kind of access to black political perspectives as those who were here during the movement, and those ideologies they have access to might be promoting insularity instead of coalitions.

These analyses of contemporary African American political perspective and its implications for alliances with other groups might be too pessimistic and static, however. Indeed the critics of conservative nationalism mentioned above generally caution against this form of nationalism, raising concerns about its *potential* negative effect on coalitions rather than proclaiming the end of cross-cultural alliances. What is clear is that African American political perspectives are ever changing, with multiple points of views and political strategies coexisting in any historical period. Thus we find that a conservative black nationalism has always been a part of African American political culture, waxing and waning according to social conditions in the larger society, and coexisting with integrationism and revolutionary nationalism. Similarly, while the 1980s was a period of African American-centric nationalism, it was also a period of an intensely radical pan-Africanism, evident in the solidarity organizations in support of revolutions in Namibia, South Africa, Zaire, El Salvador, Guatemala and Grenada (Kelley, 2002).

The alternative to the isolationism of a conservative black nationalism and the symbolic identity politics engendered by cultural and structural pluralism supports pan-African and cross-ethnic consciousness and struggle. Basch et al (1994) found, for instance, that in the 1990s while some African American leaders in New York City were engaging in an insular ethnic politics, there were others who were articulating a more inclusive pan-African, pan-black philosophy. Exposed to this through black activists, radio stations and political figures, a small numbers of Haitian immigrants began to see themselves in pan-African terms, and to support cross-ethnic alliances.

Some scholars also do not agree that rap is necessarily hostile to coalitions and narrowly African American-centric. For example, while Raquel Rivera (2003) found much tension between African Americans and Puerto Ricans around the production of hip hop, she also found a good deal of cooperation and cultural sharing. Based on their shared experiences of marginalization in New York's ghettos African Americans and Puerto Ricans constructed a shared politics and aesthetics. Rivera identified at least two tendencies among the urban youth who created hip hop: an African American-centric tendency and an Afro-diasporic, transnational tendency. The dominance of the former tendency, especially during the 1980s, was partly a function of the commercialization of rap. Music companies promoted a narrow essentialized definition of blackness. They saw only African Americans as blacks, and excluded Puerto Ricans. With the shift in the 1990s away from black nationalism and toward a more ghetto-centric and class-based rap, there is once again an expanded more inclusive definition of blackness. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are now imagined by African Americans as black too, even if sometimes in a highly tropicalized and eroticized manner as sexy *mamis*.

African American Political Cultures and Diaspora

Rivera's findings are significant also because it points to what is frequently ignored: that "African American culture" is often the product of intra-racial and inter-ethnic exchange and influence. Caribbean immigrants played significant roles in the radical politics of black America, including the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the various North American organizations that have promoted a pan-African approach to

black empowerment. Marcus Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, C. L. R. James, George Padmore, Claude McKay, Cyril Briggs and Arturo Schomburg were Caribbean blacks. Shirley Chisholm, Harry Belafonte, Vincent Harding, Stokeley Carmichael, Robert Moses and Malcolm X were the children of Caribbean immigrants. Caribbean blacks also inspired some of the most radical of black Americans. According to Winston James (1998: 260):

A. Philip Randolph traced his political awakening to the Caribbean radical milieu in Harlem... Randolph's trade union activity within the Brotherhood (of Sleeping Car Porters) were carried on in concert with Caribbean radicals like Ashley Totten, Thomas T. Patterson, and Frank Crosswaith... Robert Williams... author of the uncompromising *Negroes With Guns*, admired Cyril Briggs, after whose magazine he named his own bold *Crusader*. And Briggs along with his good friend Harry Haywood, who was by then an old but stalwart black Bolshevik, advised many of the young radicals continuing the old fight.

The struggles and political perspectives of blacks (and other oppressed peoples) around the globe also impacted the philosophies of the black liberation movement in the United States. For example, their contact with young African revolutionaries and leaders led some SNCC members to begin to link the struggles of black America with those of the continent and the Third World in general. SNCC members, including James Forman, John Lewis, Fannie Lou Hamer and Julian Bond, toured Africa in 1964. There they met Guinean President Sekou Toure who encouraged them to see the links between the struggles in the United States with what was happening in Africa. Those SNCC members who went on to Liberia, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia and Egypt met with African students and leaders and African American expatriates, including Malcolm X, who also encouraged them to see their struggle in a pan-African perspective (Carson, 1995). The evidence of black people in power in Africa and the Caribbean also inspired in American

blacks the desire for their own black power. Take for instance Paul Robeson's statement (quoted in Edmondson, 1974):

Yes, I think a great deal of the power of black people in the world. That's why Africa means so much to me. ... Yes, this black power moves me. Look at Jamaica. In a few years the white minority will be there on the sufferance of black men. If they're nice decent fellows, they can stay... If I could get a passport, I'd like to go to Ghana or Jamaica just to sit for a few days and observe this black power.

Scholars too often paint a picture of African American culture that does not recognize its transcultural and international nature. This static and bounded rendition of African American culture needs to be replaced by a diasporic perspective. Paul Gilroy's (1993:4) image of a ship to describe new world black cultures is a fine example of this approach:

I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organizing symbol for this enterprise, and as my starting point. The image of the ship—a living micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion—is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons that I hope will become clearer below. Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various project for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activities as well as the movement of key cultural and political artifacts: tracts, books, gramophone records and choirs.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Considerations: Ethno-Racial Identity and Social Mobility

In the previous chapter I outlined the social context in which the study's participants made their identity choices and developed their political perspectives. As I approached the study and analyzed the data I collected, I was guided by the social science literature on identity and on immigrants. Below I sketch out the perspectives and findings that guided this research and to which this study speaks.

New paradigms of immigrant adaptation have been developed to explain the political, economic and social experiences of “new immigrants,” the post-1965 immigrants who are predominantly people of color. The most influential of these paradigms—segmented assimilation, interest group/resource competition, and transnationalism—have been important in overturning straight line assimilation assumptions that immigrants give up their national identities, assimilate into the dominant culture and achieve upward mobility. We now know that immigrants do not necessarily give up their national identity, but that this becomes the basis for the construction of ethnicity, which can be an important tool for accessing resources. Together these paradigms represent important breakthroughs, but they have also generated new debates and sometimes failed to clarify or resolve old ones. The most relevant of these debates to this dissertation are the different conceptualizations of the role of racial and ethnic identity in social mobility.

Of particular concern is the way in which social scientists conceptualize the role of culture and identity and structure in social mobility. In other words, how do scholars explain a group's socioeconomic achievements or lack thereof? What relationship do they posit between identity and social mobility? One school of thought tends to emphasize a group's cultural values and behaviors, while another argues for the primacy of structural factors or macro-level processes. Essentially a cultural explanation for social mobility claims that the extent to which groups achieve socioeconomic success rests on their cultural values and norms. The use of culture and ethnicity the primary explanatory factor in social mobility has a history in the social sciences as long and stubborn a history as the use of biological explanations. This perspective is evident in the stories told about Euro-immigrants' social mobility as well as in the literature on new immigrants. The deployment of cultural explanations is also evident in the literature on inequality among native minorities, a category that includes African Americans, Puerto Ricans and Chicanos. The assumptions embodied in the literature on native minorities and immigrants appear in the work of some influential studies of "new immigrants." There is a strong tendency in some of these studies to compare "new immigrants" with native minorities, and to attribute success or lack therefore to group identity, values and norms.

In contrast, structural explanations posit that macro-level factors, such as the availability of jobs and the level of wages, access to quality education, health care and housing, and social conditions such as racism and sexism that either hinder or help mobility. Structural perspectives also treat ethnic groups as entities that are formed as groups compete for

resources. Ethnicity and identity, then, are themselves a function of structural factors and of macro-level processes.

Below I review the social science literature on the identity and socioeconomic achievements of immigrants in general and Afro-Caribbean and Cuban immigrants in particular. I also review those theoretical perspectives of native minorities that are used most frequently in the study of new immigrants. In the first section I introduce the three most influential paradigms in immigrant studies: segmented assimilation, interest group/resource mobilization, and transnationalism. Section two looks at the application of these perspectives to native minorities' failures, Euro-immigrants' success, and new immigrants' success. Section three addresses the relationship between African Americans, African American culture, and the identities of black immigrants.

Section I: Paradigms of Identity and Social Mobility

Segmented Assimilation

Segmented assimilation is one of the most influential paradigms in the study of new immigrants. However, it is preceded by and shares much with the cultural pluralist paradigm of group relations and adaptation initiated by the publication of Glazer and Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963). Glazer and Moynihan asserted that the model image of America as a melting pot where immigrants gave up their ethnicities was incorrect. Instead they suggested that the United States was a pluralist society in which ethnicity was alive and well, and an important resource in social mobility. Essentially

they argued that ethnic groups are in competition for resources, and that a group's values and norms determined socioeconomic success or the lack thereof.

Cultural pluralism has been criticized for among other things, turning all groups into ethnics, thereby "obfuscating (each group's) very different histories and social constraints;" for masking the critical fact of continued racial discrimination; and attributing social mobility to a group's cultural norms and values, thereby making light of the macro-economic factors affecting a group's success or lack thereof (Mullings, 1978). Additionally, though cultural pluralism correctly called attention to the salience of ethnicity and the fact of ethnic groups in competition, it *a priori* assumed the existence of a group, rather than exploring the ways in which "ethnicity is conditioned by economic and political relationships, and the role of the larger social, political and economic structure in defining" ethnicity (Mullings, 1987:3-4). The focus for these researchers was on identifying the values and behaviors of groups which advantaged them rather than on the *formation* of groups or the establishing of boundaries within the context of competition.

Segmented assimilation theory shares much with the older theories of Glazer and Moynihan's (1963), especially in assigning a causative role to culture and identity in social mobility. The segmented assimilation paradigm was initially developed to explain the differences in educational scores of junior high school children with at least one immigrant parent. The children of some immigrants had higher GPA scores than children of other immigrant groups and than native minorities. From this, segmented assimilation

theorists constructed a model of immigrant adaptation, which goes like this: Second-generation Euro-immigrants assimilated into the society because a manufacturing economy with plenty of mid-level jobs allowed for a sequential improvement over their immigrant parents. They were also allowed to assimilate into the dominant society because they were white.

This same assimilation process is not available to recent immigrants and their children. In today's hourglass economy (many good jobs at the top, many low paying jobs at the bottom, and few decent jobs in the middle) occupational segmentation has "reduced the opportunities for incremental upward mobility through well-paid, blue-collar positions" (Portes and Zhou, 1993:85). Racism also presents a serious barrier to their cultural assimilation into the white mainstream.

The children of new immigrants, according to this paradigm, have two other choices. One is to assimilate into native minority communities and cultures. This is the fate of those children whose parents are without the resources of a strong ethnic community and who live in close proximity to native minorities. As they assimilate into native minority communities they come to adopt the adversarial outlook of native minorities toward the mostly white mainstream (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes, 1995; Zhou, 1996; Gibson, 1988; Mature-Bianchi, 1986; Foley 1991). As Portes (1995:253) explained, though understandable, "oppositional" culture and identity are ultimately detrimental to upward mobility because of its "leveling norms:"

Although accurate from a historical standpoint, the emergence of such norms further reduces chances for individual advancement to the extent that youth are

socialized into the futility of ‘making it’ on the basis of one’s own merits.

The other choice new immigrants have is to *not* assimilate. They can remain ethnically identified holding on to their "traditional values," which are seen as more conducive to success. For instance, groups with strong ethnic solidarity who are able to establish ethnic enclaves can offer protection to future immigrants from societal discrimination and higher socioeconomic returns, at least as compared with the returns seen by immigrants without enclaves. Enclaves also insulate children from assimilating into “ghetto youth subcultures” and allow parents maximum social control over their children (Zhou, 1997). Ensnared within the enclave, parents are better able to pass on to their children what Portes and Rumbaut (2001) referred to as “key attitudinal variables,” which includes perceptions of discrimination and high aspiration. In the case of Asian immigrants, explains Zhou (1997:994), Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese parents preserve and pass on traits rooted in Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism that are advantageous in American society: “two-parent families, a strong work ethic, delayed gratification and thrift.”

Segmented assimilation has been critiqued in the social science literature for overstating the benefits of ethnic enclaves for immigrants (Kwong, 1996; Model, 1993; Gilbertson et al, 1993); exaggerating the acculturation of Euro-immigrants; being too hasty and pessimistic in its assessment of the prospects of new immigrants (Perlmann and Waldinger, 1998); and positing ethnically-bounded communities (Aparicio, 2004). My own concern with the paradigm is the role it assigns to identity and culture—behavior

and attitudes— in social mobility. I contend that the paradigm is a cultural one even though its proponents include structural factors in explaining mobility.

In the case of immigrants, for instance, segmented assimilation scholars correctly point to the human capital immigrants bring with them, the economic and social conditions they meet when they arrive in the United States, and group size and settlement patterns.

However, also integral to their analysis is the claim that these immigrant groups have mores and values that are conducive to upward mobility. These parents, this perspective also argues, pass on these values and norms to their children which then assure their children's social mobility. Similarly, segmented assimilation proponents do consider that racial discrimination and the lack of economic opportunities are factors in the oppressed social status of native minorities. These structural factors, they contend, also produce an identity and cultural values and norms that hinder social mobility; these values and norms are passed on to the youth and perpetuate their poverty. Ultimately, then, while segmented assimilation proponents do not hold the position that racism is no longer an issue for native minorities they, like Glazer and Moynihan, also leave the distinct impression that native minorities have cultural values that are detrimental to success while immigrants have values more conducive to success.

The cultural narratives of success produced by the cultural pluralism and segmented assimilation schools differ significantly from the other two influential paradigms in immigration studies: interest group/resource mobilization, and transnationalism.

Interest Group/Resource Mobilization

A significant paradigm shift has occurred in scholarship on identities. Instead of a primordial, fixed and bounded notion of racial and ethnic groups and identities some social scientists now see identities as flexible, negotiated, constructed and relational categories. As early as the 1960s, anthropologist Frederik Barth (1970) introduced this paradigm shift and in so doing ushered in a structuralist perspective of ethnicity. Barth argued that it is as groups compete against one another for resources that they form themselves into ethnic groups. For Barth, the important sociological and research questions were the reasons why, and the circumstances under which, people construct boundaries between themselves and others. It is as groups construct boundaries to differentiate themselves from others that symbols (language, skin color) and ideology (claims about welfare dependency versus self-reliance and work ethic) become meaningful and are deployed as boundary-making mechanisms.

This constructionist approach has produced an impressive body of work on ethnic groups and ethnic identity, with a heavy focus on the structural factors underlying ethnic group formation. A major theme, then, in the constructionist perspective on identity is the strategic and therefore political nature of ethnicity (Padilla, 1985; Espiritu, 1992; Nagel, 1994; Croucher, 1997). The interest group/resource competition model is most often associated with ethnic group formation, but researchers have also applied the model to racial formation, in particular to white racial formation. Hence, several scholars contend that the drawing of the color line between blacks and whites, and indeed the formation of the concepts of “whites” and “blacks,” was a means for early Euro-Americans to

establish control over the society's resources (W.E.B. Dubois, 1935; Roediger, 1991; Ignatiev, 1995). Important institutions of the society as well as ordinary workers were involved in establishing the color line.

As the purveyors of resources the State plays a central role in the formation of ethnic groups and identity: "As the state has become the dominant institution in society, political policies regulating ethnicity increasingly shape ethnic boundaries and influence patterns of ethnic identification" (Nagel, 1994:156). Immigration policies, official ethnic categories, ethnically-linked resources policies and ethnically-linked political access are all government policies that affect ethnic group formation and identity. For instance, Padilla (1985) documented the role of Chicago city programs focused on Hispanics in creating a collective Hispanic identity among Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.

Government policy also plays a significant role in racializing groups, and in shaping socioeconomic achievement and ethno-racial identities. This was the case at the founding of the country when governmental and civic institutions determined, on the basis of skin color, who could be citizens and therefore have access to the society's resources. This same process continues. In the case of Asian immigrants, Aihwa Ong (1996) has examined the institutional practices that "whiten" or "blacken" Asian groups, and in so doing create different forms of subjects. She concluded that:

Cambodian refugees and Chinese business people did not arrive as ready-made ethnics. Through the different modes of disciplining—the primacy of the state and church regulation in one and the primacy of consumption and capitalist instrumentality in the other—Cambodian refugees and Chinese immigrants are dialectically positioned at different ends of the black-white spectrum (Ong, 1996:751).

Transnationalism

Another recent and influential paradigm—*transnationalism*—also identifies the role of structural factors in the formation of transnational identities and communities, i.e. identities and communities that link both home and host societies. These scholars (for example, Basch et al, 1994; Duany, 1994) also argue that immigrants find more social, political and economic value in being ethnically or nationally identified and linked, rather than in assimilating. As with the interest group/resource competition model, the transnational model emphasizes the structural basis for this phenomenon: globalization and racism. Globalization is marked by the slide of the world economy into sustained crisis, generating economic dislocations in dependent and core capitalist countries and sending increasing numbers of citizens of dependent countries to core countries in search of a better life. However, as the core countries' economies slip into decline as a result of deindustrialization, both natives and immigrants are made to feel economically insecure and to compete with one another for resources. Ethnicity and mobilizing along ethnic lines become a means by which these immigrants get access to resources.

A structural explanation, then, offers a very different picture of social mobility and ethnic groups than a cultural explanation does. Instead of attributing success or lack thereof to values and mores which groups possess and pass on, a structural perspective highlights the nature of the economy and political conditions, including how resources are distributed and groups are organized within a society. Below, I use the examples of African Americans, and European, West Indian and Cuban immigrants to demonstrate

the types of narratives of social mobility that come out of these different perspectives. These examples demonstrate that values and behaviors are grossly inadequate explanations of group mobility. Instead structure—the nature of the economy and the social and political environments—provides or limits opportunities.

Section II: Interrogating the Myths of Social Mobility

Native Minorities: “Oppositional Culture” and “Underclass”

A central tendency in immigration studies is to compare immigrant groups with native minority populations, particularly African Americans. Both the cultural pluralist and segmented assimilation models of immigrants’ social mobility compare immigrants with African Americans. The two perspectives on the socioeconomic status of African Americans that these schools of thought most frequently deploy are the “underclass” and “oppositional culture” paradigms. It is therefore important to deconstruct these paradigms.

The “underclass” perspective gained ascendancy in the social sciences with William Julius Wilson’s work on poor inner-city African American communities, *The Declining Significance of Race* (1987). The concept, however, had been used in the general populace before then. In 1977, for example, *Time* magazine wrote: "Behind the (ghetto's) crumbling walls lives a large group of people who are more intractable, more socially alien and more hostile than almost anyone can imagine. They are the unreachable...Their bleak environment nurtures values that are often at odds with those of the majority—even the majority of the poor" (quoted in Katz, 1993:4).

Wilson argued that structural factors, mainly the flight of manufacturing jobs from urban areas, but also the flight of middle-class blacks, had created a permanent underclass—a concentration of poor, socially isolated inner-city residents. He argued against the claim that the “underclass” have values that are at odds with those of the majority, but also described what he termed the “ghetto-related” (a change from his earlier term, “ghetto-specific”) behaviors and values associated with people who do not work—lack of a work ethic and culture, and low self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Basil Wilson and Charles Green (1992:49) took Wilson to task for “slap(ping) capital on the wrist and then embrac(ing) it as the only way out of the malaise;” that is, Wilson identifies the role of capital in creating joblessness, but then sees capital as *the* solution. The underclass perspective has also been critiqued for “minimizing the force of white racism in politics and civic life” (Thompson, 1998:1) and for its blame-the-victim-point-of-view (Maxwell, 1993). According to Andrew Maxwell (1993:241), though Wilson sees the flight of jobs from urban areas as central to the production of an underclass “the underclass is implicated in its poverty via the reproduction of maladaptive subcultural attitudinal and behavioral traits.” As Wilson (1987:57) wrote, “jobless-ness, as a way of life, takes on a different meaning...A vicious cycle is perpetuated through the family, through the community, and through the schools.” The issue of whether there are jobs or not can easily drop out of the reader’s vision.

The underclass perspective, some scholars have pointed out, is an ideological support for neoliberal economic and social policies. It gained popularity with the triumph of the market, the whittling away of the welfare state and a growing rhetoric of personal responsibility (Winant, 1997; Mullings, 2005; Harrison, 2005; di Leonardo, 1998). As Micaela di Leonardo (1998:113) charged, the underclass perspective is a part of the times. It “functioned as had older ‘culture of poverty’ formulations, to focus attention away from (a) political economic production of poverty to the ‘pathological’ behavior of the poor whose characteristics were presumed (in the hard version) to cause or (in the soft version) merely to reproduce poverty.”

The other cultural paradigm, which is popular in studies of native minorities and immigrants, is John Ogbu’s (1994) theory of oppositional culture. Ogbu developed the oppositional culture and identity theory to explain why African Americans *across social class* lag behind whites and some immigrants in school performance and educational attainment. Ogbu proposed a difference between voluntary migrants (most Asian groups and Europeans), and non-voluntary migrants (such as African Americans, Puerto Ricans and Chicanos). Having come here voluntarily, European and some Asian immigrants do not bear the society any animus. They have a positive attitude toward the society and therefore are willing to struggle and assimilate into the dominant culture. Involuntary immigrants, however, were incorporated into the United States through enslavement, conquest and colonization. What is more, they continue to experience discrimination and marginalization, which engenders hostility toward and opposition to the dominant society. In the case of African Americans, they have also “developed a ‘folk theory’ of

‘making it’ that “goes beyond the strategy of pursuing educational credentials for mainstream employment or saving money to be able to live in desirable neighborhoods, to include several survival strategies” (Ogbu, 1994:270).

Their alternative survival strategies are not serving them well, however, since it includes a rejection of white culture, particularly education. Hence, Ogbu contended, despite the fact that the African American students he interviewed said they wanted to succeed and understood the importance of education, they really did not act in accord with what they said. Instead, he claimed, they lacked "effort optimism" and a "strong cultural ethic of hard work and perseverance in pursuit of academic work” (1994:280).

Though Ogbu argued that oppositional culture characterized all classes of African Americans,²⁰ more often than not this paradigm is applied to poor inner city blacks and other poor native minorities. As Katz (1993) points out, moral gatekeepers have always distinguished between the deserving and the undeserving poor; in this case this is a distinction between deserving and undeserving blacks. Hence we find that in its application, the culture of opposition concept is similar to the “underclass” perspective: There is a cultural response to material deprivation, but it is a culture which is self-perpetuating, dysfunctional and self-defeating. Ultimately, both perspectives share in common the use of culture, albeit as a secondary factor, to explain the lack of socioeconomic success.

²⁰ Ogbu in fact argues strenuously against a class explanation, including the “underclass” paradigm, for the lack of achievement of African Americans.

An alternative to cultural explanations for the plight of inner-city minority populations are the macro-level processes and factors that block their access to the resources needed to achieve upward mobility: good schools and health care, jobs and a livable wage. These structural conditions are not unfortunate consequences of naturally occurring processes, but are the direct result of political and economic policies. As Micaela di Leonardo explained (1998:114):

From the mid-1970s on the Democratic Party increasingly abandoned minority, poor, and labor constituencies, and the federal government pulled out of the business of regulating the poor. First Carter, then Reagan, drastically cut back social programs spending, abandoned federal commitments to low-cost housing while allowing rapid-fire real estate speculation, and continued policies that encouraged rather than slowed big-city deindustrialization as firms relocated both regionally and internationally in search of the lowest possible labor costs.

Working from a structuralist perspective some anthropologists responded to “blame-the-victim” theories of the plight of native minorities. They produced thick descriptions that linked the lives of ordinary individuals to larger political and economic processes and structures. For instance, Jagna Sharff (1987) criticized culture of poverty explanations for not providing a “rationale and socioeconomic explanation for why some people must engage in illegal activities.” Another cogent rejoinder to blame-the-victim perspectives was Dell Jones’s (1993) work in Central Harlem. Jones documented the efforts made by poor mothers in Harlem to get their children educated and the incredible institutional barriers they faced in their efforts. The mothers’ efforts led Jones to propose a “culture of achievement” among these Harlem women.

An important field of research on whiteness also plays a role in deconstructing the reasons behind the tremendous racial gap in wealth, which underpins the crisis of minority communities. This wealth gap is a direct consequence of government policies and the behavior of ordinary white Americans, which combined have denied African Americans the same opportunities as Euro-Americans to accumulate assets—home ownership and college education in particular. Government policies, for example slavery, the Homestead Acts of 1866, the Social Security Act of 1935, suburbanization, FHA redlining policies and urban renewal policies distributed assets to whites and not to blacks; thus whites were able to accumulate *wealth* while blacks were less able to. But ordinary whites participate in maintaining the advantage they have. In *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, George Lipsitz (1998:24) presented powerful evidence of the ways in which ordinary whites, through a "coordinated politics characterized by resistance, refusal, and renegotiation" have undermined civil rights laws such as fair housing efforts, school desegregation and fair hiring that were supposed to redistribute resources through a "coordinated politics characterized by resistance, refusal, and renegotiation." The effect of this is that, as Oliver and Shapiro (1997) charged, we have "two nations." According to these authors, "African Americans have not shared equally in the nation's prosperity" (1997:85-86). Blacks earn less than whites and possess far less wealth. For every dollar earned by white households black households earned sixty-two cents. Whites possess nearly twelve times as much median net worth as blacks, or \$43,800 versus \$3,700, and the average white household controls \$6,999 in net financial assets while the average black household retains no nest egg whatsoever.

The consequences of this wealth inequity is that whites' assets are used to finance their children's college education and life in the suburbs where the value of their houses guarantee a high tax base to fund good public school education, and college education for their children, and where their children have their own space, computers and other necessary tools to do well in school. Class matters! The importance of assets in predicting educational achievement is striking. Dalton Conley (1999) has argued that when assets are incorporated into statistical models, the racial gap in educational achievement disappears. He found that when parental income, educational level, occupational prestige and assets are taken into consideration, blacks are 2.60 to 2.67 times more likely than whites to complete high school. He also found that the racial gap in college completion disappears when class is factored in.

What do these figures say about Ogbu's claim that African Americans lack a "strong cultural ethic of hard work and perseverance in pursuit of academic work?" Ogbu's concept of oppositional culture does not explain the achievement of so many African Americans. It also ignores African Americans' strong tradition of education, as evidenced by the schools and colleges they built, and the long and hard battles they fought to gain access to schools and colleges. For African Americans, Manning Marable (1996:153) notes, "education was the most reliable and widely recognized key, which promised to give black people the ability to achieve full equality." We also see this tradition manifested in the strides made immediately after the Civil Rights Acts of 1965, when African American college attendance rate nearly doubled between 1970 and 1980. Also by the late 1980s, the proportion of blacks and whites graduating from high school was

equal (Oliver and Shapiro, 1997). That there is some reversal of this trend is testament to what happens when the society withdraws from a commitment to equality, and not to a lack of desire on the part of African Americans to achieve.

And what of oppositional culture? Does this concept adequately capture the very complex nature of the ways in which African Americans have dealt with the unrelenting nature of racism? In their article, "Pro-Black Doesn't Mean Anti-White," Mary Herring et al (1999) have argued that the notion that African Americans reject whites and the dominant society is based on anecdotal evidence. Their study represents a rare attempt to empirically analyze this claim. Based on their analysis of a national sample of African Americans, these researchers concluded that there was no evidence to support the notion that blacks reject whites. Instead, they found that black identity is marked more by in-group solidarity and support than by rejection of whites.

Indeed a look at the political philosophies to which African American have been most attracted confirms these authors' findings that most African Americans do not reject whites and mainstream norms. On the contrary, the majority has sought integration with whites and the dominant society (Marable and Mullings, 2000; Dawson, 2001). This is what the period of Reconstruction in the South and the Civil Rights Movement were about. Only black nationalists have consistently advocated a rejection of whites and this group historically has the least support from blacks. Black nationalism receives the most support during times of great hostility from whites, those times when African Americans are most discouraged. For instance, Marcus Garvey's movement was popular during the

interwar years, a time of Jim Crow segregation and lynchings. With the recent white backlash against affirmative action policies, support for black nationalism is once again growing among African Americans. As Michael Dawson (2001) points out, however, black nationalism, including the current version which he labels “community nationalism,” does not reject many of the norms of the dominant society. While black nationalists might be wary of whites, they are ardent supporters of capitalism and the tenets of American liberalism: individualism, self-help, and a limited role for government.

While “oppositional culture” itself is a grossly inadequate concept, it does capture some of the responses of African Americans to racial oppression. The black liberation movements at the middle of the 20th century were manifestations of the group’s opposition to the status quo that confined them to second-class citizenship and denied them their basic human rights. They, and the many groups their struggle inspired, including women, Puerto Ricans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, gays and lesbians, and senior citizens, democratized the society. Left out of the concept of “oppositional culture,” as used by Ogbu and others in that camp, are the multiple forms of opposition, and the role that oppositional politics has played in accessing rights and resources.

This is the “oppositional culture” with which a significant number of this study’s informants identified, and which empowered and inspired them to reject the notion that compliance with the norms of the dominant society, as oppressive as they are, brings rewards. Maria was the most articulate in this regard. As she said:

Growing up in LA in the mid to late 60s, the sad thing was that there were no black "Cuban" role models, except for Celia Cruz, and I can't sing so I knew I couldn't do what she had done. Anyway, some of my black Cuban friends and I looked at women like Rosa Parks, Maxine Waters, Eleanor Holmes-Norton, Yvonne Braithwaite, Angela Davis, Coretta King as women that were changing their community and the future. I loved the fact that even in bad situations these women did not project an image of victims, which I felt that black Cuban women in Cuba did at the time, and to a certain degree even now.

What Maria also alludes to is the fallacy of romanticizing immigrant culture. Another black Cuban who shares Maria's perspective and experience is Evelio Grillo, a black Cuban man who grew up in Tampa in the 1920s and 1930s. In his memoir, Grillo (2000:11) wrote that, "it was from black Americans that we learned about black colleges.... We learned we could attend them.... Not a single conversation about college was ever held in my home."

Perhaps the reason some scholars view assimilation into African American culture as *not* beneficial to immigrants is because of a skewed and superficial understanding of African American "culture." First, African American culture and indeed the idea of a culture of opposition is too often homogenized, so instead of African American *culture* and a culture of opposition we should be talking about *cultures*. Second, African American "culture" is often seen as static rather than as fluid and dynamic. In short, the extant view of African American "culture" needs to be updated. Researchers' perspectives are limited to the oppositional and underclass paradigms of African Americans, when in fact there is a considerable body of work that is far more nuanced and cogent to the issue of intra-African relations and the formation of black identities.

Immigrants: Horatio Alger and Model Minorities

The Horatio Alger perspective of European immigrants' success is the classic example of a cultural explanation of social mobility. Among scholars this bootstrap narrative is most elaborated for Jews, but it is also evident in some studies of Japanese and Chinese immigrants (Steinberg, 1989). It goes something like this: European immigrants arrived here voluntarily. Several of these groups—the Irish, Italians and Jews in particular— did face discrimination, but because they bore no animosity toward the society and the dominant group, they were eager to assimilate. Because they came here for a better life, they were willing to work at the most menial jobs. They also compared their status in the United States with their home country and felt that no matter how bad things were here they were better off than their country of origin. They were able to bear discrimination as a temporary barrier to be overcome. Acceptance, and with it assimilation, wasn't easy, but they persevered, studied, worked hard and pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. They were also aided by changes in the economy post-WWII, but they were able to take advantage of the opportunities because they were willing to study and work hard. One early example of this bootstrap approach is from sociologist, Milton Gordon (1964:186-87), who wrote that,

...the Jews arrived in America with middle-class values of thrift, sobriety, ambition, desire for education, ability to postpone immediate gratifications for the sake of long-range goals, and aversion to violence already internalized...It is these cultural values which account for the rapid rise of the Jewish group in occupational status and economic affluence.

A structuralist perspective produces a different narrative of Euro-immigrant social mobility. Left out of the cultural narrative is the fact of collective struggle— bloc voting,

unionism, mob violence, intimidation and the outright refusal of Euro-Americans to comply with laws. In their climb up the socioeconomic ladder and as they competed for resources, European immigrants mobilized themselves as white people demanding what W. E. B. Dubois (1935) referred to as the “wages of whiteness”—jobs, jobs with good benefits, neighborhoods and schools reserved for whites, but just as important, the psychological wages of being seen as white and not as black. As Noel Ignatiev (1995:3) wrote in the case of the Irish, being seen as white meant that instead of being confined to certain jobs and to virtual slavery, they could compete for jobs in all spheres. They also won the right to “sell themselves piecemeal instead of being sold for life...to be tried by a jury of their peers, to live wherever they could afford, and to spend, without racially imposed restrictions, whatever money they managed to acquire.”

Government policies and macro-economic processes also contributed to the upward mobility of Euro-immigrants. Karen Brodtkin (2002), who looked at the extraordinary upward mobility of Jews, has taken issue with the bootstrap narrative of the group’s achievements. She argues that while Jews did value education and hard work, it was the post WWII opportunities available primarily to Euro-males that secured their upward mobility. They pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, but with a great deal of help from the federal government.

Another aspect of the "bootstrap" narrative of Euro-immigrants' success is the notion that they were eager to assimilate into the mainstream and to adopt dominant values and norms. This image, however, is probably an overstatement since it is not quite borne out

by the historical record. For instance, in their own analysis of this claim, Perlmann and Waldinger (1998) examined contemporary studies of early Euro-immigrants and concluded that they did possess an "oppositional culture," which came out of their working-class experience and not from exposure to stigmatized native-born minorities.

The structural perspective indicates, then, that is problematic to attribute the success of Euro-immigrants to their values and mores, and to the idea of the United States as a meritocracy according to which willingness to work and study is recognized and rewarded. The attraction to individual effort and cultural explanations remains alive, however, and is manifested in new immigrant studies. A similar bootstrap narrative—model minorities—of upward mobility is articulated for some new immigrants. This model minority thesis crosses discursive domains to include politicians and social commentators, historians, newspaper reporters and the immigrants themselves.

Model Minorities: Cubans and West Indians

The model minority narrative has a number of components that are quite similar to the Horatio Alger myth: it claims success for some immigrant groups and it attributes their success at least in part to their cultural behaviors and attitudes. We can begin to assess this narrative with reference to two of these model minority groups: Cubans and West Indians.

Cubans

The dominant view of Cuban immigrants is that they are a successful group, and that they achieved success at least partly because as Cubans they have cultural attributes that are advantageous. The Cuban success story crosses discursive domains, with George Gilder (1984:95) attributing their success to an "upsurge of their own productive effort;" José Llanes (1982:29-30) to the "apparent absence of value conflict and similarities in race, class and backgrounds between the refugees and their hosts;" and Alejandro Portes (1969; 1995) to the early exiles' "spirit of entrepreneurship" and "middle-class and individualistic-utilitarian ethic" and to the group's ethnic solidarity "grounded in common cultural memory."

Second-generation Cubans are also portrayed as successful, and especially so by proponents of the segmented assimilation model. Indeed, Cubans is one of the groups that form the basis of the segmented assimilation paradigm. In his development of the paradigm, Alejandro Portes (1995) compared the high educational achievement of Cuban children with the low achievement of Haitian children. The Cuban youth are successful, he argued, because they are optimistic about achieving. They are optimistic because the enclave protects them from discrimination by the larger society and provides them with the resources of their ethnic group. Also important in Cuban youth success, the segmented model posits, is the protection the enclave affords *from* native minorities. Ensnared within the enclave, parents can prevent their children from associating with native minorities and therefore from adopting those groups' oppositional stance toward

mainstream society. This combination of social capital and traditional values leads them to feel optimistic about achieving and to be upwardly mobile.

The Cuban success story is apparently more complicated, however. While in the aggregate they are more successful than other minority groups, disaggregated a different picture emerges. For example Pérez-Stable et al (1993) found that in 1970 only about 20 percent of Cuban immigrants conformed to the success story. They also found that Cuban American educational attainment between 1970 and 1988 didn't really fit the success story model either. Cuban educational attainment was much closer to African American than to white Americans: 67 percent compared to 88 percent for white Americans.

The cultural explanation for Cuban émigrés' success has also been challenged. Pérez-Stable et al (1993) acknowledged the skills the émigrés brought with them as a factor in their success; the émigrés, for example, did have experience in manufacturing because of the development of an industrial belt of manufacturing firms in Havana in the 1940s and 1950s. What was more important in their success, however, was the fact that they arrived in Florida at a time when Florida was developing its own industrial belt. They also were able to build the enclave because some came with money, had North American and South American business contacts that got them loans based on their record in Cuba, and some received funds from the sale of illegal drugs, the CIA and the Federal government's very generous economic assistance program (Stable and Uriate, 1993).

Pedraza-Bailey's (1988) comparison of Mexican and Cuban immigrants also questions

the culture explanation. She found that there was no significant difference in the socioeconomic profile of both groups before the Cuban Revolution. After the revolution, however, Cubans became political refugees, and this is when the socioeconomic differences between Mexicans and Cubans developed. It was as political immigrants, then, that the “value of being Cuban” increased. As discussed above the post-1959 émigrés benefited enormously from the Cuban Refugee Program, described by Masud-Piloto (1998:54) as “the largest, longest running, and most expensive aid program for refugees from Latin America ever undertaken by the United States.” Thus Cuban immigrants stand as a remarkable example of the role of the policies of governmental and civic institutions on a local and national level in the creation of citizen subjects.

The second-generation “success” is also questionable. New data has come to light that indicates less success and therefore should disrupt the cultural narrative of Cuban success and native minority failure that is advanced by the segmented assimilation model. The data for the segmented assimilation paradigm partly came out of the “Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study,” a multifaceted investigation of the educational performance and social, cultural and psychological adaptation of children of immigrants. This study began in 1992, and includes youth from seventy-seven nationalities from southern California and southern Florida. The youth were initially surveyed in eighth and ninth grades, and then three years later as seniors in high school (Rumbaut et al, 2001). The more recent survey found that Cuban youth had “below-average grades and the highest drop out rate in the sample” (Pérez, 2001:118). In summarizing the findings on Cuban youth, Lisandro Pérez wrote (2001:118), “Cubans are moving away from the

model of academic achievement that characterizes most immigrant children and starting to follow the mainstream American pattern in which aspiration remains high, as does confidence that resources will be available for upward mobility without extraordinary effort.” Surprisingly these findings do not disrupt the discourse around the segmented assimilation claims about the role of an oppositional culture in impeding the social mobility of native minorities. Apparently when Cuban children do not perform well they are following mainstream American patterns, but when Haitian children do not perform well they are following African American oppositional cultural patterns.

Cuban Identity and Inter-Group Relations

What, then, is the meaning of Cuban identity, and of what social significance is Cuban ethnicity? Government and civic institutions in the United States play an important role in the construction of Cuban ethnicity, in the nature of Cuban identity and in the relationship between Cubans and other groups, particularly African Americans.

The assistance and support the refugees received from U.S. government and civic leaders invested Cuban-ness with symbolic and social capital; it made being Cuban rewarding. This support was also very important in the establishment of a successful enclave in Miami. In turn, the enclave has played a significant role in the development and continued reproduction of Cuban ethnic group formation and identity. For instance as some scholars have noted the enclave’s institutional completeness insulates members and might therefore be a significant barrier to their integration into the dominant society. This is manifested for example in language. Several studies show that most Cubans in Miami

use only Spanish at home and in many of their daily activities; in 1980, one-third reported speaking English not well or not at all (Pérez, 1992).

Cuban ethno-genesis and the nature of Cuban identity is also a product of exile processes:

“Another factor that retards the process of acculturation among Cubans in Miami, especially important in the early stages of the exodus, is the perception many U.S. Cubans have of themselves as migrants, compelled to leave their country, but expecting to return. They consequently have little desire or motivation to assimilate into this society” (Pérez, 1992:93). Exile ideology is a central theme in Cuban ethnic identity and it is constantly being reproduced by influential leaders and the enclave media (Pérez, 1992; Croucher, 1997). Though rarely mentioned, the discrimination Cubans have faced, especially from Miami Anglos, has also led them to close ranks, and reinforce a “we/they” perspective (Moreno, 1996)

Government policies have also shaped the relationship Cubans have with other groups in their environment. In Miami, the support the exiles received has created tension between Cubans and African Americans, a tension which in turn influences how my informants self-identified. This—inter-group relations and the identity of Cuban immigrants—is the central focus of this study.

Writing Race into the Cuban Narrative

A part of the reason why Cubans are represented as a model minority group, and why there is a popular narrative about Cuban ethnic solidarity, is the tendency among some

scholars to homogenize immigrant groups and to rely on aggregate data. Disaggregated, a different picture begins to emerge. This is particularly the case when the group is broken down along racial lines. This dissertation makes race a central variable in assessing socioeconomic achievement and ethno-racial identity. There is some research that already hints at race. For instance, there is evidence that black Cubans are residentially segregated from white Cubans, that they are less likely to be employed in the Miami enclave, and they are not doing as well as their white co-ethnics. Silvia Pedraza (1996: 275), for instance, wrote that based on 1990 census data, “while only 14 percent of White Cubans fall below the poverty line, 35 percent of Black Cubans and 23 percent of racially-mixed Cubans fall below the poverty line—figures that compare most closely to the poverty rates among Black Americans and Puerto Ricans in the United States.”

The existing data also indicate that black Cubans who came in the Mariel boatlift in 1980 fare worse than their white counterparts. For instance, Aguirre et al (1997) found that black Mariel exiles were more likely to be incarcerated than their white counterparts. And in their study of Mariel exiles in 1983, Portes and Stepick (1985) found that black exiles from the Mariel boatlift were also more likely to be poor and to be under employed and unemployed than their white counterparts and less likely to be employed in the Miami Cuban enclave. A more recent study illustrates that this inequity continued into the 1980s: in her analysis of the 1990 Census, Emily Skop (2001) found that black Mariel exiles earned less than white Mariel exiles, and that the former were more likely to live below the poverty line.

A comparison of black and white Cubans' socioeconomic status offers a unique opportunity to explore the influence of culture and structure on social mobility. Because Cubans are a multiracial group who presumably share the same culture and both are immigrants, we should be able to hold culture constant and examine the effects of race. If culture and identity even partly explain social mobility, black Cubans should be doing about as well as their white co-ethnics. If there are socioeconomic differences, it should at least give pause to the certainty and frequency with which culture is used to even partially explain *group* mobility. The findings from this study suggest that black Cubans are not doing as well as white Cubans. Not only do black Cubans in New York and Florida seem to do worse than their white co-ethnics in these states, but on some socioeconomic indicators they also do worse than the black population as a whole. Deconstructed, the narrative of Cuban success is less tenable, and therefore the models of immigrant adaptation that they have been used to construct should be reconsidered.

West Indians

Like Cubans, West Indians are often portrayed as a successful immigrant group, and their success attributed to their culture and identity. Hence we have Dennis Forsythe (1983) attributing their success to their Protestant Ethic, and Glazer and Moynihan (1970) to their spirit of entrepreneurship. As with Cuban immigrants some scholars use variations of the segmented assimilation model to explain the immigrants' success, linking cultural values and attitudes to the success of their children.

One example of this perspective is Kalmijin's (1996) explanation for the differences in

the socioeconomic status of U.S.-born British Caribbean men, foreign-born British Caribbean men and African American men. He found that foreign-born British Caribbean men were not doing significantly better than African Americans, even though they had higher status jobs, but that U.S.-born British Caribbean men did better than their foreign-born counterparts and African American men. In explaining these differences Kalmijin advanced a structural explanation for why some of these men *don't do* well, but a cultural explanation for why others *do* well. Thus the reason he gave why the foreign-born were not doing much better than African Americans is that they faced racism. His explanation, however, for why the U.S.-born British Caribbean men were doing better than African American men is cultural— U.S.-born British Caribbean men had not assimilated:

“Cultural assimilation may be mitigated by the influence that immigrants have on their children. More specifically, Caribbean immigrants may transmit their orientation toward hard work and achievement by emphasizing the importance of schooling for their children”(Kalmijin, 1996:928). Hence, while Kalmijin did give a nod to the advantages that might have accrued to these men because their immigrant parents had higher educational levels than African Americans, had established ethnic niches and were preferred by white employers, he ended up with a cultural explanation for their success. Moreover, he also attributed the “positive” traits of these men, even those who had been here for more than two generations, to West Indian culture rather than to African American or even American culture.

Another example of this perspective is Mary Waters’ (1999) study of West Indian immigrants and their children. Waters’ study is very important because it examines both

first and second-generation immigrants. Waters concluded from her study of the first generation that the relative success of these immigrants compared with African Americans is not a function of *cultural* differences between African Americans and West Indians. She argued instead that the differences in achievement are a function of the groups' different *attitude* toward mainstream society, racism and achieving. Following Ogbu's oppositional culture model, she proposed that West Indian immigrants view the norms of the dominant society more positively, are optimistic about achieving and believe strongly that individual effort can overcome racial barriers. African Americans, on the other hand, have an oppositional stance toward mainstream society, are pessimistic about achieving and do not believe that individual effort can overcome racial barriers.

When Waters interviewed second-generation West Indians she found that middle-class youth were more likely to be optimistic about achieving and to be upwardly mobile, and low-income youth were more likely to be pessimistic about achieving and were not upwardly mobile. In a formula much like segmented assimilation she posited a cause and effect relationship between the identities of the youth, their attitudes about achieving, and their social mobility trajectory. The majority of the middle-class youth was ethnically identified and had adopted their parents' optimistic attitude toward achieving. This, Waters reasoned, is because their middle-class parents were able to protect their children within immigrant institutions, to pass on their positive attitude toward achieving and to keep them away from inner city African American youth. The majority of low-income youth, on the other hand, were African American identified and had adopted the oppositional culture of African Americans. Thus, unlike her middle-class respondents,

low-income youth were pessimistic about achieving and doomed to failure. This occurred, Waters argued, because low-income parents lived in inner-city neighborhoods with poor African Americans, and were not able to protect their children and pass on their optimism about achieving.

Though Waters did discuss the role of social class in the youth's attitude toward achieving, for example the quality of schools in poor urban communities, she also saw identity as important—those who were ethnically identified had the right attitude for success, and those who were African American identified had an oppositional stance toward mainstream society. In their evaluation of the oppositional culture paradigm Perlmann and Waldinger (1998) remarked on this tendency to turn what is a class issue into an ethnic one:

Though the context for the discussion...is ethnic, the explanatory factors seem to be of a different nature, having to do with the disarticulation between schools, on the one hand, and the world of manual work to which immigrant children were destined, on the other. That disconnection breeds revolt: working class children perceive that school has little to do with their chances in life, and they also react against the middle-class culture of the school and its denigration of working-class life and labor.

Don Robotham (2002:969) made a similar point in his review of Water's monograph:

If the issue is one of the operation of labor markets, then the problem has little to do with the adoption of attitudes, oppositional or no. Much larger forces...are at work, perpetually consigning a huge chunk of the population (West Indian, African American, and white) to the bottom of the labor market and the ethnic and racial hierarchy, attitude or no.

Narratives such as those produced by Waters and Kalmijin indicate a strong anti-African American bias. Though there are plenty of disclaimers, these scholars do not adequately

acknowledge the strides made by African Americans. They might also be contributing to pathologizing discourses of African American culture, homogenizing African American cultures, and perpetuating a somewhat romantic notion of West Indian culture. Nancy Foner (2005) has made an important observation about the tendency among scholars and other observers in the United States to attribute West Indian success to their cultural values or attitudes. According to her, it is the mere presence of African Americans that leads to this phenomenon. In London, in contrast, there are no native blacks, and West Indians are “the structural equivalent of American blacks.” Thus, while in New York, West Indians commonly feel superior, and assimilation into African American culture blamed for any “dysfunctionality” the immigrants exhibit, this is not the case in London. There it is West Indian culture which is pathologized and demonized: “when reasons are sought by social workers and others for social problems among African Caribbean youth in Britain—under achieving children, delinquency, or ‘dysfunctionality’—West Indian homeland culture and institutions, particularly lone parent families, are often among the factors blamed” (Foner, 2005: 116-127).

A different sort of narrative about the socioeconomic status of West Indian immigrants emerges from a structural perspective. A number of scholars paint a much more complex picture of West Indian success. Suzanne Model (1991; 1995), for instance, has concluded that West Indian immigrants are not as successful as the model minority narrative claims. Kasinitiz (1992) also found that not all West Indians are successful, even though they all come from the same culture. West Indian women have had a higher labor force participation rate than African American women, but this difference is grounded in

structural factors. Central to their achievement, Kasintiz notes, is their successful establishment of ethnic niches, particularly in the low-wage sectors of New York's labor market—nursing homes and domestic service. But as Kasintiz explained, these women were able to establish these niches because of the dynamics of the labor market. For instance the demand for child-care and household employment was because of the increase in the labor force participation of middle-class women during the 1970s.

The picture is different for those West Indians who went into the public sector and the construction industry. The public sector began shrinking in the 1980s and continues to do so, while racism and cronyism in the construction industry makes it a vulnerable sector. As a result, despite being from the same "culture" the socioeconomic profile of men who work in these industries might not be as rosy as the women in nursing and domestic service. Disaggregating the group yielded different results, and contradicts the generalized image of West Indian success.

Another researcher who takes up the issue of West Indian success is Milton Vickerman (1999). Vickerman's study is particularly important because he addresses the above-mentioned claim that West Indian immigrants' success proves that racism is not an adequate explanation for the plight of African Americans; since West Indians are black, and are successful, racism is apparently not a barrier to social mobility. Vickerman argues that West Indians do have the cultural attitudes normally seen as conducive to success. They have been socialized in their home societies by an ideology of non-racialism to downplay race; they come from societies with black majorities, which have imparted a degree of self-confidence; they have a belief in the efficacy of education; they

are socialized to believe in achievement through individual effort. Yet, according to empirical studies there isn't a major difference between their socioeconomic status and that of African Americans, and both groups are equally disadvantaged compared with white men. Why are they not more successful? According to Vickerman (1999:120), racism is a significant barrier to their social mobility:

If West Indians say anything about the place of African Americans in American society it is not that race is now unimportant. Rather it is that race remains crucial and intertwines with other key factors impinging on socioeconomic status—e.g., presence in ethnic niches that are expanding or contracting; years of schooling and schooling in particular disciplines; and intangibles such as self-confidence, deferral of gratification, and persistence.

Black Immigrants: Identities and Intra-Black Relations

The formation of black immigrants' identities is another area of research. Here, the literature is primarily focused on West Indian immigrants. Researchers have identified significant shifts beginning in the late 1970s in West Indian immigrants' ethnic group formation: the establishment of civic and cultural organizations and an immigrant press that encouraged and expressed this national and ethnic awareness, and the appearance of West Indian politicians who assert West Indian interests.

Researchers identify several factors in the development of West Indian ethnic group formation (Foner, 2005; Basch et al, 1994; Vickerman, 1999; Waters, 1999; Kasinitz, 1992; Green et al, 1992). One is the dramatic increase in the numbers of West Indian immigrants as a result of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. This Act, which equalized quotas for all immigrants, initiated a mass migration from the Caribbean and created a critical mass of West Indians in some cities, particularly New York City. One

consequence of this is that it is very likely that West Indian immigrants live in communities with one another, and work and socialize with one another (Foner, 2005).

The second factor in West Indian ethnic group formation is the changes in the ways in which groups are incorporated into the U.S. society, and the ways the state distributes resources (Green et al, 1992; Basch et al, 1994; Kasinitz, 1992). The institution of cultural and structural pluralism, post -1960s, encourages groups to petition the state for resources as ethnic groups, and politicians appeal to groups as ethnic groups. This encourages ethnic group formation, as well as competition among groups.

Hegemonic institutions and agents have played a significant role in forging a West Indian ethnic identity, and a separation between West Indians and African Americans. For instance, in New York City, Mayor Koch's Commissions on Black New Yorkers and on Ethnic Affairs had separate African American and West Indian representatives (Kasinitz, 1992). White politicians also courted West Indian vote by strategically emphasizing West Indian cultural symbols and courting West Indian voluntary organizations (Green et al, 1992; Basch et al, 1994; Kasinitz, 1992). Politicians from the immigrants' homelands also encourage these immigrants to gain empowerment by participating in the U.S. political process as black ethnics (Basch et al, 1994).

A third contributing factor in West Indian ethnic group formation is the economic and social insecurity these immigrants experience in the United States. According to Basch et al (1994), the economic policies associated with globalization makes it difficult to live in

their home societies, pushing them to core countries such as the United States. In the United States, they are faced with deindustrialization and severe cuts in social welfare programs, which leads both foreign and native-born groups to feel economically insecure, and to compete with one another for resources. According to Basch et al (1994), the racism they experience in core countries also leaves new immigrants to feel “socially” insecure. Remaining connected to their homeland, and to their ethnic or national identity is essentially an exit option for these black immigrants. Thus, it is as impoverished and insecure populations compete with one another that they construct ethnic boundaries:

Their (West Indian immigrants) transnational practices cannot be attributed solely to affective ties, cultural practices, or to lingering political attachments... their continuing social and economic ties to their home countries are in large part a response to the West Indians’ continuing experience of economic and racial marginalization in New York City (Basch et al, 1994:75).

Research indicates that West Indian ethnic group formation and identity involves a separation between the immigrants and African Americans. The immigrants themselves make this distinction, and according to Vickerman (1999), the larger society is beginning to make these distinctions as well. Contributing to this separation, some scholars argue, are some cultural differences between these two groups. Rogers (2001), Vickerman (1999) and Waters (1999), for example, share the perspective that West Indians have what Rogers (2001) refers to as a different “cognitive frame of reference” from African Americans. By this they mean that they experience different forms of racism and consequently have different responses.

African Americans have faced unrelenting racism, which leads them to be deeply pessimistic about individual effort, and instead to support collective effort and

government intervention as the path to upward mobility. The racial experiences of African Americans also lead them to a linked racial fate outlook and a highly politicized racial group consciousness.

West Indians, on the other hand, are socialized in black dominant societies where a muted racism coexists with ample opportunities for blacks. They are also socialized to believe in the efficacy of individual effort rather than collective efforts in achieving upward mobility. Thus in the United States these immigrants respond to racism differently from African Americans: West Indians are optimistic about achieving through individual rather than collective efforts; they do not have a linked racial fate outlook; and though they have a black identity, it is not a politicized racial identity.

These scholars are correct in pointing to the different forms racism takes, and the different opportunities open to West Indians versus African Americans in their respective homelands. However, there are a number of problems with this formulation. First, though it captures important aspects of African American political traditions, it tends to portray African American culture in one-dimensional terms. As previously discussed for the “oppositional culture” paradigm, theories that ignore African Americans’ tradition of self-help and commitment to the tenets of individualism are too one-dimensional. Second, this construction of cultural differences between West Indian and African American culture does not adequately explain the behaviors and political attitudes of earlier West Indian immigrants. These early immigrants were also socialized in black dominant societies and in the tenets of individualism, yet many joined forces with

African Americans in a collective pan-African effort to fight against racial oppression (James, 1998).

Another problem with this portrayal of differences between West Indians and African Americans is that by emphasizing West Indian immigrants' individualistic responses this paradigm tends to downplay the immigrants' *collective* efforts in their quest for upward mobility. In other words, in the United States West Indians do not only seek upward mobility through individual effort, but also by mobilizing as ethnics and by highlighting their ethnicity. Their formation of an ethnic bloc is a collective strategy to access material and symbolic resources (Kasinitz, 1992; Green et al 1992; Basch et al, 1994).

There are also societal forces which bring native and foreign born blacks together. Vickerman (1999), Waters (1999) and Rogers (2001) find that a minority of West Indian immigrants and their children come to feel an affinity with African Americans, to exhibit a politicized racial group consciousness, and to support a pan-African path to black liberation rather than an ethnic path. Vickerman (1999) and Waters (1999) argue that these individuals come to this position because of the overwhelming force of racism in the United States; their experiences with racism eventually turns them "racial." These scholars posit that social class is a significant variable in their development of a politicized racial identity. Vickerman (1999), who found that it was his middle-class informants who were most "racial," argued that it was because they experienced racism more directly. His middle-class informants tended to compete more directly with whites and to move in white dominated spaces. They were also the most bitter since they had

played by the rules— acquired the right credentials— but still found their paths blocked. Waters (1999) on the other hand, found that it was the low-income, second-generation West Indian youth who were aligned with a racial outlook, and who were African American identified. She argued that it was in part their more direct experiences with racism, police brutality for instance, that led to this outlook. Their identification with African Americans was also facilitated by their close proximity to inner-city African Americans, with whom they lived and socialized.

My study suggests, however, that though racism is a significant contributor to the development of a racialized consciousness, it might not be the whole picture. In his study of West Indians, Reuel Rogers (2001) proposed a link between information/socialization and racial group consciousness. He argued that some of his West Indian informants had developed a similar frame of reference to African Americans because of their exposure to African American information networks. Here, Rogers relied on Dawson's (2001) formulation of the role of black information networks—churches, colleges, social clubs, community organizations, news media and black magazines— in socializing African Americans to a linked racial fate outlook and a highly politicized racial group consciousness. The idea is that racism itself does not necessarily lead to a highly politicized racial group consciousness, not even for African Americans. This response is more likely to be a function of socialization. My research explores this link between black information networks and racial group consciousness.

Above I reviewed some of the social science literature on native and foreign-born populations which relate to ethno-racial identity and social mobility. I discussed those paradigms that propose cultural explanations for group mobility. They do so by linking social mobility or the lack thereof to cultural values and mores, which in turn is linked to ethno-racial identity. I argued that cultural explanations mystify culture and obfuscate the structural factors that underlie social mobility, and ethnic and racial identities.

Chapter 3

Hyphenated Cubanidad

It's very insidious; it's not in your face. I can't even explain it. But when you sit back and you say, "Why am I acting this way?" "Why am I saying these things"? I'm walking away from who I am. And because of the human need to belong, to be accepted.

In Chapter 1, I described some of the interactions between the study's participants and their white co-ethnics, particularly the racial discrimination they experienced. In this chapter I will discuss how these racialized experiences affected their relationship with their white co-ethnics, and shaped the ways in which they identified. To do this I employ the following labels: Black-Cuban (Negro-Cubano), Afro-Cuban (Afro-Cubano) and Cuban-Black (Cuban-Negro). As I explained in the "Introduction" these labels came to my attention early in the study when a participant told me he self-identified as Negro-Cubano (Black-Cuban) rather than as Cubano-Negro (Cuban-Black), which signals the priority he gives to his racial over his national identity. I then began to ask other participants to choose, and most did. The discussions that occurred as individuals explained their choice to me are central to this dissertation. In these discussions they reflected on their relationship with other groups in their environment and expressed their political views. It is in this way that I also see the labels as ethno-racial categories or identities. In the rest of this dissertation I use these categories to describe their identities, i.e., their relationships with other groups and their political perspectives.

The chapter is arranged as follows: The section entitled "Hyphenated Cubanidad," analyzes and describes their identity in relation to their white co-ethnics. I make the case

that their hyphenated identity is an indication of the distinction they make between themselves and their white co-ethnics.²¹ They have what W E B Dubois (1899, 1961) long ago identified for African Americans as a “double consciousness.” The second section, “Ethnic Path?” takes up the issue of their access to the social and symbolic capital which has been described for their ethnic group, and which has made Cubans the most successful Latin American origin group in the United States. Here, I argue that as a group black Cubans do not benefit from their group’s social and symbolic capital, especially because of the response of their white co-ethnics. The final section examines one of the other community and identity options they have: being Hispanic or Latino. Here, I demonstrate that this too was not the most viable option for most.

Hyphenated Cubanidad: Black-Cuban; Afro-Cuban; Cuban-Black

All of this study’s subjects self-identified as Cuban. For them there was no doubt they were Cuban, and they had no choice in the matter. Being Cuban was a matter of fact: They were born in Cuba and socialized by Cuban parents and Cuban social norms. Most were patriotic, having been socialized into the intensely nationalistic culture that has characterized Cuban society since the country won its independence from Spain in 1898. One woman who left Cuba in 1950 put it simply: “Once a Cuban, always a Cuban... For us the best place to live was Cuba... We thought we were better than everybody else.”

However, the labels also indicate that they saw themselves as distinct from their white co-ethnics, hence the racial signifiers—Afro and Negro. Theirs, therefore, is a hyphenated identity, which suggests that they hold a minority group consciousness. It is

²¹ Thanks to Don Robotham for bringing this very important point to my attention

also an identity that rejects a non-racialized vision of Cubanidad, and which thwarts the attempts by some white Cubans to create a myth of Cuban unity and racial harmony.

Despite the rhetoric of racial fraternity, racial tension and cleavage is evident.

Racial cleavage is evident in my informants' physical, and social and political estrangement from their white co-ethnics. Most of my informants did not live among white Cubans. They either did not live in South Florida or those who lived in South Florida, lived in Broward County or in North Miami. The majority of my informants in New York told me they would not live in Miami because of racism. Several had personal stories of the discrimination they had experienced while living or visiting Miami, or had heard from others. One black Cuban man who grew up in the enclave and left as a young man told me that it was easier to be a black man in America than among white Cubans. Another man who initially settled in Miami and then left for the Northeast told me of the time he was ignored in a Cuban restaurant for twenty minutes while others who came in after him were served. He eventually told the waitress he had the "same blood as these people, felt the same as these people," and that he was just as hungry as they. He demanded to be served immediately or he was going to call the police. The waitress "created a scene," and so he left. He then stood by his car (actually his sister's new car), which was parked in front of the restaurant, knowing, he said, that they would be impressed that he was "no lowlife." Ultimately, he concluded, "it doesn't matter whether I am a lowlife or not, Cuban or not, I am a person and I have rights."

While some participants in Florida made a conscious decision to live in non-Cuban areas because of racism, others maintained that their housing choice was not motivated by anti-

black racism; they lived in black or “multicultural” areas because they liked it there. One informant told me he did not want his children to be surrounded by the “exile culture” that, he argued, dominate in Cuban areas. Others, however, directly linked racism to their housing choice. In the excerpt below Nicolás explains this. His response also demonstrates the limitations residential placed on their experiences:

Nicolás: Let me give you an experience. After I first came here in 1980 and spent two weeks with my father, he was living in a very bad area (Carol City). So he kept on telling me, "well, whoever don't want to come to see me here in the barracon; it's up to them"

MH: The barracon! The barracon is where the slaves lived; so was it a very black area, that's why he said it?

Nicolás: No. It's the type of building that look like that...it was a dangerous neighborhood... Everything was available: drugs, sex. I invited them out for a nice dinner. It doesn't matter what you eat, but I just wanted to take them out. My half-brother drove me around and we went down to Bayside, and that place is beautiful. So I said, let me bring these guys here, show them something nice in Miami. The only thing they know in Miami is where they live and Roy Rogers...Reluctantly they agreed and we driving, "But where we going? We don't have to go so far to eat." When we got down to Bayside the guy panicked, "What are we doing here?" He nearly suffered a heart attack. "What are we doing down area? This is white people land. You always creating all of these problems." And we had was to get out of that area. They're still afraid of the master. We had dinner in a Howard Johnson.

Most participants, especially those who lived in New York, did not have white Cubans as close friends. The participants who were more likely to socialize with white Cubans were the middle-class Miamians, largely because white Cubans dominate in Miami, and it was not easy to avoid them. From their narratives, their estrangement from white Cubans seemed to be a reaction to white Cubans' rejection. Consider the following exchange between two middle-class women:

Ana: I go wherever I wanna go and I don't care if anybody is looking at me. But most of the time I will be the only black in the place.

Liliana: I think you make a statement by going. I think that our parents, not my

parents because they lived in Union City, but my aunts and uncles and many of the black people that I know that have been here for a long time, they didn't go to many places...because they felt like, these are the kinda people that would have excluded us in Cuba. We don't wanna mingle with them because what if they do something to us that we don't like. So they wouldn't even put themselves out there.

Some middle-class Miami participants did have white Cubans friends, but their friendships rarely crossed over into interracial dating and marriage. Only one of the participants was married to a white Cuban, and only three reported dating white Cubans. I found a situation similar to what Winddance Twine (1998) found in Brazil: the belief that Brazilians are more willing to enter into interracial marriage and dating, even though the incidence of interracial marriage appears to be low. Several of the women in my study felt that black Cubans are more willing than African Americans to enter into interracial marriage, even while they knew of very few such couples. Apparently, as Winddance Twine (1998) also found in Brazil, blacks are more willing to enter into interracial marriage, while whites actively resist it (see Nadine Fernández's (1996) research on interracial marriage in Cuba). White Cubans' resistance to interracial marriage was very upsetting for several of the black Cubans in my study. Liliana is one of the few who told me she felt completely comfortable with, and accepted by, white Cubans. She also told me that the racial situation in Miami has changed considerably with the arrival of new Cubans, those from the Mariel boatlift and since. New immigrants had fewer "hang-ups" about race. However, Liliana felt that intermarriage was still the "ultimate taboo," especially for the "older ones and the upper class:"

MH: Do you think Afro Cubans have faced different barriers here than white Cubans? Are there barriers that are unique to Afro Cubans?

Liliana: I think maybe the whole issue of being put down or being the victim of racism by your own people.

MH: More so than by Anglos?

Liliana: Yes. That hurts, and it hurts more because it's like it's your own culture. I once asked a friend in New Jersey, we got into the issue of race and Cubans... she was white... I said to her... because she was defending the fact that she wasn't racist but that she understood that there were differences. And I said, "like what? For instance if my brother fell in love with your sister would you object?" And she said yes. I admired her because she was honest. And she said, "there are just differences." And I said, "but tell me which differences. We eat the same rice and beans. We talk the same language. They were probably born within miles of each other in Havana." And it was... we go back to color... it was color. It was the idea of the intermarriage and having children of mixed race. When that happened... racism is always tough and being the victim of racism is always tough... but when it's your own people it's very sad.

Though seemingly less common, some blacks also rejected white Cuban partners. Several participants, men and women of all social classes, told me they would not seek out a white partner because they knew they would get a hard time from the white families. Some of the women also felt that white Cuban men saw them as sexual objects, and some families rejected interracial love for precisely this reason. Two women told me their fathers had insisted that they not have anything to do with white men because they are only interested in sex, and not marriage, with black women. One of these women, who was the only informant married to a white Cuban, described what she went through when she introduced her then boyfriend to her father:

My current husband is white. You have to see what I did to him for 6 years. You know he's a good man, but he's white! My father don't like white people. He was a racist also. I never told my father "this is my husband." I told my mother and she tell it to my father. When he (her boyfriend) came I introduced him. (Her father said), "Have a seat here...you see, this is my daughter. How I know you not coming to pass the time and you're not going to stay too long with this girl?" Because the white people coming to look for the black people to pass the time.

Several respondents in Miami described their social estrangement as occurring when they began to socialize and date:

After I finished high school I think I had to make a conscious decision. I was living in Miami. I saw how the Cubans reacted to me so I had to decide: Do I live life as a Cuban or as a black person? Dating, for example, I could not date a white Cuban girl and at the time there were not... I did not know any black Cuban women. I was an athlete so... I'm thinking I migrated to African Americans because I had to socialize.

One area of social life where there is racial intermingling is Santeria ceremonies.

Apparently in Miami white Cubans dominate in the religion, and it was not easy to avoid being around them. I did attend two ceremonies in Miami where there were no white Cubans, but this probably was because the ceremonies were in the non-Cuban areas of North Miami. The conversation excerpted below captures several issues, including the stress some felt around white Cubans and their consciousness of themselves as a minority:

Liliana: Michelle don't be fooled by this, Santeria is a white man's religion, in exile, okay. It's 80 percent white... It's formidable when you go to an event and 80 percent of the people are white.

Miriam: How do you deal with it? Because I have difficulty dealing with the whiteness. I need psychological therapy when I leave. It's like, no shit! It's okay, Miriam, we can handle this! Usually the tamberos (drummers) are black and then 90 percent of the others are white, you know. ... my madrina who is white is very intelligent, but when you hear racist comments...

MH: They're making racist comments?

Miriam: You have a group of hundreds of people somebody is bound to, and I remain quiet.

MH: Isn't that kind of amazing that they can take part in this religion...

Miriam: Oh yeah, and still be racist. And you sit there and you say, what is my choice here? On your head you have a black thing;²² it's like give me a break! But no, no, no. The social piece and the religious piece overlap, but at some point I do remember I am here for the religion; the social piece, leave it alone because you hear it all the time. I really think that we black Cubans have such an experience of being burnt that we don't raise a voice. We don't even comment on anything that belongs to us. I was at this bembé (a Santeria ceremony) and all the tamberos were black Cubans with one or two other black Cubans; the rest were white. And the men started getting into "I'm more Cuban than anybody." They got into asking everybody around the table about who is their Cuban hero. José Martí,

²² This is a reference to being mounted or possessed by a spirit, which is usually a black spirit.

Maceo por supuesto (of course). One tambero is sitting in the corner minding his own business...this is white Cuban stuff...and I go to him: “Quintín Banderas es mío” (Quintín Banderas is mine).²³ He’s like, “Yeah”, you know...Because it’s the black issue, black centered. That’s the one I said; forget about Maceo. Between the two of us we agree Quintín Banderas is our man, okay. You can’t say Quintín Banderas... because you become a divisionist, okay. This is the kind of thing. An African American can say my hero is Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and no white American is going to deny this. We cannot say, “My hero is an Afrocentric Cuban.” When are we gonna be able to say this?...The tambero and I agreed, but we were quiet. When are we going to be able to do this?

Their alienation from white Cubans can also be seen in their lack of support for the anti-Castro activities of the exile community. Most did not support the Cuban government, but they felt they had a different agenda from the majority of white exiles; they were concerned about the well-being of blacks in Cuba, and they did not think most white Cubans had the best interest of black people in mind. They did not trust white Cubans, they explained, because they knew they were racist in Cuba, and they had experienced racism from white Cubans in the United States as well. The following two excerpts capture their sentiments:

We don’t show up because we don’t trust things organized by whites. Black Cubans are not going to have a presence in things organized by white leaders. The unspoken experience of black Cubans whenever I listen to the older ones is that total distrust...black Cubans do not trust if it’s organized by whites because it’s a white agenda.

Recently the right-wing Cubans have discovered that there are black people in Cuba, and they are using this as a weapon to overthrow the Cuban government. I have no problem with them trying to overthrow the Cuban government...but they should do that on their own. Don’t use our people that were victimized by you while we were in Cuba now that we’re here.

²³ Quintín Banderas is the black Cuban general who was involved in what is known as La Guerrita de 1912 (the Little War of 1912) when black veterans of the Liberation Army organized to demand unpaid wages and access to jobs. Banderas was assassinated by the Cuban government in 1906 (Greenbaum, 2002).

The few occasions that they became involved confirmed for them their feeling that white Cubans did not accept them as Cuban, or had their best interest at heart. In a conversation with three women, one of them recounted her experience at a rally:

Many years ago the white Cubans were protesting the dialogue in Cuba and there was a march down 8th Street. Angela and I... Angela is darker than the three of us... and we get to this red light, there was these people gathering together to go to the march and one of the ladies I heard her saying in Spanish, "look, even the black Americans are coming to join us." Because they're no black Cubans! I got so...Angela had to calm me down. I would have gotten out of the car, but Angela is very calm. So Angela talked to them and told me shut up. I just said to the woman, "I speak Spanish as well as you do." And she said, "Oh!" And I said, "Yes, there were blacks in Cuba!"

Angela, in fact, was the participant who was most supportive of the anti-Castro activities of the exile community in Miami. Angela's experience illustrates how difficult it is for those participants who shared the exile community's hostility to Castro to participate in Miami politics. Over the years, Angela had patiently worked to build bridges with white Cubans both because she considers herself part of the Cuban community in exile and because of her concern for Cuba. She was often the only black person in Cuban and Hispanic organizations and she sometimes had difficult racial experiences. Angela expressed the feeling, however, that it was important for blacks to have a presence in order to "educate" people. Her patience is remarkable because she has had to tread carefully for fear of being accused of being disloyal, divisive and leftist. Here Angela explained how she was sanctioned when she founded an organization dedicated to integrating black and white Cubans. Though she saw herself as first and foremost Cuban, this white Cuban saw her as first and foremost "African:"

Angela: To create an organization led by a black woman in Miami was very, very difficult. I had a lot of enemies; people who had misconceptions about me, and the organization. Perhaps they thought I was a subversive group, I don't know... when you create an organization that is totally a strange one. It was creating a feeling that this is a leftist person that is here to create a problem for us. MH: This is what some of them thought?

Angela: Yes, because when I first came out in the newspaper (it was) in the wrong way because that was not my plan. One of the radio commentators said, "Look, *la africana de Liberty City vestida de verde Oscar de la Renta*. Let me explain that to you, "The African woman from Liberty City dressed in a green Oscar de la Renta." On the radio on my way to work the day after the picture came out in the newspaper the commentator said that...the purpose was anger because I talked about black Cubans in the article, that we wanted to be integrated into the community, etc. so that was not well received.

For a few of the participants, age affected how they identified. Some reported rejecting Cuban culture and identifying as Cuban in their youth. They assimilated into African American culture, especially the radical culture of the black liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They dated, married and socialized with African Americans, listened to African American music and wore clothing associated with African Americans. As some of them aged they found themselves coming to appreciate their Cuban roots and Cuban cultural forms. They returned to Cuban-ness, however, very much changed and unwilling to accept the racism they feel to be endemic in Cuban culture. They were indelibly marked by their radicalization, which lead them to evaluate their national culture critically and to more overtly challenge racism.²⁴ Ramón, for example, left Miami as a young man in disgust over racism from white Cubans, took part in the black liberation struggles of the 1970s, and assimilated into African American communities and culture: He lived in black neighborhoods, socialized mostly with African Americans and raised his children to be black. During the period of this research he returned to Miami to an

²⁴ Cruz-Janzen (2001: 174) describes her own "return" to her Puerto Rican and Latino roots in a similar fashion: "I am a Latinegra who will no longer accept the rejection and scorn of others, especially those Latinos who share my origin."

influential position. When we discussed the differences in Miami between his youth and now, he reminisced about the discrimination he experienced as a young man and concluded: “They (white Cubans) don’t do that now. They don’t mess with me. My body language indicates that you should not mess with me. I am not joking.”

These participants also “return” with a highly politicized racial group consciousness, such that though they are comfortable with Cuban culture, their political allegiance is to a larger black struggle. This is the direct result of their socialization into the radical political culture of the 1960s and 70s. But it is also the consequence of the conflict in Miami between blacks and Cubans. This will be explored fully in the following chapters. Suffice it to say here that this conflict made it difficult for Black Cuban-identified participants to easily reconcile these two parts of themselves, and some ended up choosing one over the other.

Ethnic Path?

The racial discrimination my informants experienced from some white Cubans raises questions about the availability of an ethnic option for them. Portes (1994; 1995) has argued that Cubans are relatively more successful in part because of their ethnic enclave in Miami. As Portes (1994:256) explains: “With their education and skills from the home country devalued in the host society’s labor market and facing pervasive discrimination by the native-born, immigrants have little recourse but to band together in search of moral support and economic survival.” According to Portes, Cubans can also benefit from the social capital their group has. They can call upon their co-ethnics for

employment and loans, for example. Thus there are concrete benefits to remaining Cuban-identified and living within the enclave.

Ethnographic Evidence

For black Cubans, however, this ethnic option may not be as viable. As a group they apparently do not have the same access to their group's social network system that their white co-ethnics have. Most of this study's participants felt that black Cubans do not directly benefit from the ethnic enclave: They are not employed in the enclave, do not live in the enclave and do not own businesses in the enclave. Most, in fact, felt it was to their disadvantage to remain in the enclave. One informant who left Miami in disgust put it this way:

When you're denying me my livelihood, education, that's another thing. Black Cubans leave. They're in New York, Michigan, Minnesota. That is disgraceful! Minnesota has a black Cuban restaurant and Miami doesn't. That's disgraceful! It is easier just being black in other parts of the country.

According to many of my informants who lived and/or worked in the Miami enclave, business is carried out largely through personal contact. Access to loans, contracts, employment and other resources is very much based on who you know and who likes you, and conformity, in terms of behavior and even appearance, becomes important. Many, especially professional women, felt enormous pressure to conform, wearing their hair in a particular way for example. This same system operates in Cuba where blacks' access to the tourist sector is limited by the requirement that employees have "*buena presencia*" (good presence). This essentially leaves most blacks out since this is a requirement that phenotype be as close to white as possible (de la Fuente, et al, 1997).

In Miami, *buena presencia* consists of both behavior and physical appearance, and is captured by the concept of *fino*. *Fino* refers to the ideal in both behavior and features, with this ideal being established by the dominant culture: white Cubans in Miami. To be *fino* is to look and behave European. Whites then are inherently much closer to *fino* than are blacks. Blacks are associated with inferior cultural practices like playing the drums and practicing Santeria. A dark skinned person, however, can be *fino* if that person has sharp features, straightens their hair, and/or is slim— what some women referred to as a "European body type." A *negro fino* is also someone who has European cultural behaviors, including musical taste, and speech patterns. In this way a black person can access the privileges associated with whites, such as employment and promotion. Conversely, dark skin individuals who are not *fino* because they do not dress, walk, talk, style their hair, or listen to the music associated with whites, are likely to be classified as black and treated disrespectfully.

Some participants argued that for Cubans class was more important than race; an idea captured by the saying, "money whitens." Indeed money could whiten because with money one could adopt the cultural behaviors and acquire the material possessions that would make one *fino*. Money did not always whiten, however. As one participant explained: "If you have very negroid features and you're a very black person, they might not want to give that to you, even if you have the education."

The association between the European behavior and appearance is exemplified by a conversation I had with Juan. Though not critical of it, Juan was very perceptive in his analysis of the mechanisms through which things European have come to be seen as the epitome of all things good. Juan was trying to explain to me how he came to identify with Spain as his motherland:

I guess it's...the really embedded life of the Spanish tradition imposed in Cuba, you understand? The clothing, the supposedly called "class act." Things like that, those were the things you grow up with. And you're kind of focusing to be like that because it's like the epitome of reaching the height... You want to have a house that looked like the best house in Cuba, which is traditional Spanish architecture. I want to be the best person that I can be... How can I put it? Look at Cuban nationality, how they are composed: Indians, black, Spanish. The Indians had their own way of life, which in comparison to somehow the modern type of living cannot be compared with the civilized Spaniard attitude. Africans that came to Cuba...were slaves. So, if you were to look upon being the best, or reaching to the top, you're not looking at the fact that I wanna be like el Indio, Athuey... You wanna be like, Don Jacinto whatchumacallit, that has a fantastic hacienda you know. That's what shows what is the best of the best.

The higher value awarded to whiteness and the lower value to blackness makes it almost necessary to be as close as possible to whiteness, both culturally and in appearance. The women in my study described the ways they must "disguise" their blackness in order to be accepted and treated respectfully by their white co-ethnics. To be accepted, they had to manipulate their physical appearance and behave in ways that placed them in an acceptable social category. One social category they had to avoid if they wanted respect was African American. Often if they were going shopping or out to a restaurant they had to dress in a manner that signaled they were Cuban, and not African American. It was stressful since it took time and energy that they did not always have, but they also experienced it as an assault on their personhood. On their jobs, the right appearance remained an issue even though their co-workers and employers would presumably know

they were Cuban. Their jobs also required other forms of conformity: not being too radical or racial. In the following discussion between four (all college educated, late forties to early fifties) women and myself, the women talked about the pressures they face and how difficult it is in Miami to be dark and have dark features:

Josefina: It's very insidious; it's not in your face; I can't even explain it. But when you sit back and you say, "Why am I acting this way?" "Why am I saying these things?" I'm walking away from who I am. And because of the human need to belong, to be accepted. And white Cuban women are very...this is the standard, and this is the way you need to be.

MH: So you were trying to live up to the standard?

Josefina: Yes, this is normal.

MH: They are the norm?

Josefina: Not the norm; normal!

Miriam: It's not about standard; it's about normal. If you are not normal, what are you?...It's like fooling around with people's heads...

Josefina: When I pull my hair back completely I look more black. When I have it like this (permed and styled) I look more Cuban Miami, so sometimes I have my hair back forever, and when I wash my hair and put it like this, "oh I love your hair like that." They don't say anything when I have it pulled back; they just look at me... "You should always wear your hair like that."

MH: Is it easier being a *mulata* in Miami?

Liliana: Remember I have those two friends that live in Broward. They're married to Jamaicans, but they're integrated. That's the other thing that happened. If you're very dark and you have dark features...

Ana: ...You live in North Miami...

Liliana: And Southern Broward. There are pockets here and there. And you marry Americans...

Ana: And Jamaicans.

Liliana: You speak Spanish baby 'cause your mom speaks Spanish, *pero*, these two women are into another culture, and they wear braids and listen to reggae.

MH: But why do you say it's if you're very dark?

Liliana: Because the darker you are and the more *negro* your features are, the harder it is to lead a social life and marry...

Josefina: There's no place for you in Cuban Miami.

Liliana: Or in Hispanic Miami.

Fewer men spontaneously discussed issues of *fino* and its significance for their opportunities. There were apparently fewer ways that men could signal their Hispanicness, which made them more vulnerable to being treated disrespectfully. There were

some markers available to them, however. One man who lives and works in Miami told me he would not wear an African outfit to a Cuban event because it would not be perceived not as a statement of elegance (which he felt it to be), but of power and therefore threatening. Another man told me that when he was a young man he was perceived as black and not Hispanic because he was “a big black man with a beard.” The older men in my study felt that as they aged and became professionals who wore suits (and therefore would be considered *fino*), they were seen as less threatening and more Hispanic.

Though participants tended to talk much more about the intimate types of racism they experienced, some felt that their careers had suffered. This moved some of them to try to form an organization to address these issues; their attempts did not reach fruition. In the excerpt below Maria, who was one of this group, summarized the reasons she and her friends were trying to form the organization:²⁵

MH: What were some of the impetus?

Maria. Richard didn't get directorship at (name of organization). The board was 80 percent white Cuban. The person who got it was a Jewish man who wasn't even qualified and not even bilingual; he eventually was kicked out. Lotsa other people had the same experience as Richard. It happened to me; I was interviewed the first and second time, but big boss was on vacation. At the third interview big boss comes to get me and when he sees me, he goes back in and says, "You didn't tell me she was black." Human resource guy was a white Cuban, but he had gone through the Civil Rights Movement and was different. Jennifer should be the editor of that paper but she had two strikes: she was a woman and then she was black. Brenda has taught every social worker that has gone through there; she's still a social worker; same with Donna. Mark tries not to call it as it is, but he wonders why things don't happen. My husband (an African American) got a job offer from the Miami Beach Police Department for \$30,000 that white Cubans were getting \$60,000 for; he took the same job in California for \$90,000 and they paid for one year of housing.

²⁵ All names in this excerpt have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

MH: Did you have any difficulties getting them (other black Cubans) to recognize racism?

Maria: Yes! They had always lived there. To them it was business as usual. I would say to them, “Why is it that blacks can only get hospitality jobs here and in Atlanta they get vice president of public relations jobs?” But they recognized something was wrong.

Apparently, however, some individuals did benefit from ethnic solidarity. The father of one participant, a builder, was encouraged by a white Cuban friend (someone he had known in Cuba) to relocate to Miami in the 1970s to take advantage of the building boom there. And one other participant got a high-level job because he went to school with the person who employed him. A few others who worked in Miami did feel that they got their jobs because they were Cuban, and that being Cuban *and* black gave them an advantage. Some informants were cynical about this. White Cubans, these participants reasoned, needed to have a black face, and they preferred hiring Cubans over African Americans. One man, Omar, told me that though white Cubans discriminated socially, they did not discriminate in the job market. His impression was that being black was not a hindrance. Significantly, as this excerpt illustrates, it depended on whom he compared himself with.

MH: Has being black hindered you?

Omar: No. I have made good use of my race.

MH: I was given you as an example of someone who was denied promotion because of your blackness.

Omar: These things are subjective. Had I been white, looking at my white friends with the same qualifications and contact, [I] would have done better, but in comparison to other black Cubans I have done well... Afro Cubans have done better than other groups of color, not as well as white Cubans since we're talking about the Deep South.

MH: But Cubans don't have that history of the Deep South.

Omar: No, but they established themselves in that context. They made a decision to embrace a white way of thinking, which was not too far from their own thinking.

While Omar told me he enjoyed being the only black person in his job, for most who were employed in the enclave, the price was high. They were often the only black person, and almost always the only black Cuban in their place of employment. Many described a never-ending battle to get respect from their white co-ethnics, and the psychic toll the subtle forms of racism take on them.

It was also difficult for black Cubans to begin their career from scratch in the Miami enclave. Apparently to be taken seriously and respected by their white co-ethnics, black Cubans had to be exceptional. Hence, most who had high-level jobs had first established themselves professionally outside of the enclave. With the exception of two, these professionals had either lived in another state, or had gotten their start working with Anglo- American companies in south Florida. As one man put it: “All the good opportunities I have here is in the American world, not in the Spanish world.” These professionals felt it was easier to establish themselves outside of the enclave. Ramón told me it was easier outside because the racism was more obvious and easier to deal with. He also made the point that there were more opportunities in the larger society because he is a part of the pool that qualifies directly for affirmative action. He explained that in Miami, because as Hispanics Cubans qualify for affirmative action, employers can meet their affirmative action requirement by hiring white Cubans. Even so, most of the professionals in Miami who took part in this study worked in the public sector, possibly because there is more oversight of diversity and discrimination.

The disadvantage of being black in Miami was such that one woman gave the following advice to her cousins who had just arrived from Cuba:

We told them, get outta here. It's not that we don't love you; we love you enough that we want you to get out of here. You need to start from scratch. This is not the town for you blacks to do it here. They're now in Louisiana. They got all the help and all the stuff... Here, the struggle is going to be too hard. If you choose to live in Miami then come later, but don't start from scratch here. Here the Cuban situation here is gonna be such that you have an easier time outta here as a black Cuban.

Quantitative Evidence

Statistical data, though limited, also suggest that black Cubans in Florida do not benefit from the ethnic enclave. The earliest data on this comes from research done by Portes and Stepick in 1983 on the workforce participation rate of Mariel (1980) exiles in the enclave. Greenbaum (1998) analyzed the data and found that whereas 22 percent of the white Cubans interviewed had found employment in the enclave, only 8 percent of black Cubans had; white Cubans were nearly three times as likely to be employed in the enclave as were black Cubans. What is more, black Cubans had the same workforce participation rate as Haitians. Thus, as Greenbaum concluded: "Afro-Cubans derived no particular benefit from their ethnicity, despite linguistic and cultural affinities alleged to engender preferential treatment." This apparently continued into 1990, when, based on that year's census data, the incomes of black Cubans in Dade County (where the Cuban enclave is) averaged 40 percent less than those of white Cubans. This disparity is far greater than the 27 percent difference between Cuban American and African American family incomes (*Miami Herald* Aug. 8, 1993).

My analysis of the socioeconomic status of black Cubans in Florida and New York suggests this socioeconomic disparity continues.²⁶ The data come from a one percent sample of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) of the populations collected by the Census Department as part of the 2000 census.²⁷ It is a small sample, especially of black Cubans.²⁸ Of the 9981 Cubans in the sample only 2.7 percent identified as black; this is the same percentage, though, that self-identified as black and Hispanic in the 2000 National Census (Logan, 2003). The limitations of the one percent sample, which I use, are obvious. The sample was also skewed geographically, with 92.8 percent from Florida. Black Cubans were more evenly distributed: 55.4 percent lived in Florida and 44.6 percent in New York. On the other hand, 95.2 percent of white Cubans in the sample lived in Florida. In addition, this sample depends on self-identification, which varies according to a host of factors, including geographic location, and the different ways in which individuals interpret the meaning on the census of the categories of “black” and Hispanic.

The information gathered from the sample, however, is supported by other quantitative studies on the larger Hispanic population. For instance, the level of racial segregation that this study found for Cubans is similar to the segregation Denton (1989), Rosenbaum

²⁶ Ramona Ortega and Mamadi Matlhako assisted me with the statistical analysis.

²⁷ PUMS allows researchers to tabulate self-reported race and ethnicity with many social and economic characteristics.

²⁸ I identified black Cubans as those individuals who either self-identified as black and Cuban, or who indicated black and Cuban ancestry as their first and second responses. White Cubans are those individuals who self-identified as white and selected Cuban as their first or second ancestry. They also did not indicate black ancestry.

(1996) and Logan (2003) have documented for Hispanics as a whole. My findings about the socioeconomic disparity between black and white Cubans is also similar to the disparity between white and black Hispanics, which Logan (2003) identified. From his analysis of the 2000 Census, Logan found that those Hispanics who also self-identified as “black” had a lower median income, higher unemployment rate and a higher poverty rate than those who identified as white or of mixed race. White-identified Hispanics had a median household income of \$5,000 more than black-identified Hispanics; the latter had a 12 percent unemployment rate while the rate for white Hispanics was 10 percent; and 31.5 percent of black identified compared with 26 percent of white-identified Latinos lived below the poverty line. This was the case despite the fact that black Hispanics were better educated, having an average of twelve years of education, compared with eleven years for white Hispanics, and ten years for those who said they were of neither race.

My analysis of the one percent sample demonstrates that in the year 2000, there was a socioeconomic disparity between white and black Cubans, and that there was a greater socioeconomic disparity between black and white Cubans in Florida than between black and white Cubans in New York. The sample also suggests that black Cubans who lived in Florida fared worse than black Cubans living in New York.

Compared with their white co-ethnics in Florida, black Cubans were less likely to own their own home, to be employed and to have 1-3 and 4 plus years of college. The homes they owned were also less valuable than those owned by their white co-ethnics, and their white co-ethnics had a family income that was almost twice theirs. The number of black

Cubans who lived at or below the poverty line was more than twice the number of white Cubans.

Though there were also some differences between white and black Cubans in New York, on some indicators there was either no difference or the difference was minimal. White Cubans in New York were more likely to be employed than black Cubans in New York, and to have 1-3 and 4 plus years of college. The number of black Cubans who lived at or below the poverty line was more than twice the number of white Cubans. However, there was no significant difference in the rate of home ownership, house value and family income.

Take home ownership and house value for instance: In Florida, 36.7 percent of blacks in the sample owned their own home compared with 53.3 percent of whites. In New York, the figures were: 42.1 percent and 44.8 percent, respectively. In Florida, the house value for blacks was \$95,000 and for whites \$137,500. In New York, there was no difference in house value (Chart 1). There is the same disparity in median family income. In Florida, white Cubans had a family income of \$41,500, while black Cubans had a family income of \$21,800; a \$20,000 difference. In New York, white Cubans' family income was \$54,000 while black Cubans' family income was \$52,115; a little less than a \$2,000 difference (Chart 2).

The sole indicator that was similar for both states was the poverty rate: in Florida, more than twice as many black Cubans in the sample lived at or below the poverty line than did

white Cubans: 36 percent compared to 15.2 percent; in New York, the ratio was similar: 31.4 percent and 11.6 percent respectively (Chart 3).

Chart 1

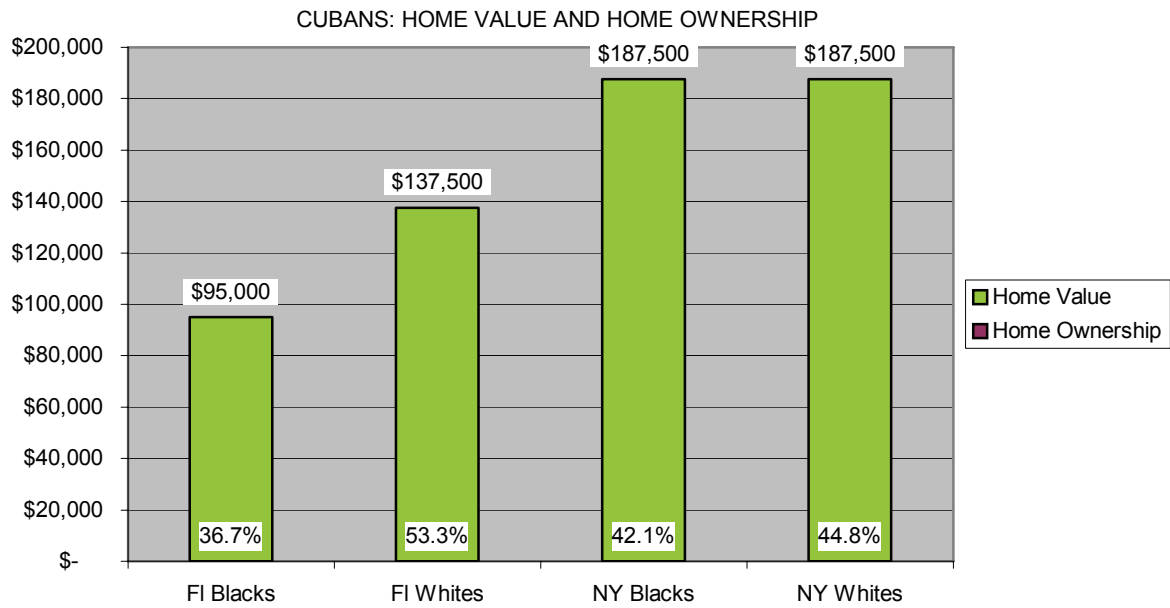


Chart 2

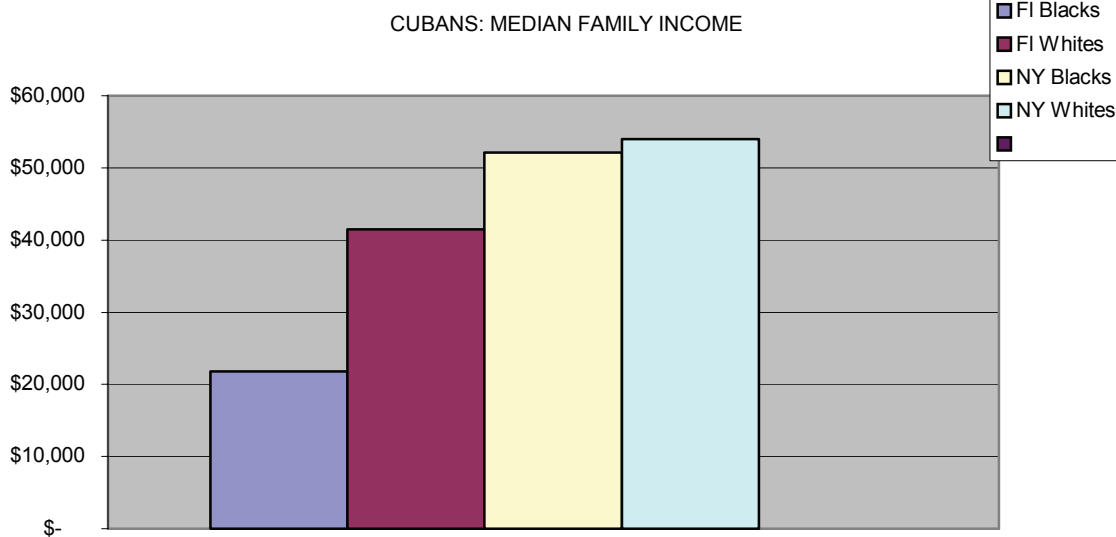
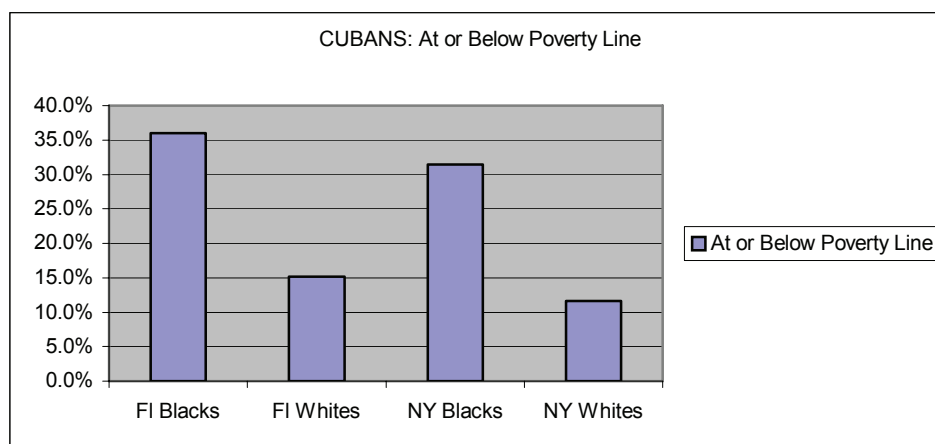
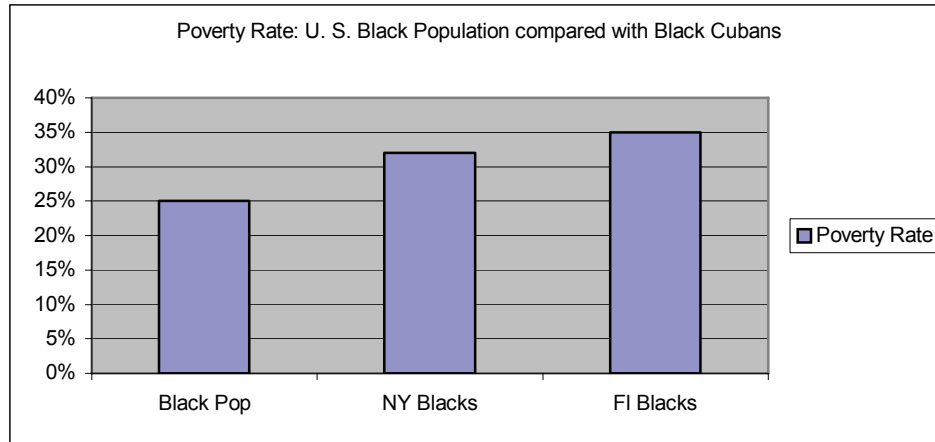
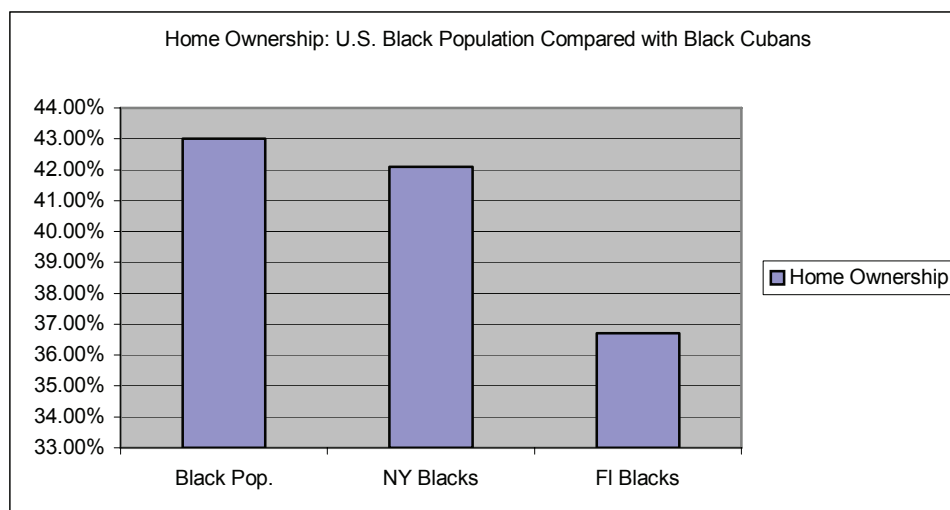


Chart 3

Black Cubans in Florida, then, did not fare as well as their New York counterparts. New York black Cubans were more likely than black Cubans in Florida to own their own home: 42.1 percent compared with 36.7 percent (Chart 1). New York black Cubans also had a median family income that was twice that of their black co-ethnics in Florida: \$52,115 compared to \$21,800 (Chart 2).

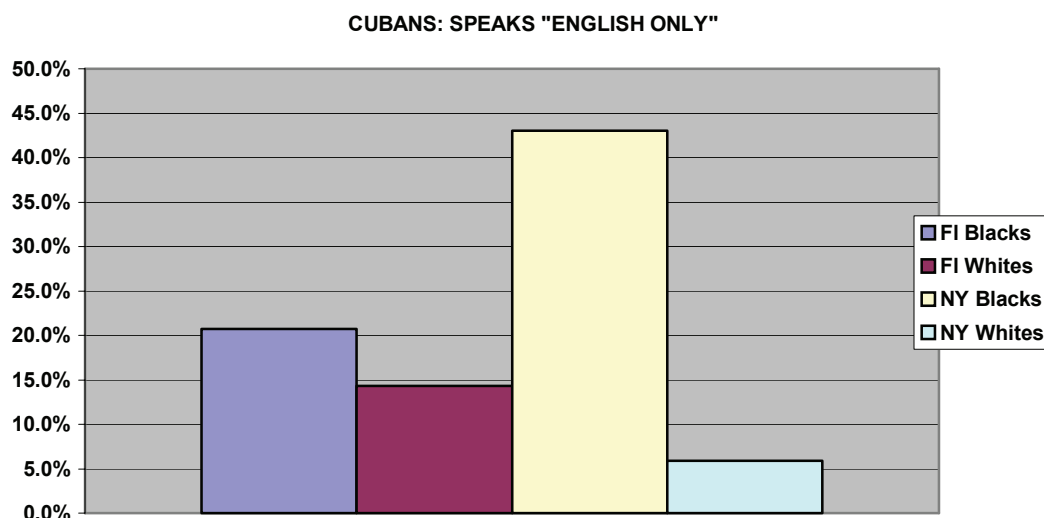
As Charts 4 and 5 demonstrate, black Cubans in the one percent sample were also not doing as well as the larger black population. Their poverty rate in both states was higher than the poverty rate for the black population as a whole: 24.9 percent. Also compared with the larger black population, fewer black Cubans owned their own home: 36.7 percent in Florida, and 42.1 percent in New York, as compared with 43 percent nationally.

Chart 4**Chart 5**

Here again Logan's (2003) research helps to place these socioeconomic indicators into a larger context. According to Logan's (2003) findings the poverty rate of the black Cubans in the sample—24.9 percent—is similar to the poverty rate of black Latinos nationally. Logan also found that both non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanic blacks lived in neighborhoods with a median income of \$36,200 and a poverty rate of 20.4 percent. Logan (2003:8) concluded that: “compared to other Hispanic groups, black Hispanics’ neighborhoods have the lowest median income, the highest share of poor residents and the lowest share of homeowners.”

Logan (2003:8) also found that black Hispanics “live in neighborhoods with the lowest percentage of immigrants and neighbors who speak a language other than English in their homes.” My statistical data parallels this finding. For instance, black Cubans in Miami and Florida were more likely than their white co-ethnics to speak “English Only.” In Florida, 20.7 percent of blacks and 14.3 percent of whites reported speaking “English Only,” and in New York many more blacks than whites reported speaking “English Only:” 43 percent to 5.9 percent (Chart 6). This pattern of language use—black Cubans tend to speak more English than white Cubans— suggests that black Cubans are more likely to live, work and socialize with English-speaking populations.

Chart 6



The one percent sample might also be an indication that black Cubans are integrating into the society differently from white Cubans. For instance, there were significant differences between the percentage of black and white Cubans who claimed Hispanic origin, and the ancestry they reported. Thus, 14 percent of black Cubans in the sample did *not* choose “Hispanic Origin” while only 7 percent of whites did not. Fewer blacks than whites also chose “Cuban” as their ancestry, “First Response:” 59.8 percent compared to 71.8 percent. However, many more blacks than whites chose Cuban as their ancestry, “Second Response:” 11.8 percent versus 3.1 percent. This might be an indication that these identities—Hispanic and Cuban—are more important to white Cubans. It might also indicate a higher rate of intermarriage between non-Hispanic blacks and Cuban blacks, similar to what Logan found: close to one-half of those individuals who identified as black Hispanic on the 2000 Census were children under 18, and the majority of these

children—69 percent— had a non-Hispanic black parent. It appears, then, that black Cubans might be thinking of themselves differently, and developing different identities and relationships with the society. This brings us to the other ethno-racial identity and community option that is open to black Cubans: Hispanic or Latino.

Hispanic Option

Some participants, both from Miami and New York, told me they did not self-identify as Hispanic on questionnaires. Miami respondents did not do so because, according to them, in South Florida, the label is associated with white Latinos. Their choice, then, was less of a rejection of Hispanic culture than a racial choice; they were not white. This perspective came up primarily in discussions about filling out forms. Note the power of official labels in determining identity:

1) When I started teaching I wanted to work in a black school, not Hialeah and the only way I could is to put "Hispanic." If I put black I would go to Hialeah. The principal told me to put "Hispanic." When I went and the lady was doing my fingerprint and she said, "You know if you put Hispanic, you're white." But I had no choice. That's when I fully realized Hispanic means white.

2) MH: What did you check on the 2000 census when they asked you about race and ethnicity?

Pablo: That's like when you fill out a job application. I always put black.

MH: Do you put black Cuban or just black?

Pablo: No. Because there was no black Cuban. As I remember it's just strictly black.

MH: They have black Hispanic. You could put black as your race and then ethnicity: Hispanic.

Pablo: Yes, but you see I have a problem with that. When they put Hispanic, but they also put black and when they talking Hispanic they talking about actually white. They not considering you as black.

In her article, “This black Cubana hates to be called Hispanic,” Bárbara Gutiérrez (1996) explains that she rejected the Hispanic label in part because it is imposed on her.²⁹ But she also rejects the label because she finds it “both too narrow and too broad” for what she is— “a black Cuban.” It is for similar reasons that some of Suzanne Oboler’s (1995) informants, immigrants from Latin America, reject the label: It is imposed, “what Americans call us.” The term homogenizes and therefore erases national differences and particularities.

Oboler’s informants, particularly from a working-class background, also reject the label because of the stigma attached to it: “According to Rosa (one of her informants), Hispanic is a term that ‘they’ (Americans) use as a synonym for pigs, for people who are dirty, have bad habits, and are noisy” (Oboler, 1995:143). Several of my New York informants also reject the label because of this negative connotations. In their minds, the label is associated with Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, so when they reject the label they are also disassociating themselves from these groups. It was primarily working-class participants who rejected this association. These participants held negative ideas about Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, which they based on their own experiences with these groups in their neighborhoods and on their jobs. They might also be developing these negative ideas from the larger society. Several scholars have convincingly argued that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans occupy the same stigmatized and racialized space in the dominant society and in the white imaginary (Duany, 1994, 2002; Torres-Saillant; Rodriguez-Morazzani, 1996; Rivera, 2003).

²⁹ Gutiérrez was executive editor of *El Nuevo Herald* when she wrote this article.

Another reason some individuals gave for feeling estranged from the Hispanic groups in New York is because of what they saw as the latter's anti-black prejudices. New York participants all talked about the indignities they suffer among Hispanics because they are black. Often Hispanics who don't realize they speak Spanish make derogatory statements about black people in their presence. It was painful for them that other Hispanics do not acknowledge them to be Hispanics. They felt this was a denial and erasure of the presence of blacks in Latin America. This anti-black racism among Hispanics led Jasmin to completely reject an association with Latinidad:

MH: Did you feel excluded from the Latino community at certain points in your life?

Jasmin: All the time. I still do. Just like those (black) Cubans who feel that people (white Cubans) don't accept them. Oh yeah. Have you ever turned on the Spanish station? And what do you see? You don't see many people looking like me, so of course I feel excluded.

MH: Was that an issue for you when you were dating?

Jasmin: (laughs) It's always been an issue. And sometimes I refuse to speak in Spanish to people that I know are Hispanic because I don't want them to know I'm Hispanic. It's that anger that you have. You know when you said that black Cubans (in Miami) are angry because they (white Cubans) don't recognize them as Cubans, it's like I don't wanna go through that.

In summary, the majority of men and women who took part in this study reported that they felt alienated from their white co-ethnics, and this is because of the racism they experience from some of their white co-ethnics. Though some arrived in the United States with a sense of themselves as different from their white co-ethnics, most had developed this identity in this country. Here, they argued, white Cubans had become more racist. Their estrangement from their white co-ethnics is manifest in their hyphenated identities, but also in the social, spatial and political distinctions they make between themselves and their white co-ethnics. This ethnographic study captured this

alienation. My statistical analysis of a small sample of Cubans in Florida and New York also suggests that the ethnic path is not available to black Cubans as a group. For them, Cuban ethnic solidarity did not seem to work the same way as it did for white Cubans. This has a detrimental effect on their socioeconomic achievements; they are not doing as well as their white co-ethnics.

Chapter Four

Black Identities: “I’ve Been Black in Two Countries”

I’ve had African Americans tell me I’m not black; I’m Cuban. I say, “I’m more black than you are because I’ve been black in two countries”...so don’t tell me about blackness. I’m black here ‘cause when I walk around I don’t have a sign so people separate me and say, “No that’s alright, we don’t need to call him nigger ‘cause he’s Cuban...” I get stopped by the police, I go through the same experiences than any of you...just because I’m born in a particular place does not prevent me from suffering and being able to identify with the experience here, more so that I have lived in this country much longer than I lived in Cuba. I was fourteen when I left. I’ve been here for thirty-four years... So don’t tell me I do not know the black experience. I may know it better than you.

Finding the ethnic path rough, and in many ways, unavailable, many seek out other groups. For most these were groups of people of African descent, particularly African Americans and West Indians. As the labels indicate there is a racial signifier—“Afro” and “Black” (negro). Blackness, then, is very important in how black Cubans see themselves and in their social experiences. The opening quotation of this chapter— “I’ve been black in two countries” —captures the significance of blackness for many of them. They were black in Cuba and are black in the United States. The same point made in the previous chapter about their Cuban identity is relevant here: In the same way that they are Cuban by birth, they are black by birth; they have no choice in the matter. Being black meant different things to the study’s participants, however, and these differences were shaped by their social experiences in Cuba, but especially by their experiences in the United States.

The labels are not about *being* African American. To them, African Americans are an ethnic group; this is an ethnic category available to people of African descent who are born in the United States. As I explained in the introductory chapter, this led some to *not* select “black” on questionnaires, since alongside the term “black” is African American. The labels do reflect the nature of their relationship to African Americans, however. They speak to their social, emotional and political relationship with African Americans. I used the quotation above because it captures the significance of the presence of African Americans in the social experiences of this study’s participants. Foner (2005) has made the important point that the presence of a native-born black group in the United States is integral to the social experiences of black immigrants, and therefore must be a significant part of the study of these groups.

This research does not speak directly to the question of whether black immigrants are becoming African American or not; most felt they could not be African American since they were not born here. However, it does speak indirectly to the question because a good number of my informants came to the United States as young children or as adolescents, and have lived in the United States the bulk of their lives. These are in fact the participants who were most inclined to feel close to African Americans socially, emotionally and politically. They were comfortable socializing with African Americans, dated and married African Americans, and liked African American music and cuisine. Many also saw their children as African Americans of Cuban descent. They felt this way

partly because their children were born in the United States, but also because of their children's cultural practices and personal identities.

Being Black in the United States

Scholars have noted that in the United States, phenotypically black persons have little choice but to identify as racially black (Waters, 1999; Foner, 2005). The racial system in Latin America, however, is different, and is often contrasted with the racial classification system in the United States. The latter is said to have a bipartite or two-tiered system (black and white), which follows the rule of hypodescent: one drop of black blood makes one black. This is described as a rigid system, which defines race on the basis of ancestry and lumps together all people with black heritage regardless of variations in phenotype (unless one is “passing”). Latin American, on the other hand, has a more fluid system with several racial categories. Racial designations are on a continuum and are based primarily on phenotype and social class.³⁰ Skin color, hair and facial features place individuals on a racial hierarchy, producing categories such as *mulato*, *indio*, *moreno*, *jabao*, *prieto*, *negro*, *mestizo* and *blanco*. Moreover, an individual can shift from one category to a proximal one by changing appearance, behavior and social class. Behavior, then, is also racialized. Racial categories are associated with speech, dress, and even how pleasant and gracious one is. What this means is that a person who is classified as black in the United States might not be classified as black in many Latin American countries.

³⁰ Skidmore (1995:40) makes the point that the contrast between the US and Brazil's system should not be overemphasized. Ancestry was also important in Brazil, such that “upwardly mobile mixed bloods often took great pain to conceal their family background.” The Puerto Rican saying, “Y tu abuela, donde esta?” (“And your grandmother, where is she?”), also speaks to the practice of concealing black ancestry.

What happens, then, to the racial identities of Latin American immigrants in the United States?

Apparently the vast majority of immigrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean self-identify on the census as “white” and increasingly more as “Other.” There is an ongoing debate in the popular press and in academia, internal and external to these communities, about the reasons for this pattern, its significance for individuals, and its potential impact on racial formation in the United States. On the one hand, some see cause to celebrate because they see it as a disruption of the polarized construction of race in the United States (see for example Rodriguez, 1980, 1996). Immigrants who choose “other” are viewed as resisting their racialization as either black or white. John Logan, who articulated this view at a conference on Afro-Latinos at Hunter College (Dec. 2003), said he was “optimistic” that immigrants who choose “other” can be intermediaries in what historically has been a polarized nation.

Such a notion, however, is an ahistorical view of racial formation in the United States where there have been several instances of intermediary groups, without a disruption of the racial regime of white supremacy and black inferiority. This also disregards the fact that a racial system that is not bipolar, as in Latin America, is still a racial system, and one in which the poles of black and white have the same values they have in the United States. In both sites, whiteness is valued much more highly than blackness, and the closer one gets to whiteness the more prestige and resources one has.

There are other scholars who are much more cynical about the racial choice Spanish-speaking immigrants make (this topic is discussed further in Chapter 6). They see the choice as an attempt to avoid the stigma of blackness and association with those at the bottom of the social hierarchy: African Americans. However, regardless of how Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants might self-identify, the reality is that they have a history of being racialized as non-white and suffer the socioeconomic consequences of this racialization (Rodriguez-Morazzani, 1996; Duany 2002).

The participants in this study were quite different from what is reported for the majority of Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants. They did not claim any other racial identifier, and many told me they selected “black,” along with an ethnic category—Hispanic or Cuban—on the census. They rejected the Latin American variant of racial classification. Some did use the terms *mulato*, *jabao*, *negro* to describe themselves and others, but these were references to skin color and other physical features. They were not used to claim a racial identity besides black. They all were highly critical of people who tried to deny being black, seeing them as psychologically damaged. Consider what Filomena had to say:

Some people don't like to say they are black. This one (she shows me a picture of a relative) when she was little, she was white, her hair was blonde and she had blue eyes. My sister's husband used to say, “Why (the baby) being so white, why does she have those lips?” I used to tell him, “You know why? Because when black people come out white, God give them something to remember where they come from and what they really are.”

The meaning of blackness and of being black came up in different contexts. Sometimes it came about because I asked directly, but it also came up in discussions about the

difference between African Americans and black Cubans. For the most part, the majority of participants felt that being black in a Cuban context was different from being black in the United States. It must be underscored that because most participants had lived in the United States for the bulk of their lives, their experiences and impressions of being black Cuban was that of being a black Cuban in the United States. All respondents felt they belonged to a global black community, either because of a common ancestral homeland or shared experiences of discrimination. This racial group perspective led José to reject the label African American:

Definitely the experience I have is more with black Americans than with white Americans and Latin Americans. All of my growing up is black Americans—the music, the clothes I wore when I was growing up. So when I talk about racism I don't say Cuban, I say black. I say "we." *I don't like the term African American. I like the term black because it is more universal. African American separates you from the other blacks in the world* (my emphasis).

Several participants were bothered that African Americans did not acknowledge this, and that African Americans seemed to feel they had a monopoly on blackness. This is what Omar meant when he said:

At times African Americans have a chip on their shoulders about their experience. It's like no one has suffered like African Americans, "Oh, the civil rights movement, the lynching, and this and that." I say, this is not a unique experience to people from the United States. We went through this in many other countries.

Samuel's response was: "I am more African than you are. My family practices African religions, and I do too. Tell how many Baptists you see in Africa. There are no Methodists in Africa. You don't even speak the language; I speak some of the language. I get furious when they tell me that."

Many respondents highlighted the fact that they are viewed as black by the larger society, and not as Cuban. Blackness, then, was ascribed. The power of ascription was such that their race, and not their ethnicity, was primary. Two women—mother and daughter—explained it this way:

Margarita: *Yo soy primero negro porque, ahora* (I am black first, because now... (She disappears from the room and then reappears) "what do you see first?"

Marisol: That's my thing! When I walk through the door they don't say there goes that Cuban...there goes that black girl!

Discrimination was central and it was what linked them and their fates as individuals to all other blacks. While most respondents tended to emphasize this conception of blackness, some did speak about blackness in more positive ways. For instance, some talked about how comfortable and affirming it was for them to be with blacks. Here, even though Josefina felt that what she had in common with blacks was discrimination, she also explained that being around black people was affirming and emotionally satisfying:

I think race comes before for me...in other words, I think there's more of a bond between myself and black people all over the world. I think we're able to find a common ground whether it is the dark common ground of being discriminated against, of being set aside. That's what I don't have with Cubans. And I know that sounds kinda weird because you have the food, the language, and you have history and all that, ...and that means a lot, but it becomes such a painful issue in light of the race thing. I'm familiar with the white Cuban because we do share all that, but I don't think it gets to the heart of the matter of who I am. I think the heart of who I am deals with my race. That's kind of like the best way I can explain it. I don't feel understood...I don't feel validated as a human being unless my race is validated, so that's a big conflict. I think it's validation and acceptance. I don't think I'm fully accepted by white Cubans as another human being, as an equal. I think that the color of their perceptions is tainted by what they consider this is better, this is a little less better....

Some participants emphasized a common homeland and shared cultural practices rather than a common experience of racism. As Jasmin explained:

Blackness is not any one people or country. It is not claimed by any one group. It is a state of being where you identify with elements of the culture, which is worldwide. It is a culture of accomplishments, slavery and survival. The language can change, but we're connected through Africa. That's what my bangles remind me of, the chains of the Africans; the sounds are very important to me.

Many also felt strong racial pride:

We were instilled that black people are just as good as white people. We never felt inferior, and in Cuba there is a lot of racism, but we never felt less than anybody else because we were black. When I came here I saw colored people from other countries that they did not like being called black, and I remember when I was in the hospital and the nurse came and told me, "What race is your daughter?" I said, "Black." And a lot of Puerto Ricans say, "You're not black; you're Cuban." I say that's not a race; that's a nationality. I am black and there is nothing wrong in saying I am black. I mean I feel happy. Why should I feel offended because someone tells me I am black?

The vast majority of participants saw themselves as representatives of a black race.

Indeed they felt that society evaluated them first and foremost as black people. Middle-class respondents articulated this far more than their working-class counterparts. As middle-class blacks in white-dominated spaces they are in more intimate contact with whites, and therefore have more of an opportunity to be judged directly by whites. Many saw themselves as having a special responsibility and even a burden to prove to whites that blacks are smart, competent and refined. This is not a purely selfless responsibility, however, since they can benefit personally when whites see blacks positively, and can be personally disadvantaged when whites see blacks negatively. Neither is it a purely selfish response on their part because they could opt for being the exceptional black or for being a different kind of black—Cuban—an option some individuals sometimes took.

For some, the sense they had that they are representatives of the race had its origin in Cuba. One man from a middle-class family in Cuba who left the country at 15 years old told me:

Let me tell you because in Havana, because of the position of my family, my mother was always cognizant of the fact that we're representatives of the race, so there was no casualness about how we showed up to places. We had to be the best!

Living with Racial Stigma

Some participants also held negative opinions about black people as a whole. The stigma attached to blackness in the United States makes this almost inevitable. People ran into many situations where in order to be treated respectfully they had to prove themselves a different kind of black. Here Dalgis recounted what happened when she moved into a new neighborhood:

Dalgis: This block was Italian; I was the only black, myself and Ms. T....

MH: How was it?

Dalgis: Very good, but I overheard... one evening I was coming from work and Mr F... was telling the Italian man "I'm moving out; they coming in." And the Italian man say nothing, just smile and put up his shoulder like this. But when they saw the kind of black woman that was living here it was a different thing. Mr. F..., Oh he talk so good about me because you see he saw the quality and the kind of person... I was decent...And afterwards Mr. F... come over here to talk to me, and Ms. S..., "Why don't you come over and have tea with us."

MH: Were you surprised?

Dalgis: Well, no because I knew I come into the block and I didn't bring any parties, because he called the police for those Jamaican people that was living here at the corner...all kind of riff-raff used to go. But he saw me going to work and coming home peaceful and quiet, so he probably thought I was this rowdy kind too.

MH: So you think they associate blacks with rowdiness?

Dalgis: Yeah 'cause really there are some blacks who deteriorate homes. They don't take care. It's true.

MH: But there are whites who do that too.

Dalgis: But the majority is our people.

Explicit in Dalgis' narrative is her desire for Anglo-American approval. Thus, though many expressed a general distrust of white Americans and could give me examples of Anglo racism, they strove to prove themselves respectable. Greenbaum (2002:179), who also found this to be the case for black Cubans in Tampa, argues that this emphasis on respectability and dignity was because their position was so tenuous:

The tenuous position of Afro-Cubans in the Ybor City community heightened the importance they attached to dignity and respectability. This aura of respectability, and its implications of moral superiority to African Americans, secured the distinctions that were made in favor of Afro-Cubans and entitled them to special treatment.

Participants' feelings about being black and the ways they negotiated being black in the United States were deeply affected by the stigmatized images of African Americans that circulate throughout the society, particularly from the mass media. The media is a central source of information and ideas about blacks (Entman et al, 2001; Feagin, 2001). In *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* Entman et al (2001) demonstrated that while there are some positive images of African Americans in the media, negative images continue to outnumber these. These authors also found that the media played a significant role in white Americans' knowledge about, and attitudes towards, African Americans. One set of ideas that circulate is that African American culture is pathological, and is to be blamed for the poverty which has stricken so many inner-city African Americans communities. Black conservatives are one group that is implicated in reproducing these ideas. Dawson (2001) has pointed out that black conservatives are the most "visible black ideologues in mainstream (white) American media and cultural outlets." Their views are allowed to enter the public space more than

others and become taken-for-granted or common sense. Black conservatives tend to subscribe to the cultural rather than the structural perspective of the plight of black communities. They, Dawson (2001) writes, “call for blacks to abandon what they see as cultural pathologies...(and believe that) “a pathological reliance on the state is a major barrier to black advancement.” This is hardly any different from those informants who told me African Americans were too dependent on government, namely welfare, and that the problem with African Americans is that they feel this country “owes them something.” It is significant that when I asked participants where they got the ideas they hold about African Americans, there was a special legitimacy given to the idea if it came from an African American. This was true whether the idea was a positive one or not.

These “cultural” explanations for poverty get more public attention than the statistical evidence of racial discrimination in housing, employment, loans and education and the criminal justice system (Hacker, 1992; Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Conley, 1999); evidence of what Howard Winant (1997: 47) refers to as the “continuing viability of old-fashion white supremacy, and the competitive advantage whiteness still has to offer.”

Social Class and Perceptions of Racism

The views participants held about racism, racial inequality and socioeconomic achievement were also shaped by their lived everyday experiences. Working-class and middle-class participants had different class-based experiences. They interacted differently with white Americans or Anglos and with African Americans and other native minorities. In this study, the majority of Miami participants were middle-class

professionals, and the majority of New Yorkers were of working-class backgrounds.³¹ Thus, for the most part social class and place of residence intersect. However, while working class participants in both cities had similar experiences, middle-class participants who lived in New York had some different experiences from their counterparts in Miami. Thus the city in which they resided is also an important variable. The experiences working-class informants had with Anglo Americans shaped their views on the nature of racism in the United States. Working-class participants in both cities lived in segregated minority neighborhoods and had limited contact with Anglo Americans. This has consequences for their experiences with racism, and for their attitudes toward white Americans, and their relationship with native minority groups. Nancy Foner (2005) has made the case that West Indians in New York City live racially segregated lives, apart from white Americans, and that their segregation has some benefits: “for one, living out much of their lives apart from the presence of whites has reduced the opportunities for racial tensions and conflicts to develop. When West Indians in New York walk the streets, go to the shops, worship, and send their children to school, it is on the whole other blacks they see and deal with” (Foner, 2005:117). This was the case for most working class individuals in this study. They lived, shopped and worshipped in communities of West Indians, African Americans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. As a result, they tended to have very little contact with Anglo-Americans. Friendships with Anglos were rare, the exception being one participant who followed Cuban music and dance and therefore associated with white Americans who were Afro Cuban music aficionados. Most was in contact with Anglos at work, but these were

³¹ It is important to note here that this correlation between social class and place of residence might be purely a function of snowball sampling. A middle-class participant referred me to her friends, all of whom were middle-class professionals.

usually whites in supervisory positions. Some people talked about how nice a white employer was to them. And as Waters (1999) found for West Indians, Anglo American supervisors and employers usually awarded them higher status than African Americans.

The racism most working-class New Yorker participants experienced did not follow the same pattern described by some researchers: white women crossing the street to avoid them; women clutching their purse; being followed around the store by a sales clerk. This is largely because most of my participants were older adults. Some of these adults did recall personal experiences of discrimination when they were younger, and before the Civil Rights era. Those with children, particularly sons, were concerned for their safety, but none told me that their children had been harassed by the police. One man in his thirties (the only second-generation participant I interviewed) told me he knew the neighborhoods that were not safe for him to visit, and he was very careful not to date white women. At the time of our interview he was searching for a way to understand his experiences, and had begun to read about Malcolm X, and black history. Another man, in his forties, and who was raising a son told me he had prepared his son for the world by letting him know he had to work twice as hard as a white person.

Most working-class participants, then, had experiences with racism that were rather abstract from their day-to-day lives. Thus, when they gave me examples of racism they talked about the highly publicized examples of police brutality, and society-wide discrimination in employment and in the granting of mortgage loans. In this regard they were aware of institutionalized racism. They rarely linked institutionalized racism to *their*

life opportunities, however. Indeed, they tended to see themselves as doing well in socioeconomic terms, comparing themselves with their relatives in Cuba and to African Americans.

Middle-class participants tended to interact more with Anglo Americans. Those participants who lived in New York socialized more with Anglos than the Miami cohort; two New York informants were married to Anglos whereas none of the Miami cohort was, and all middle-class New Yorkers lived among Anglos. Middle-class participants in both cities interacted with Anglo Americans on their jobs as equals, and as competitors for employment, promotions, housing and education. Most middle-class participants in Florida began their careers working with Anglos and in Anglo-owned companies, and then moved to work in the Cuban enclave in Miami. New Yorkers also worked with white Americans, but none worked with white Cubans.

The Miami contingent in particular tended to compare the forms of racism they experienced from Anglos with their experiences with white Cubans (discussed in Chapters 1 and 3). Most felt that Anglos were less openly racist than white Cubans, and that Anglo racism was easier to handle. They argued that unlike some white Cubans, Anglos did not allow their dislike of blacks to interfere with business; Anglos, they felt, were interested in getting the work done, and would hire anybody who could get the job done. For most, their interactions with Anglos on their jobs were quite amicable, particularly because as with their working-class counterparts, they got preferential treatment as Cubans. Some pointed out, however, that they did not depend on Anglo

preference since one had to be able to signal Cuban-ness, and this was not always possible. Men in particular talked about the potential of being harassed by the police. Middle-class participants were also similar to their working-class counterparts in that when they talked about Anglo racism they most often referred to institutionalized racism—negative images of minorities in the media, the absence of minority groups in managerial positions, poor schools in minority neighborhoods, and police harassment.

Even though most middle-class informants had few experiences of overt racism from Anglos, they sometimes measured their socioeconomic achievements against Anglos. At those times they came up with different conclusions about their socioeconomic achievements than their working-class counterparts did. Like the upwardly mobile men in Vickerman's (1999) study, they felt most acutely the disjuncture between their qualifications and what they had actually achieved. Sometimes they compared themselves with African Americans. Some felt they were more successful than African Americans, but they also felt that like African Americans they should be more successful, given their qualifications.

Social class also affected the social-class background of the African Americans participants came in contact with, and this in turn tended to shape their views about and their relationships with African Americans. Mary Waters (1999) has argued that the negative opinions West Indians hold of African Americans partly comes from their experiences with low-income African Americans. As a result of residential segregation many black immigrants live alongside or with low-income African Americans, and they

generalize from the behavior and condition of their neighbors. This was also the case in my study. Working-class informants who lived in working-class and low-income communities of color held negative views of these groups. They supported their opinions with their own experiences, often generalizing from one or two neighbors on welfare or using drugs. In so doing they ignored their neighbors who are stable and working, or they dismissed them as the exception.

Some working-class informants were quite aware of the history of racism and contemporary racism, yet they did not make the connection between the difficulties some African Americans face and the racism they identified. They repeated and reproduced the hegemonic explanations for achievement or the lack thereof: African Americans lack the right values, and immigrants have the right values. They reasoned that since they are successful, racism, though it exists, is not enough of a barrier. In the excerpt below we see a number of themes: 1) the use of personal and limited experience, rather than empirical data; 2) the over inflated assessment of the success of some immigrant groups; and 3) the heavy reliance on cultural explanations for achievement or the lack thereof.

Note that this participant also acknowledged racism and was deeply distrustful of whites:

Santiago: White men used blacks as guinea pigs. Whites bring drugs in this country and then its blacks who give it to blacks. White people notice that the majority of blacks are mentally weak because of their history. Those blacks who know their history are smarter than whites, but you have to know your history.

MH: So why aren't you more sympathetic?

Santiago: They aren't taking advantage. In Harlem they're struggling. You go to Queens you see successful people, Asians and Arabs in Astoria, Jamaicans and Cubans in Hempstead. You don't see African Americans who own bodegas. So there's something wrong with African Americans. At Harlem Hospital, the doctors and nurses are Filipinos, Indians, Koreans, from the OR to the ER. In engineering, the Italians and Irish rule; no African Americans. In x-ray, no African Americans; no African Americans and the hospital is in Harlem. Why?

They think this country owe them. And the way they live. On my block the African Americans injure themselves so they can get compensation. They don't have any skills. These guys sell drugs. Their background is welfare, jail...

The irony of these ideas about African Americans is that black Cubans are stereotyped in a similar way (Fernández, 1996; de la Fuente, 1997; 2001). Both white and black Cubans have blamed slavery and not ongoing racism for the racial inequality in Cuban society, and the plight of impoverished black Cuban communities. Middle-class black Cubans have also chastised poor black Cubans for the same behaviors some of my informants associate with African Americans: their “barbarian” African practices, lack of education and proper manners, and especially for their family form—illegitimate births, consensual unions, sexual licentiousness, and the ease with which they enter and leave unions (de la Fuente, 2001). Several of the middle-class women in my study harshly criticized black Cubans in Cuba, including their family members who they saw as dysfunctional, disrespectful and ungrateful. They tended, however, to blame the revolution for changing values. They also worried about black Cubans' lack of interest in education and in achieving generally, with one woman arguing that black Cubans in the United States had no black Cuban or African American role models besides athletes and movie stars.

Most informants who held these ideas were simply unable to see these parallels. On one occasion I decided to challenge a participant. In response to his stereotyping of African Americans I reminded him that people say the same things about blacks in Cuba. He replied that people who do that are only focusing on black Cubans in the cities, and that in other areas of Cuba blacks work hard, do not drink excessively and have stable families. I responded that it seems to me he is doing the same thing: generalizing from

the African Americans he sees on a daily basis in his very depressed neighborhood; his response was to deny he was doing that.

Middle-class informants were much *less* likely than their working-class counterparts to articulate the negative ideas about African Americans that pervade the society. Unlike their working-class counterparts many knew successful African Americans, people they had dated, gone to college with and lived with. As one participant put it: “I know better.” Few middle-class participants subscribed to the claim that black immigrants are doing better than African Americans. José ’s response was as follows:

José: Basically I think there aren’t any differences. That immigrants want to work more than African Americans...c’mon who built this thing before the immigrants came? If blacks are so lazy, then who built this country?

MH: So there’s this idea that black Cubans are doing better than black Americans...

José: No. As a matter of fact there was an article that said that black Latinos are pretty much in the same category as black Americans.³² So, this whole thing that black Latinos are doing better, no. We experience the same thing. My younger brother became addicted to drugs. I don’t think black Americans want their kids on drugs no more than black Latinos do.

A few middle-class participants did think black Cubans had a higher socioeconomic status than black Americans. However, most tended to see the differences as primarily structural in its roots. When I asked Omar why he thought black Cubans were doing better, his response was that it was a “stupid” comparison since black Cubans are immigrants and immigrants behave differently from the native born. One other person first tried to explain why black Cubans might be more successful: They have the

³² A reference to John Logan’s (2003) report that Latinos who described themselves as black had lower incomes and higher rates of poverty than Latinos who described themselves as “other” or white—despite having a higher level of education.

advantage of a second language and they have higher social prestige and therefore are treated better. Finally, however, she decided that she really did not know if black Cubans were actually doing better and that she would need to see the statistics.

Middle-class participants also had other sources of information about the nature of racism and racial and social inequality. Most had been educated in the United States, and had taken college classes that gave them a different perspective. Some also belonged to black professional organizations. Several of these middle-class informants drew a link between the stereotypes immigrants hold of African Americans and what they saw as immigrants' "ignorance." Beatriz, who attributed her racial consciousness and her social awareness to the classes she took at Hunter College in New York City, made this clear. She also linked the stereotypes Cubans and other immigrants hold of African Americans to the educational system:

Beatriz: I went to school and you took all those classes which were very enlightening, and then once I came here and went to Hunter it was even better.

But there weren't that many classes on the black race, not in those days...

MH: But that was '72, the days of black liberation...

Beatriz: But not down in Miami, not for me. Here at Hunter it was a totally different story. At Hunter I took more black courses...of course you have Puerto Rican and Black studies. Do they have that in Miami? Maybe now, but in Miami it was the Latino stuff in the forefront...Cubans need to have consciousness raising, even some black Cubans. That's why they say those things about African Americans that they're lazy and don't want to work. I used to have those ideas until someone took me aside and explained it to me.

Black Identities: Black-Cuban, Afro-Cuban, Cuban-Black

Despite the fact that all participants were racially identified, there were differences in the nature of their racial identities. Thirteen participants exhibited perspectives that are

captured by the Black-Cuban label. As the label implies—the racial signifier preceding the national/ethnic signifier—Black-Cuban participants tended to emphasize their race over their ethnicity. I found that they also exhibited a highly politicized racial group consciousness. For the sake of ease I will refer to them as Black-Cuban identified or Black-Cuban classified. Thirteen individuals expressed perspectives captured by the Afro-Cuban label. These participants tended to emphasize their ethnic identity, but the “Afro” aspect of their ethnicity; in other words, though they tended to emphasize their Cuban identity, they separated themselves from their white co-ethnics. I will refer to these informants as Afro-Cuban, Afro-Cuban identified or Afro-Cuban classified. Those participants for whom Cuban issues were central I classified as Cuban-Black. I will refer to these participants as Cuban-Black, Cuban-Black identified and Cuban-Black classified. The least number of participants—four— are in this category. It is therefore difficult to characterize the category in the way I have for the others, but all four exhibited a strong exile group identity in which their political orientation was primarily, though not exclusively, toward Cuban issues, both domestically and on the island.

Negro-Cubano (Black-Cuban)

As I explained above, the differences in the participants’ identities and perspectives came to my attention when one of the participants, Ramón, told me he self-identified as a Negro-Cubano (Black-Cuban). Before he introduced me to what was for me a new term—Negro-Cubano, I asked him what it meant to him to be an Afro Cuban in the United States. This is his response:

Being Afro Cuban in the U.S. means to me being someone of African descent. I don't consider myself different from Afro-Jamaicans or African Americans. The same everyday reality that anyone of African descent experiences I would experience. I'm no different from anyone else of African descent. The thing that distinguishes us is the color of our skin. Whether you're born in San Juan, Washington, D.C. or Havana, to me makes no difference whatsoever. I am above all a black man and I feel an affinity to any black person of whatever nationality. My strongest sense of identity is that of an African-descended person.

Captured in Ramón's narrative is the central feature of the Black-Cuban label: the emphasis these respondents placed on blackness. The majority of Black-Cubans—nine out of thirteen—migrated to the United States before age thirteen, and most lived in Miami or had spent a good portion of their lives there. All, except for two, were college-educated professionals. Several came from modest backgrounds in Cuba, or had parents whose status declined upon migration.

Though in the United States racial identity is assigned, Cubans of African descent do have the option of identifying with Cubans, and not as black. In the excerpt below Omar explains a number of issues, the ways black Cubans are encouraged to whiten, the ways white Cubans encourage black Cubans to identify as Cuban and not with African Americans, and the idea that identifying as black also means identifying with African Americans:

There is the perception of if you make it economically or if you are of some level of attractiveness then blacks are encouraged or given license or toy with the idea of you can advance the race, you can move up to this group, which by its mere description puts your group lower. It means that if I'm good enough to go up that means that I have become better than my group. So that's always been interesting. The relationship between black Cubans and black Americans is a very interesting one because early on at the beginning of the Cuban exile there was not that many of us who made it an issue. You'd see a black Cuban and it was like, "God, I didn't know there were blacks in Cuba." But then you could be absorbed into the African American experience 'cause you look the same. But as more came and as

white Cubans continue to assert that level of: “You’re not black; you’re Cuban, and black Cubans are different from black Americans,” (they) created that separate and conquer type of thing...

Black-Cuban classified participants tended to resist the option to whiten, and instead chose to be black. They talked often about their choice, which I ultimately came to see as an act of courage and resistance. Here these women described how they confronted individuals who sought to erase their blackness. As they described it, they are faced over and over again with having their racial identity acknowledged:

Liliana: I just feel proud of the fact that as a black Cuban I have said I'm a black Cuban, because there are so many who hide under the Hispanic label. So just the fact that they know I'm black, and you better not make any jokes around me.

Ana: That's another thing. You know when you fill an application and they say, white, black, ...they have Hispanic, they don't have black Cuban. So one time I was filling out an application and I put black Cuban and this guy sitting next to me and he says, "You're Hispanic. You don't have to put black or white Cuban." And I said, "No I'm not Hispanic, I'm black." When you see me what do you see first, black, right? I'm black. I have a problem every time I have to fill out those applications. They don't always have the "other."

MH: The Census in 2000 had it.

Liliana: But she had to deface a lot of applications before that!

Choosing to identify as a black person took courage because there are many social pressures to choose Cuban and/or Hispanic. The encouragement was often in the form of acceptance and better opportunities for those who emphasized being Cuban or Hispanic, and disrespect and rejection for those who chose to be black. This was true for both Miami and New Yorkers, but especially so for the former. But Black-Cuban identified participants were cynical about white Cubans’ acceptance. Here is Ramón’s (written) response to my attempt to classify him as a mulatto on the basis of his medium-brown skin:

I have always been referred to by White-Cubans as Negro. What's more, I think of myself as a Black man and it's irrelevant to me however else other people may want to categorize me. The fact as I know it is that white Cubans only refer to me as "mulatto" when they want to gain my graces. Little do they know that only puts me more on guard.

Many felt that white Cubans' acceptance was conditional, and on an individual basis. To gain acceptance they had to not be "black," which, as one participant explained, meant "keeping your place... and not bringing up race in mixed company." Those who brought up racial issues risked being told they have a complex: "tu eres complejada." Some of my Miami informants told me about the tendency for some white Cubans to refer to Cuban blacks as "*nuestros negros*" (our blacks), implying that unlike African Americans Cuban blacks did not make trouble. Wade (1997:7) observed the same in Columbia. Black Columbians' acceptance, he argued, is conditional on "not constituting a perceived threat as far as non blacks is concerned."

Black-Cuban classified participants noted differences between themselves and African Americans, but these differences did not lead them to distance themselves. In the excerpt below Jasmin explains some of these differences.

Many African Americans know their history. They know they come from a specific place in the United States. Many know where their ancestors are buried. They go back generations and generations in the same land. I'm not. I'm an immigrant, right? I don't have that experience that my great, great, great grandfather comes from Alabama or upstate New York. So there is that difference, the difference of the continuity of family in a particular place and that place being in a particular country. So there's that allegiance to that country... And then for African Americans, their heritage and their ancestors was forced to come here. They didn't come here of their own free will like my mother did to a certain extent. They came in bondage for the most part, so that is a different type of... I don't even call it immigration. So that's a different type of

feeling that you would have toward a country...So those are the differences of experiences.

Yet Jasmin also she told me, “My group of allegiance is actually people of color and more specifically African Americans. That’s who I identify with.”

Liliana also talked about these different historical experiences. Many black Cubans, she felt, had not experienced “the pain of slavery and the pain of what people went through here prior to the civil rights movement.” She argued that they would have to feel the same kind of “marginalization, prejudice and exclusion” in order to relate to African Americans. She saw herself as different from most black Cubans, however, because she had read every slave narrative and had taken “(Howard) Gates’ history course at Harvard.”

In the emphasis they place on being black, Black-Cuban individuals were going against the norm. They differed from most other black and Latino immigrants who research indicates are choosing to emphasize their national or ethnic identity, or who choose a mixed race category (Foner, 2005; Water 2002; Duany, 1995; Rodriguez, 1980, 1996). Despite their unusual choice, it is obvious from their narratives that Black-Cuban classified individuals have an identity that is “made in America” in the sense that their strong racial group consciousness came primarily from their lived everyday experiences here, a point I elaborate on in Chapter 5.

In the primacy they give to race and in their racial group consciousness, Black-Cuban classified individuals also differ from those informants who emphasized their ethnicity and who tend to see themselves as distinct from African Americans. These are the individuals I classify as Afro-Cuban. Like the Black-Cuban category, the Afro-Cuban category is “made in America.” It is an ethnic identity constructed out of these participants’ attempts to negotiate the North American racial and ethnic landscape. .

Afro-Cubano (Afro-Cuban)

Thirteen of the thirty participants either chose this label or expressed views that I characterize as Afro-Cuban. Most lived in New York, and had migrated to the United States as adults. Afro-Cuban classified respondents were more likely to be working class, and without a college education; a minority—four—were college-educated professionals (the significance of these variables will become clearer below and in the following chapter). The Afro-Cuban category comes closest to being an ethnic identity. Afro-Cuban classified individuals differ from Black-Cuban participants in the emphasis they placed on being a black *Cuban*, different and separate from other black people, particularly African Americans. Some, especially those who were immersed in Cuban cultural practices such as Santeria and Afro Cuban music, emphasized cultural differences. The two informants, for instance, who identified the most strongly with this label practiced Santeria (though not everybody who enjoyed Afro Cuban music and was in the religion is classified as Afro-Cuban). For Miriam the religion was the vehicle through which she affirmed blackness:

Going into the religion has also been a positive black experience for me. I'm now out of the closet as a black woman; the way I dress, my hair, I look like a black santera from way back. It's an affirming feeling.

Many also emphasized their immigrant status, which meant they had an allegiance to another country, spoke a different language, and just had not had the same kind of experiences as African Americans.

One particularly articulate participant, Miriam, told me that this different history led her to respond to white Americans differently than do African Americans. White Americans do not elicit the same emotional response from her that white Cubans do:

Since I am not African American, white Americans will always be a foreigner. I have a sugar picking mind, not a cotton-picking mind. The anger, resentment automatic response to wording and attitudes that African Americans have toward whites I don't experience because I only learned about white Americans as an adult. I don't have the emotional response to white Americans; but to white Cubans, Yes! I don't respond negatively to the word, "nigger" because it isn't my language. They are not my whites; these aren't the words that hurt me. I understand the words. I know how to deal with it—the body language—but there is no emotion. Spanish is my emotional language; English is logic.

African Americans noticed these differences, and treated them differently and often in a hostile way. Most participants told me that at one point or another African Americans had rejected them. This seemed to impact participants who came as adults more than those who came as children. The latter tended to either dismiss this rejection as normal since they *were* foreigners when they first arrived, or to feel that African Americans were justified since most black immigrants feel themselves superior to African Americans. Some who arrived as adults or as older teens were alienated by this rejection, as the following excerpt makes clear:

African Americans don't accept blackness in its entirety; they won't learn another language. More educated African Americans who I socialize with in academia have a wider scope of the world, and are more open to other forms of blackness. They feel insulted because you're speaking another language. African American women ask, "Are you one of us"? But I can never be! I wanna say, "can you deal with blacks from other cultures? I have yet to find an African American woman who is comfortable with me as different. That is the biggest block; the closed-ness they have. I want to tell them, "You need to open up to all of us." When African Americans say, "Why can't we speak English," I want to say, "How white of you! This is the American part of you. It doesn't matter what color you are; it's the American in you. Wake up! You're American!"

Significantly enough, though, Afro-Cuban identity did not necessarily require a community of black Cubans in the immediate environment to support it. Most Afro-Cuban classified participants were New Yorkers who lived in West Indian, African American and Hispanic neighborhoods. Some Afro-Cuban classified New Yorkers knew very few black Cubans, and even felt alienated from black Cubans. One woman who had no black Cuban friends told me she did not get along with most Cubans, including black Cubans, because their politics was so different. Two other women told me they did not associate much with black Cubans because they did not entirely agree with black Cuban religious practices. One did not like that black Cubans were always “drumming as if they’re still in Africa,” while the other distinguished herself from the “new type” of black Cuban, namely those that came in 1980 during the Mariel boatlift. One social club in New York, Club Cubano Inter-Americano Inc, had by the time of my research lost its clubhouse, and was meeting in the home of a member.³³ Most people who attended the meetings were older. None of my informants attended, and only two attended the yearly dance, the *Mamoncillo*, which brought black Cubans together.

³³ The Club was formed separate from the club for white Cubans. One of the founders of the club told me that the reason the club’s name did not reflect the fact that the members were black is because they were trying to keep politics out of it; they wanted it to be a cultural and social club.

There was one social network of blacks who came in the Mariel boatlift. They got together in a barbershop in Union City owned by one of them, and on Sunday nights for a rumba at a nightclub in Union City (both places have since closed down or changed owners). This social network functioned as a support group for Mariel exiles and other black Cubans. One of my primary informants was a central part of this network. He kept in touch with many exiles and was in a sense the network's coordinator, arranging get-togethers, keeping members in touch with one another, providing lodging and financial assistance to new arrivals and needy group members alike.

Afro-Cuban identity also did not appear to me to be the result of the type of transnational experiences the transnational literature (discussed in chapter 2) describes for West Indian immigrants. These participants were not linked to, and did not share the political attitudes of, the Cuban exile organizations and activities that dominate in Miami. They rejected the exile politics of the dominant Cuban group. There were no national politicians mobilizing them on behalf of Cuba. It was also difficult for them to stay closely involved with Cuba because traveling to Cuba was difficult and expensive. A few did travel to Cuba yearly to visit relatives, and some did provide financial support to their families in Cuba. Returning home was very important to those who did; for two in particular it was almost a spiritual renewal.

The main feature of Afro-Cuban classified participants, then, is that though they self-identified as black people they saw themselves as different from other blacks, particularly

from African Americans. They also distinguished themselves from white Cubans. Life in the United States had also come to take precedence over life in Cuba. Cuba was just not as dominant in their lives in the way they felt it was for the majority of white Cuban exiles. In this regard they differ significantly from those respondents in my study who I classify as Cubano-Negro or Black-Cuban. For these respondents, Cuba was primary.

Cubano-Negro (Cuban-Black)

Four respondents either chose this category or expressed views that I classify as Black-Cuban. Three of these respondents arrived in the United States as adults, and one arrived as an older teen. The three who arrived as adults came in 1980 and after, while the teen came in the early 1970s. Two earned college degrees in Cuba and one here. Two lived in Miami, one in North Florida, and one in New York. For these participants, their national identity, allegiances and concerns were primary. This is not to say that they did not identify themselves as black, but that Cuba was paramount in their concerns and lives. The label Cubano-Negro, then, comes closest to an exile identity. For example, like many in the larger exile community in Florida, three of these participants did not visit Cuba. Two objected to visiting Cuba under Castro, while one could not visit because she is known in Cuba as an anti-revolutionary. Only one—Nicolás— did not share these sentiments and visited Cuba regularly to see his family and as part of the work of his organization. Also in our conversations they tended to talk a great deal more about their hatred of Fidel Castro and their hopes that the revolution will end, rather than about their lives here.

The Primacy of Cuba

Cuban issues were primary in the lives of Cuban-Black classified participants. They were extremely patriotic. Nicolás, for instance, told me that deep inside he is first black and that Cuba is an accident of birth. However, because the accident happened his idols are in Cuba. His idols, however, are important black Cubans. He laments it that “most black Cubans in the United States only have a 4th grade education” and therefore don’t know their country’s history. He told me he feels fortunate that he received an education in Cuba that taught him about Cuban history, the meaning of the flag, the battles. Nicolás also explained that so many things attach him to Cuba so that he gets emotional just by seeing the flag.

Like Nicolás, Angela displayed a great deal of national pride, and pride in the contributions of blacks in the social and political life of Cuba:

We (Cuban blacks) have a history of participating in wars in Cuba. We have a history that has been written in books so we’re not people who have not been recognized. We have been recognized as part of the independence movement in Cuba. Nobody can tell us we did not help Cuba liberate herself...we can look at Cuba, at our contributions and we feel proud.

Angela strongly objected to the label “Afro Cuban,” and asked me to be sure to document her objections. In this discussion between two other black Cuban women and myself we can see that she objects to “Afro” because it dilutes her Cubanidad. But she also objects because of its association with Africa. In another conversation she explained to me that new world blacks are not Africans, and that unlike African Americans black Cubans do not need to look to Africa for an identity because black Cubans have played an important

and acknowledged role in Cuban social and political history. Interestingly enough she preferred the terms “negro” and “black.” In the final analysis, however, blackness was secondary to Cubanidad; race was secondary to nationality:

Angela: I have a problem with “Afro Cubans.” If you call me Afro Cuban and the others Cuban, I have a problem with that.

MH: People don’t say white Cubans?

Angela: No, we say Cubans...we say white Cubans sometimes when I’m discussing social issues like now, but in terms of my day-to-day living I don’t refer to Afro Cubans or Ibero Cubans.

MH: What do you call your foundation?

Angela: Black Cuban foundation, but the first was called Afro Cuban Association. I had a problem with that name, but it was a democracy and most people voted for Afro Cuban...I like the term, “negro.” I’m proud of...

Miriam:... and there you see the difference with African Americans.

MH: There are lots of African Americans who don’t want to be called African American.

Angela: Because they’re not!...so you will discuss that?

MH: I will for sure because I notice that some people say Negro-Cubano and others Cuban-Negro. What do you prefer?

Miriam: Are you black Cuban or Cuban black? A Cuban that happens to be black as opposed to a black that happens to be Cuban?

Angela: Cubana Negra!

Angela, as well as two of the other Cuban-Black identified participants—Maximo and, Fernandez—explained that race was not primary for them because they had not encountered racism in Cuba. In a conversation I had with Angela and two other women she described her childhood in which she only recalled one racial incident. Note that Angela also blamed the Castro government for introducing racism:

Angela: My struggles have been tremendous being a black woman, but no question about it I’m Cuban. I like Cuban music. When I was going to kindergarten I was never a black child. I was a child!”

MH: Where in Cuba are you from?

Angela: Matanzas. I was just a child!

Josefina: so the subject of race never came up? you didn’t hear your parents talking about it.

Angela: I heard it once. I remember once when a cousin said, “oh, they’re not gonna give me this house because I’m black.” And my mother said to him “don’t think about that;” but only once.

MH: Did you grow up in a predominantly black town?

Angela: Yes, I would say 70 percent black.

Miriam: So you went to a school that had a high percentage of blacks?

MH: So you probably didn’t have to think about race in the same kind of way?

Angela: Maybe that’s why my racial experiences are different. So after that I realized there were racial issues when the government decided blacks were not to be allowed to leave. In school we were ridiculed. My sister and I would be taken to classrooms and they would say, “look at them, these black girls leaving the country.” We were 9 and 10 years old. What kind of government would do that to children? Now, do I have reasons to hate the government and their regime? Yes! A lot! Those blacks that dared to leave paid a very high price. Those people who were leaving were white, so we were friends and we engaged even at that age as a group.

She continued:

Our teachers were all colors and shades. Also our neighborhood was totally mixed. I had two grandmothers, my surrogate grandmother was blond and blue-eyed, and then my father’s mother, so in terms of my experience I was raised among people of all colors. So the concept of racism is very foreign to me, because white people were coming in and out of my house like it was no big deal.

Significantly, Fernandez, who blamed Fidel Castro for introducing racism into Cuba, also told me there was no racism in the United States. These three participants also felt the revolution has been bad for blacks. Angela gave me the example of her family who had begun to achieve upward mobility before the revolution, but who lost it all with the revolution. In this excerpt she expresses her satisfaction with the gradual improvement blacks were making before the revolution in 1959:

Blacks were beginning to make progress because there was that movement (referring to her family). Blacks were really beginning to see the light and then Castro came. Some of those gains that were made were lost, so Castro cannot tell me that just because he took over he made things happen for black people. That’s what people in Cuba believe, that after the revolution everything was for blacks. There was progress that was being made gradually, but people do not know that history. People believe that it is only when Castro came to Cuba that he did away

with racism. That was being dealt with gradually. But he burned the books, did away with those books about the progress blacks were making.

Nicolás had different experiences and memories. He recalled painful experiences of discrimination. Unlike Angela, Nicolás felt the revolution has given many opportunities to blacks, though he thinks there is much that should have been done and wasn't. He gives credits to the revolution for his own achievements. Nicolás also used his own family as evidence of the opportunities the revolution has given blacks. He argued that his family members who left Cuba for the United States early in the revolution have not earned an education and occupy menial positions while his immediate family in Cuba is highly educated.

Intra-Group Relations

The different perspectives Angela and Nicolás held on Cuba shaped their relationship with their white co-ethnics in the United States. This is reflected in the different nature of their activism. While Angela has worked relentlessly at getting Cuban blacks integrated into the exile community and involved in the exile community's efforts to overthrow Fidel Castro, Nicolás rejects "right wing Cubans" and works mostly with African Americans to aid black Cubans in Cuba. Below Angela explained that she founded an organization with "an agenda" to:

Urge black Cubans to participate in the community and to promote the agenda that blacks have to be integrated. They have to understand that they need to show up, to attend the patriotic rallies because many black Cubans are anti-Castro. We have the same agenda; we don't like Castro, but we don't participate and so we are invisible people. But we cannot blame (white Cubans)...we have to share the blame. We can't say people don't let us.

Angela's goal, as she explained, was integration. A primary motive for the organization was to bridge the racial divide among Cubans in the United States. Like all others in the study she was dissatisfied with the discriminatory behavior of her white co-ethnics. Instead of rejecting white Cubans, however, she sought to bridge the gap. Unlike her co-ethnics in this study who identified otherwise Angela tended to be more forgiving of white Cubans. For instance she was less upset about the tendency to erase blacks from the Cuban imaginary, explaining that she understood white Cubans did not recognize her as Cuban because she has very African features.

Unlike Angela, Nicolás distrusts the “right wing Cubans” in Miami, who he saw as disingenuous in their “recent” concern for black Cubans in Cuba. This is not to say, however, that he eschews contact and organizing with all white Cubans. On one occasion he told me he had more in common with white Cubans and felt more comfortable with them than all other groups. Though he feels culturally comfortable with Cubans, his concern for black Cubans sets him at odds politically with his white co-ethnics, and brings him in political alliance with African Americans. Nicolás founded an organization, The Cuban American Foundation, which aims at assisting blacks in Cuba through fundraising in the United States. A major goal of his is to build bridges between black Cubans and Americans. Thus a significant part of his work is leading groups of African Americans to Cuba where he introduces them to black Cuban issues and communities. Here he explained the rationale behind his work:

What this situation has provided to me is an opportunity to be able to do something for both parties—African Americans and black Cubans, without

making the distinction. First, I'm able to do the little thing I am doing right now like send donations to people in Guantánamo, in Banes, Santiago (areas in Cuba with heavy concentrations of West Indian immigrants). I'm not saying that that's the reason I do it, but coincidentally that's the darkest part of the country. So I'm thinking that when I send a wheelchair to Guantánamo the possibility of it landing in the hand of a black person is much greater than anywhere else. But on the other hand I'm trying very hard to relate Afro Cubans and Afro-Americans, let them know that it's that big old boat that made a number of stops, that you living in Georgia or Louisiana, these guys are your cousins.

Unlike Angela, Nicolás was not concerned about being negatively sanctioned by white Cubans. For instance his activities and opinions, many of which can be construed as pro-revolutionary, can be seen on the internet at afrocubaweb.com. This is partly because Nicolás did not live in South Florida, and he was an independent businessman. He explained that he did not have to fear losing his job. But he also was more independent because he did not look to Miami Cubans to support his organization, and unlike Angela his main goal is not integration with Cubans in the United States.

Nicolás's comments above also indicate that he does not feel estranged from African Americans and blackness. Like him the other four participants who fit in this category also identified themselves as black people, and they did feel a connection with all blacks. However, they tended to subscribe to Cuban exceptionalism, and this often meant making distinctions between themselves and African Americans. There were differences, though. For instance, Nicolás saw differences between African Americans and black Cubans, but he tended more toward emphasizing the commonalities. He also was more inclined to attribute differences in socioeconomic status to structural factors, such as the Cuban revolution's role in educating and equipping Cubans with work skills so that when they get here they are better prepared to take advantage of opportunities. He also noted the

role played by the economic and moral support Cubans have had from the U.S.

government. As he explained this support he also expressed his anger at the U.S.

government for sabotaging the revolution. He asked me to document the following:

What really happened here: it was a political issue that have given us a selective and unique treatment. You know what happened? In 1959/60 when the first masses of Cubans arrived here, who were they?...so what happened is that the first wave of Cubans that came over were people that were politically connected with the United States. They were the administrators of the American businesses. They were part of the American system. This is how the United States kept control. If you read that book *My Man in Havana* and many others, it says that when the American ambassador picked up the phone, the president went over to see him. So disgraceful it was! So therefore when Castro kicked all these people out of the country, there was a sense of gratitude. Plus these were the educated people of Cuba in those years. So when these people came here the only thing that they did not know really was the rules and regulations of this country and the language. So all you had was to produce for these people was teach them the language. So all of these people arriving in '59 they sent them to English school. Once they learned the language, these became the nucleus; you know, you, go over to the banking department; you, go over to health and welfare... I don't know if you know this, but...that was the most dramatic period. The United States, not the United States, the CIA focused on some critical areas in Cuba: education, health and intellectual in general. In the nineteen sixties... they offered every doctor who migrated from Cuba, don't hold me to that, it was 6,000, 10,000, I don't remember. Once as a doctor you migrated from Cuba, when you arrive here you were given \$6,000 and apartment or house and one year for you to go to school for licensing. And who is going to license you? The people that came before ...Fidel is very angry with this country and he has tons of reasons to be angry. In the nineteen sixties where the *Poder Popular* is today, that used to be a polyclinic. In those years, Sunday evening when you went out to pick up your friend, whatever, when you're walking home, there were people sleeping on the sidewalk... why am I using this as an example? That was two blocks from my home, so I had to walk there every day. And you saw people sleeping on the sidewalk every day, saving their spot, hoping to see a doctor tomorrow. Why? Because half of them had fled the country. Because they wanted to? No. Some wanted, but the magnet, the encouragement was so great. If I leave and I get \$6,000 and in one year I will have my re-certification and make big money, to hell with everyone! There is, and please print that; that's important...that guy was my mother's surgeon. He is the most dramatic example. García was in surgery in those years, and how you knew when you applied when you're about to leave? Immigration would send you a telegram. So this guy (García) is in surgery and the nurse stepped out for whatever reason and when she came somebody told her the doctor got this telegram. So when she went in the operation, she said, "Doctor, your telegram arrived." And he dropped everything!

Angela also made distinctions between African Americans and Cuban blacks, but she tended to emphasize cultural differences, even while she acknowledged ongoing racism. She subscribed to the notion that aspects of African American culture were different and pathological, and that African Americans had suffered psychological damages because of the harsher system of slavery in the United States. She also made the claim that black Cubans have a better sense of themselves as Cubans and are more patriotic because they have taken part in their country's history; suggesting incorrectly that African Americans haven't. These cultural differences, Angela felt, made it difficult for Cubans and African Americans to understand one another (interestingly enough Angela had been married to an African American man). So, unlike Black-Cuban identified participants most of whom argued that there were external forces dividing the communities or who emphasized the similarities over the differences, Angela tended to see the divisions as cultural and to emphasize the differences.

Fernández and Máximo shared Angela's views of African Americans. Compared with Nicolás, who interacted often with African Americans and other blacks, Fernández and Máximo rarely interacted with African Americans and other blacks. They lived in Cuban and Hispanic areas and spoke very little English. Indeed in some sense African Americans was not even an issue for them. Their lives evolved around Cuban and Latino issues, and African Americans occupied a peripheral place in their lives. White Americans also occupied a peripheral place mostly because they had limited contact with them. Only one of these participants, and the only one from New York, had significant

contact with other Latino groups, and so Latinos also did not figure much in their identity. Except for Nicolás, then, they lived their lives as Cubans.

This chapter described the hyphenated black identities of the study's informants. In the following chapter I use the social experiences of eight of the study's participants to discuss the formation of ethno-racial identities and the development of political perspectives. In particular their stories demonstrate the effects of exposure or the lack thereof to African American political culture on the ways these participants identified.

Chapter 5

Identity Formation: Local Contexts

This chapter describes the social experiences that led participants to identify in the ways that they did. The underlying argument of this chapter is that there is nothing inherent or inevitable in the ways in which the participants in this study self-identified. Their identities were constructed in the context of specific social experiences.

As presented in the previous chapter the study's participants expressed views that placed them into three categories: Black-Cuban (Negro-Cubano), Afro-Cuban (Afro-Cubano) and Cuban-Black (Cubano-Negro). As I became aware of the differences in their political perspectives I began asking them to reflect on what led them to feel the way they did.

With their help, I identified three variables or factors that were influential in the formation of their identities and perspectives: 1) the socio-political environment that prevailed at the time they arrived in the United States; 2) their level of English language proficiency; and 3) their age at the time they migrated. These variables determined the level of exposure individuals had to African American political culture, and consequently the level of their racial group identity as against their ethnic identity.

The variables are interconnected in such a way that any one by itself does not explain an individual's identity. What I found was that those with a high level of racial group consciousness were those who arrived in the United States during the black liberation movements of the fifties, sixties and seventies, but who were young enough to learn

English quickly and old enough to understand, follow and take part in the movements, and to establish relations with African Americans. On the other hand, individuals who were ethnic or exile identified tended to be those informants who arrived after the black liberation movements, or who arrived during the black liberation movements but who were older teens who did not speak English. Their awareness, knowledge and contact with African Americans and African American political culture were therefore limited.

The socio-political environment in the United States, then, was key in the way in which they self-identified, and the relationship they had with others. While the importance of social context and social experiences in identity formation is acknowledged in the literature, what is sorely missing in studies of black immigrants is the impact of *African American political culture and ideologies* on the identities of black immigrants. This is surprising since African Americans are a significant part of the environment of most black immigrants.

In much of the literature it is acknowledged that immigrants' prior experiences in their countries of origin play a powerful role in how they respond to their new environment in the United States, and come to see themselves and others (Vickerman; 1999; Waters, 1999; Foner, 2001). In "Cuban Social Context" I explore the possible effects of the Cuban Revolution on the identities and political perspectives of the study's participants. In the rest of the chapter I examine the social experiences my informants had in the United States that shaped their views and the ways they identified. The section, "New York," reconstructs the social environment of New York City, and presents the life

experiences of four informants--José, Liliana, Miriam, and Nicolás—to illustrate the link between the way they identified and the intersection of the socio-political environment of New York, their age at the time of arrival, and their level of English language proficiency. The section on Miami does the same, using the life experiences of Denise, Ramón, Maria and Ana.

Section I: Cuban Social Context

Here I examine the effects of life in socialist Cuba on the identities of my informants. I focus on socialist Cuba because most arrived in the United States after 1959. The Cuban Revolution moved early to eradicate inequality, including racial inequality. Structural barriers thought to prevent black advancement were removed: education and health services were nationalized and made free to all Cubans; segregated neighborhoods were integrated; private clubs and beaches, once open to only whites and the wealthy, were made accessible to all (de la Fuente, 2001).

The Cuban government also initially made attempts to address the ideas Cubans had about race. According to African-American anthropologist Johnetta B. Cole (1980) who visited Cuba in 1977-78, the government had established various policies toward this end: education, which included a conscious use of culture and art, promoted anti-racist themes, and the youth were placed away from their parents— in day-care centers and schools in the countryside—who were more likely to have racist ideas. The government also attempted in very explicit ways to write in blacks as revolutionaries, as essential in the cultural expressions of the Cuban peoples, and as critical in Cuba's historical resistance to oppression. For example, in the arts— theater, music, literature—efforts were made to depict black protagonists in positive ways, while in the media, there was a

marked increase in the use of visual images of blacks. Cole was satisfied that the revolutionary government was "committed to building a non-racist Cuba."

The Cuban government also supported the black struggle in the United States and around the world. Cubans in Cuba could follow the movements, their major leaders, expressive forms, strategies and ideologies. They were televised in Cuba and several African American leaders traveled to Cuba, and sought refuge there. Cuba also sent military and humanitarian aid to seventeen African countries and three African insurgencies, the largest being the 400,000 Cuban troops who were sent to Angola between 1975 and 1991 (Dominguez, 1978; Eckstein, 1982, 1985; Gleijeses, 2002).

Two participants referred specifically to the effects of these policies on their racial identity. One woman who arrived in the United States in 1971 when she was twenty years old told me she had begun to change her ideas about the supremacy of whiteness when she lived in Cuba. She credited "Castro" with that, but felt that her racial awareness "jelled" in the United States when she went to college. The other informant, who arrived in the United States in 1980 at age forty, was much more influenced by the anti-racist domestic policies of the Cuban government, but he was even more influenced by his exposure to the black liberation movements outside of Cuba: the civil rights movement in the United States, and the anti-colonial struggles in Africa.

The majority of informants did not appear to be so influenced. Most who spent ten years or more in Cuba after the revolution triumphed and who arrived in the United States as adults were *not* more inclined toward a pan-African perspective. One possible reason for

this is that though the Cuban government's policies led to an unprecedented social mobility of black Cubans, the policies were not publicly and consistently framed in racial term. They were presented in terms of social class, and as a struggle against the evils of capitalism, not against the evils of racism. In fact, race has not been a topic of open discussion. As was the case for the pre-Castro period, to talk about racial issues is to risk ostracism, and being seen as divisive, unpatriotic and counter-revolutionary (Helg, 1996; de la Fuente, 1998; McGarrity, et al 1995; Nicholson, 1974). Historically, and this apparently has also been the case in the Castro period, blacks in Cuba have been discouraged from struggling as black people, and from seeing themselves as having a special interest as blacks.

It also appears that information about the struggles of people of African descent was tightly controlled, such that both the information and the way the information was conveyed portrayed these struggles as class and national struggles, downplaying their racial aspects. As Miriam, who is Afro-Cuban identified and who arrived at age sixteen in the mid-1960s, explained:

I had no African American history course...Hell, I didn't even know who Martin Luther King was. I have no contact with that world, so I knew more about what was happening in Czechoslovakia and what was happening with Lumumba in Africa than I knew about Martin Luther King, because I came from an island that looked out to these other places. I was coming from a world of the 60s, that my world of the 60s was not about blackness. It was about freedom, was about freedom in a larger sense of communism and the Soviet Union. I was very political at that time. Oh yeah, in high school in Cuba, the long hair was a big issue, and it wasn't allowed for men to have long hair...big political issue. So that was the issues of the 60s for me. But I remember being so angry about the Czechoslovakia thing, being so angry about the Lumumba thing. I had no idea about this afro-movement here. I was coming from a totally foreign perspective. I didn't catch up to that till the 70s.

I found that the majority of adults who came after the black liberation movements had very little knowledge about the black liberation movements in the United States. Only two had substantial knowledge. One had followed the movement from Jamaica where he went before migrating to the United States, and a second had followed it closely from Cuba. Most, then, had a vague knowledge of the major figures— Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Angela Davis— but lacked a deep understanding of the issues. For example, in a discussion with three women, all of whom had migrated to the United States as adults in the late 1970s, two of the women took the position that it was improper for Angela Davis to have throw stones on to the Guantánamo Base. They felt she was dishonoring her country, clearly missing the anti-imperialist stance Davis was taking.

Most informants who migrated as adults also lacked knowledge about the African diaspora in general, and whatever knowledge they had appeared to have came through informal channels, not through the Cuban educational system. A number of contributors to Pedro Pérez-Sarduy's *Afro-Cuban Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba* spoke to this lack of information about the diaspora. One woman when asked if she had any readings that can compensate for that kind of anguish (racism) she and other blacks have experienced answered thus:

I haven't seen anything on this, either books or journals...and I would like to. There are few texts, little information on these themes. And we need it, not only my generation, but all of us who are black and of mixed race need that kind of literature, to be informed about black communities in other countries, in the United States, in Hispanic America, in Europe, because each of these communities has its own experience (Pérez-Sarduy, 2000: 70).

Another contributor told Pérez-Sarduy (2000:39): “If you were to ask me the economic situation of North American blacks I’d have to declare my ignorance. I know more about North American Jews than about North American blacks.”

The situation is quite different for those participants who came as children, the majority of whom stressed their racial over their ethnic identity. Instead, America is their reality, and a harsh one by their account. When they evaluate their life chances and opportunities, like native-born blacks they compare themselves to white Americans, and like native-born blacks they see racism to be a significant barrier to self-actualization. Their experiences with racism in Cuba played a rather insignificant role in the extent of their racial consciousness, especially the politicized racial consciousness they expressed.

Some left Cuba too young to have developed a politicized racial consciousness in Cuba. Those who came in their early teens noted racism as part of their environment, but their racial consciousness “jelled here” as one informant framed it. It was in the United States that they came to reject the Cuban racial order, to see blackness positively and to identify with a pan-African struggle against oppression. For most, what was seminal was their experience with the black liberation ideologies, which embraced blackness as beautiful and valuable, and which encouraged them to see the status quo as unacceptable, and collective struggle for civil rights as legitimate. A few attributed their racial consciousness to their college education. The courses they took and the people they met on college campuses “opened their eyes.”

This is not to say that participants who arrived after the black liberation struggles were not black-identified. Their racialized experiences in Cuba led them to a consciousness of themselves as black people, different from whites, and they were mindful of racism. Only one person insisted that blackness is merely the color of his skin. The others understood themselves to be black and to be linked, even if it is in the white imaginary, to other blacks. But while they were racially conscious, they tended to not have a politicized racial identity. In essence, then, it appeared socialism in Cuba appeared to have discouraged the formation of a politicized racial group consciousness. Thus while they felt an affective bond with African Americans and other blacks, they were not politically connected.

Living in socialist Cuba also did not seem to lead individuals to support progressive politics either. The two participants in this study who were socialists in their political perspective arrived in the United States as children, having left Cuba in the early 1960s. Their formative experience was in the socialist movement in the United States, which was itself strongly influenced by the Cuban revolution, but also the liberation struggles in Africa and the anti-Vietnam War struggles. Those participants who spent the most time in socialist Cuba were *not* more inclined toward a class perspective; they tended instead to embrace capitalism and the American ethos and to be strongly anti-socialist.

Gaston Fernández (1981-1982) came to a similar conclusion. Three to four years after they arrived Fernández evaluated the social and political attitudes of 52 Mariel entrants. He found that they valued hard work and individual effort, both of which he argued are

consistent with American values. The overwhelming majority felt that it would be easy to improve oneself economically in the United States if one worked hard, and that a hard-working child could greatly improve himself/herself irrespective of who his/her parents were. The majority also looked favorably on the U.S. government, expressed a strong belief in the fairness of the U.S. system, and was as anti-communist as the earlier exiles. They did differ from the earlier exiles, Fernández found, in that they expected the state to perform more social welfare functions, such as medical care and housing. Unlike others, then, who expected the Mariel émigrés to have difficulty in assimilating to U.S. society because of their socialization in socialist Cuba, Fernandez predicted no such difficulties. They held these favorable attitudes toward U.S. society despite their economic marginality in the United States, and the heavy anti-American propagandizing they were exposed to in Cuban. They seemed instead to have been even more influenced by the pro-American propagandizing from U.S. radio programs to Cuba, and especially by the large numbers of émigrés who began visiting Cuba in 1979 for the first time. Several Mariel émigrés I interviewed remembered when their relatives or a neighbor's relative visited and how impressed they were by the visitors' clothing and consumer items. The visitors gave them the impression there were plenty of opportunities for blacks in the United States. Many émigrés were surprised and deeply shocked when they arrived and it was not at all easy. It was not what they were led to believe by their relatives.

One factor that might account for their (Mariel émigrés) embrace of the United States is generational differences. In an informal survey done in Cuba in 1996, Alejandro de la Fuente (2000) found that younger Cubans, both whites and blacks, expressed less

commitment to, and more dissatisfaction with, the revolution than older Cubans. Unlike older Cubans, the youth had no experience with the pre-revolutionary period, and the opportunities for social mobility that were there in the beginning of the revolution had decreased significantly, leaving young people with fewer and fewer opportunities. A similar dissatisfaction apparently existed among the youth in 1980 when the Mariel boatlift brought 125,000 exiles. Forty one percent of the Mariel exiles were under twenty-seven years of age (Fernández, 1991-1992). Not only had these young people experienced the economic decline of the 1970s but they had also been exposed to the pro-American propagandizing of the émigrés who returned in 1978-1979, and US based radio programs such as Radio Marti.

Damián Fernández (1993), who documented the dissatisfaction of the youth during this period, wrote that some Cuban youth were exhibiting some decidedly anti-revolutionary behaviors. They criticized official rhetoric as *el teque* (“*the officialese, the discource of the revolution that is no longer revolutionary*”) many were attracted to the lifestyles of a consumer society, expressed in their attraction to alternative hairstyles, dress and music considered anti-revolutionary and their attraction to tourists; and some dropped out of school and did not work. The Union of Communists Youth had difficulty mobilizing the youth. Officials recognized this problem: “The analysis of our tasks demonstrates that we have not generated successful initiatives that mobilize thousands of youngsters...Our propaganda must be more agile...we are on the defensive”(Fernández, 1993:197). It is safe to assume, then, that many of those who came in 1980 had come to reject socialism.

Unfortunately my study does not include any of these youths. Most of the participants who spent ten years or more in socialist Cuba were adults when they left Cuba, and they had some experience with pre-revolutionary Cuba. Yet, like the youth Fernández (1993) described, they rejected many of the tenets of socialism, and embraced American capitalism and consumerism. Perhaps this is because many seemed to have left Cuba primarily for “economic” rather than for “political” reasons. Most of the study’s participants who arrived in the late seventies and after complained about the shortages of consumer goods, the hardships, and the lack of opportunities for social mobility in Cuba. Several also came to be reunited with family. These participants behaved no differently than Jamaicans who come in search of economic opportunities. They used whatever strategies, including distancing themselves from African Americans, to access more resources. In our conversations they compared their lives in Cuba with their lives in the United States and found their material life here to be richer.

Section II: Identity Formation in the United States

The social environment in the United States, and their ordinary everyday experiences had a powerful effect on the identities of my informants. There were significant differences between the socio-political environment in New York City and Miami. Consequently, Miamians had different experiences from New Yorkers, and this is reflected in their identities.

Their identities, then, were shaped by local contexts, but the overall thrust for most seems to be a transitioning from national and/or ethnic affinity to an identification with other

groups of African descent. To conceptualize this transition it is necessary to deploy a historical lens. I look briefly on historical reconstructions of the formation of new world black identities, which also involved the coming together of different groups of people of African descent, and the transitioning from insular ethnic identifications to corporate identifications.

A Historical View of Black Identity Formation

Two to three hundred years ago a similar meeting of varied groups of African descent took place in the new world. Now in the United States it is African Americans and English and Spanish speaking Caribbean immigrants; then the groups were from different African ethnic groups—Yoruba, Fon, Ibo, etc. These early new world Africans eventually, and over several generations, gave up their ethnicities and constructed a new corporate identity, becoming Jamaicans, Cubans and African Americans, for example. Research on the conditions under which this transformation took place is helpful in conceptualizing the present. Both Don Robotham (1988) and Micheal Gomez (1998) have described this transformation in the identities of these early African American cultures and identities. Both researchers demonstrate the significance of the similarities in their material conditions. They were all slaves, who suffered similar regimes of terror and dehumanization, and all occupied a similar place in relation to whites.

The similarity in material conditions was not enough, however. There were other factors that eventually led individuals who had tenaciously held on to their country marks to shift to a corporate identity, and to begin to de-emphasize their ethnic differences. Gomez

(1998) argues for the importance of religion: “The shift from an ethnically-based to a race-premised collective personality was greatly influenced by the religious views of the African-based community.” This shift began occurring in the late 18th century during the period of the Great Revival when the enslaved began converting to Christianity, but an Africanized Christianity. It was their collective participation in the rituals associated with Afro-Christianity— the ring shout, funerals and baptism—that led to the development of a corporate identity).

Similarly, Don Robotham (1988) argues for the role of what he calls “symbolic” factors in the uneven and complex “development of a black ethnicity in Jamaica:” the varied movement of “Native” Baptists and “Native” Methodists. These movements, Robotham (1988:35) explains,

established a new ethical code for the people not only in the religious but in the cultural sense. Among other things, this new outlook regarded each black man, woman and child as morally and culturally (but alas, not socially) equal. It had no room for traditional ethnicity and did not recognize it.

For neither of these populations was the transformation smooth; many went to their death firmly identified with their ethnic group. And despite many similarities in material conditions their experiences was not homogeneous. There were differences based on such social conditions as region, class, gender, skin color, black to white ration, and religion, all of which influenced the formation of identities.

We can now fast forward to the twentieth-first century and foreign and native-born blacks. In the United States these black ethnic groups do share similar experiences, living

in the same neighborhoods, often working in the same sectors of the economy, and their children attending the same schools. They also occupy similar symbolic spaces in relation to the dominant society. The lesson we learn from the formation of early black subjectivities, however, is that the similarity in their material life is not enough for the development of unity. In this dissertation the “symbolic” factor in the transition in their identities is African American political philosophies, at the root of which is a racialized consciousness or a consciousness that gives primacy to race and de-emphasizes all other subjectivities. There is one significant difference between the historical experiences of the early African ethnic groups, and the experiences of the contemporary ethnic groups of African descent such as the Cubans who took part in this study: we know the outcome of the former—they became African Americans and Jamaicans. We do not know the outcome of the latter; these identities are still in process. Let us now turn to the specifics of the process.

New York: The Early Years

The majority of the early black Cuban in New York was fleeing from Jim Crow segregation in Tampa. Most initially settled in Spanish Harlem, and then later on some moved to Harlem and the Bronx. There they joined other Spanish-speaking immigrants, mostly Puerto Ricans. What was life like for these Spanish-speaking groups and what was their relationship with New York’s other minority groups, particularly African Americans?

The mass migration of Puerto Ricans did not take place until the 1950s, but there had long been a community of Puerto Ricans in New York City. The early immigrants, Oboler (1995) wrote, were subjected to a “profound experience of exploitation.” They were marginalized in segregated and neglected urban ghettos, without access to adequate schooling, housing, or good health care, relegated to low-paying menial jobs in canneries and factories, violently discriminated against by the criminal justice system, and denied access to political channels through which to voice their demands.

The racial ideology and practices of the time viewed even phenotypically white Latinos as the dark foreign “other.” For example, Cuban baseball teams, which were racially integrated, were consigned to playing in the Negro Circuit, and visiting Cuban musicians were subjected to the same Jim Crow segregation rules as African Americans (Brock et al, 1998).

Considering the class, race and national diversity of New York’s Latino population it is not surprising that different sectors responded to these conditions differently. Some tried to assimilate into whiteness. For instance some tried losing their accents and acquiring the other cultural attributes that would gain them acceptance by the dominant society.

Though not a New Yorker, this Puerto Rican activist (quoted in Oboler, 1995:49)

explained:

Though nothing extraordinary, you know, in my childhood—maybe just that I learned very early how to become accepted, how to rise above and beyond as they say. Even at that point we knew that to the extent that we became white—we would advance in school. To the extent that we spoke properly—we would get Satisfactory or Excellent on our report cards. To the extent that we conformed we were accepted.

The efforts of the assimilationists culminated in 1940, when the U.S. census reclassified individuals with Spanish surnames as white (Oboler, 1995). Another strategy some used to resist their racialization into the non-white category was to assert a national identity, which also meant establishing themselves as different from African Americans. This was would have been especially relevant for black Latinos whose phenotype linked them to African Americans. The excerpt below is from an account by Piri Thomas, a dark skinned Puerto Rican:

I remember the first time I went to the South with my friend Billy. I sat in the front of the bus and when the bus got to the Mason Dixie Line, our driver got off and a new driver got on. Immediately, he said, “all the colored to the back” and all the coloreds got up and went back and I just sat there. And he said, “I want all of you colored people to go to the back” and I said “look I am puertoriqueno” and he looked at me and said “I don’t care what kind of nigger you are” and he put his hand into his side pocket” (quoted in Rivera, 2003:25).

The attempt to assimilate invariably led some white Latinos to distance themselves from their black co-ethnics. White Cubans for instance created a social club (*Circulo Cubano*) that did not admit black Cubans (Greenbaum, 2002). Though they were not in the segregated south, white Cuban New Yorkers were behaving like their counterparts in Jim Crow Florida (Greenbaum, 2002). It is important to note here also that the racism white Cuban New Yorkers exhibited is not solely a response to the U.S. racial system. The Cuba from which these immigrants came was also marked by anti-black racism. In this excerpt Cuban baseball player Minnie Minoso drew the parallels between the Cuban and U.S. racial systems of the 1920s:

When I came to the United States, I was surprised and a bit amused to hear some black ballplayers tell me that I didn’t understand prejudice and discrimination

because I was Cuban, not black. What nonsense!...I told these players to look at me and then they tell me I am not black. Cuba was not the racial paradise some might want them to believe. Just as in the United States, there were many sections of Cuba, and many neighborhoods, where you only saw white people. And here in this country, the signs in restaurants and buses prohibiting blacks applied as much to me as it did to them (quoted in Brock et al, 1998:168).

While anti-black racism among Cubans in New York is evident, the situation among New York's Puerto Ricans is more of a mixed bag. On the one hand, there are accounts that suggest there was less anti-black racism among Puerto Ricans. Greenbaum (2002) found, for instance, that those black Cubans who migrated to New York assimilated into the city's predominantly Puerto Rican population, indicating some acceptance of blacks. Winston James has also argued there was relative racial harmony among Puerto Ricans, though he was comparing Puerto Rican and U.S. race relations, a comparison which often leads to the conclusion of more racial harmony among Puerto Ricans (and Latin Americans in general). On the other hand, however, there are personal accounts by black Puerto Ricans of racism among Puerto Ricans in the United States. One example is Angela Jorge (1996) account discussed above (see also Marta I. Cruz-Janzen (2001) on the rejection black Puerto Rican women experience).

Black Latinos in New York responded in a variety of ways to these social conditions. Arturo Schomburg and Jesus Colon, both black Puerto Rican men, illustrate two possible political paths: Schomburg was an ardent Pan-Africanist who was "wedded to the struggles of Afro-America," and Colon was a Puerto Rican nationalist "with no time for black nationalism" (James, 1996:92):

New York's Latino groups also had to interact with, and respond to, African Americans, many of whom were also immigrants from the south. The lines between Latinos and African Americans were somewhat blurred, both in the minds of white Americans and in their own practices, and the lines were not necessarily oppositional. The two groups often lived in the same or contiguous communities, and they held the same low-wage jobs. While some Latinos tried to distance themselves others interacted closely with African Americans. Age/generation and race are likely variables in the types of interactions between the groups. Children who played with one another and went to the same schools would have interacted more than their parents, and black Latinos, especially those who felt estranged from their white co-ethnics, would have interacted more with African Americans. .

Interactions between Latinos and African Americans was most intense in the realm of popular culture; African American and Cuban baseball players and fans, and musicians and their fans met, supported and delighted in one another. Lisa Brock (1998) has argued, like Michael Hanchard (1994) has for Brazil, that to investigate racial politics among blacks one has to look in the realm of popular culture, not in formal institutional structures. One can see the blurred lines that existed between the early Cuban immigrants and African Americans in popular cultural sites. As Brock (1998:19) wrote: "It was in the nightclubs, dance halls, late night studios, baseball diamonds, record stores, barber shops, low rent but clean hostels, and neighborhood eateries that the vast majority of Cubans and blacks engaged one another and expressed solidarity" (see Flores, 2000; Rivera, 2003 for a similar perspective on Puerto Ricans).

New York- The Era of Liberation Movements

The environment in which New York's Latinos and African Americans were working out their differences and establishing commonalities began to change with the black liberation movements of the middle to late nineteen sixties. Along with other minority populations, Spanish-speaking groups underwent significant social change.

It was primarily the youth from each group who led and took part in those struggles and began borrowing from each other's strategies and traditions. They rejected the assimilation strategy of their parents, and instead worked at creating an identity based on pride in their own cultural and national heritage. This meant studying and redeeming their national histories, writing and claiming the history of their denigration at the hands of white supremacy, and establishing themselves as equal and contributing American citizens. To this end, they demanded the establishment of Black studies, Puerto Rican studies and Chicano studies departments in universities and colleges across the nation. They gave themselves new labels, declared themselves beautiful and created mythic homelands (Oboler, 1995; Haney-Lopez, 2003). Redeeming ones heritage was absolutely essential because each group's heritage had been so denigrated by white supremacy. As Vijay Prashad (2002:59) explained: "This desire to confront the cultural injury of white supremacy with the salve of a plural heritage is the very best of multiculturalism."

This was a complex period, which was filled with the possibilities for both inter-group unity and divisions. As each group created an identity based on pride in its own cultural

and national heritage, some began setting up boundaries that excluded others from their imagined communities. In Roberto Rodríguez-Morazzani's (1998) description we can see the pluralist logic that guided the Puerto Rican movement, as well as the seeds of separatism:

During this period of transition, Puerto Rican youth began to enter the university in small numbers. Many of them were the first members of their families to pursue higher education. Their admission was the result of two different strategies. First, the leadership of the Puerto Rican community was pursuing a strategy of community advancement through educational achievement. Identical to the perspective of their African American counterparts, their strategy was premised on a conception of a pluralist society, composed of various ethnic groups, all of whom were competing with one another for goods and services...if granted equal access to power and allowed to strengthen and renew their unique cultural roots, the groups would form a multicultural society in which each component supported and enriched each other...For Puerto Rican youth, like their African American counterparts, the struggle was not only focused on questions of racism, social justice and exploitation, but it also involved a struggle of *definition, of identity*.

For some of these youths, however, the movements broke down boundaries and allowed them to forge more inclusive identities. Some of my respondents experienced this as a time when they created new hybrid identities that reconciled being both black and Latino. For instance, the movements provoked a criticism of racism among Latinos, empowered them to reject the racism in their communities, and were instrumental in their acceptance of their black heritage. One of the participants in this study whose family was also the subject of a documentary on black Cubans, *Cuban Roots*, explained that the Young Lords were primarily "people of color," and how affirming that was for her. By affirming blackness the movement also recast African Americans in a new light. Unlike some of their parents the second generation saw African Americans as empowered and powerful individuals.

New York: Post-1970s

It can be argued that the inclusive aspects of the 1960s and 1970s was only an interlude. It appears that the push toward separatism and the historic desire of immigrants (including but not confined to Euro-immigrants) to distance themselves from African Americans has reasserted itself. Groups are inclined to embrace the identity politics and competitive group relations that have been reconstituted in American political culture. A number of observers note that the nationalism that was part of the movement allowed for the co-optation of some segments of the movements by hegemonic agents who are more interested in controlling diversity, rather than destroying white supremacy. Prashad (2002), for instance, argues that what began as a struggle to redeem ones national heritage was co-opted by the liberal state as a way of managing diversity. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1996) postulate that it was the irresolvable dilemma of the civil rights movement—it simultaneously sought to end racial inequality and increase awareness and pride in racial identification—that made it vulnerable to rearticulation from projects on the political right. Thus hegemonic agents were able to institute cultural and structural pluralism, which encourage groups to see themselves as discrete and essentialized ethnic units, competing for resources. Groups are now locked in a zero-sum competition for “crumbs” (Prashad, 2002) or “favours and privileges”(Marable, 1994).

It is this hardening and competition between groups that post 1970s immigrant groups are more likely to see, and the political system they are negotiating. The identities of new immigrants are being forged in a different environment from the 1960s and 1970s, and as

evidenced by the small number of people who took part in this study that came after this period these immigrants are inclined draw distinct lines around their ethnic group and to see groups as competitors. As immigrants, they are behaving like immigrants have done historically—constructing ethnic identities, and distancing themselves from African Americans. Some of their children are also doing the same. For example, Waters (1999) found that a significant number of the children of West Indian immigrants maintain their ethnic identity and see themselves as distinct from native-born blacks. Nevertheless, the situation is in flux. Waters also found that some of the children of West Indian immigrants do identify with African Americans, and Vickerman (1999) found that the first generation West Indian men in his study came to sympathize more with African Americans the longer they were in the country.

The choices the children of Latin American immigrants are making are also in flux. Increasingly racism is becoming a topic of open discussion among Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants. In 1996, El Centro de Estudios de Puertorriquenos at Hunter College issued a double volume on race and identity, and there have been several conferences and articles in the media about the topic. At one conference I attended at Hunter College in November 2003, Felipe Luciano, a founder of the Young Lords, told the audience that Puerto Ricans can learn a lot about being politically black from African Americans, and African Americans can learn a lot about being culturally black from Puerto Ricans. While the majority of Latinos identified themselves as white or other on the 2000 Census some Latinos, particularly Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, seem to be creating other forms of identification. Raquel Rivera (2003:32) has documented what she

calls the hybrid cultural forms and identities that are being created by African American, West Indian and Puerto Rican youth in New York City's ghettos. She quoted Nuyorican poet Louis Reyes Rivera as saying:

Interestingly enough, of all of the 'Latino-Americans' living in the United States, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans—second generation—more easily identify with the Afro-United States scene than with the Anglo-United States scene. And that's not only because of the similarity in music but also because of the similarity in spirit and in social condition. It's not just a culture thing, it's an ethnic recognition. (sic) and it's a social response to similar condition.

In his view that there is "similarity in spirit" and "an ethnic recognition" between blacks and Puerto Ricans, Reyes Rivera alludes to the shared or parallel cultural traditions and sensibilities of the peoples of the African diaspora. Whether these traditions and sensibilities are a function of continuities from Africa or from shared experiences of exploitation, marginalization and oppression, African American "culture" (itself a hybrid form to which Afro-Diasporic peoples from the Spanish and English Caribbean have contributed) was familiar, especially to those informants who were Black-Cuban identified. These participants reported little trouble in integrating into African American culture. It was familiar to them, and was infinitely more affirming of their blackness than their own culture. Their narratives are replete with pan-African sentiments. One woman put it this way: "My identity is so deeply embedded in Africa that when I came here it was easier to identify with African Americans than with Puerto Ricans who were so prejudiced." And as one of the narrators in the documentary, *Bronx Roots*, mused about his life as a newly arrived immigrant in a mixed African American and Puerto Rican neighborhood in the South Bronx, "They wanted us to choose, but to me we were one people."

The narratives of the following are participants who settled in New York and were a part of the environment I described above. Included is one woman who grew up in Jersey City, just across the Hudson River from New York City. The first two informants exhibited a strong racial group consciousness, identified themselves primarily though not exclusively as black, and were allied with African Americans. The fourth, Miriam, was Afro Latino and Afro-Cuban identified. Through their stories we can see how their age and language abilities interacted with the communities in which they settled and the political environment at the time they were growing up to shape their identities and their political attitudes. We can also discern in some of their stories the relationship between the groups in their environment, and how that affected them. And we can see another important factor in their identification: an experience of being pushed away or rejected by one group and pulled or embraced by another.

José 's Story

José arrived in the United States in 1962 at age eleven. He, his mother and six siblings lived in the Bronx, a community of African Americans and Latinos. José exhibited a strong racial group identity. Here he described the community in which he grew up. He used his own experience to illustrate his point that though there were divisions among the adults, the children were beginning to have a different point of view:

Yes, and it's not until their kids grow up and begin to experience it that they... I give you a good example. When we came here the main group of Latinos were Puerto Ricans. And Puerto Ricans didn't mix with the blacks and the blacks didn't mix with the Puerto Ricans. It was a hostile thing. We were caught in limbo because on the one hand we could speak Spanish and the other we considered ourselves black. We saw one group of people only; but no, it was very separate.

As a matter of fact you heard comments from the Latinos towards blacks that were very racist, and you also heard from blacks. The Latinos, “don’t hang out with those blacks, *los cocolos*, *los morenos*, don’t hang out with them.” I had an experience with a young lady; we were teenagers. We were just getting to like each other, and one time I walked her home and sure enough her uncle or somebody was waiting out there. Well the next day she told me her family did not want her to talk to me and mingle, and she was like your complexion (a reference to my medium brown skin). She was not white.

Below he described the transition he saw and experienced:

I think I would have appreciated it if there had been more mixing between the black Americans and the Latinos. It wasn’t until I went to high school that it began to happen as they grew up and began shifting more and more to so-called black culture and dancing and listening to the songs that were played on the radio, and so these Latinos came to be more and more Americanized and crossing over. Same thing happened with us where we went from the Latino culture to the so-called black culture. In my family it was happening throughout, but for me it happened more in high school because I went from mixing with Latinos to more and more black friends, hanging out more with black Americans.

MH: I’ve had several people describe that to me. The way they sort of described it...one woman described a sort of situation where she was being pushed, rejected...

José : I would say yes, that would be like me. And the rejection comes from you becoming aware of some things and people saying things. Again going back to *pelo bueno*, *pelo malo* (good hair, bad hair) or my skin is better than yours, becoming more aware and saying this is all b.s., and you gravitating to people who are beginning to say black is beautiful, and you beginning to accept that and moving to that. So yes, there was pushing.

José also described the effects of the liberation movements on him. The following is part of a discussion we were having in which he had been telling me racism is a major barrier for blacks. He also told me that the fact that African Americans fought for integration and for schooling clearly indicates they appreciate and value education. His views about African Americans led me to ask:

MH: Did you come to this philosophy...I’m very interested in how immigrants learn the things that they do...

José: Yes. I think it depends the immigrant that comes. I think any immigrant of color is going to experience it. If they don’t, certainly their kids are going to

experience it and going to be put in a situation where they're going to have to take a good look at this country. My shaping and molding has been through...I have been lucky to have been in the right place and the right time, meaning there you got the Cuban revolution with a lot of things happening, and then you come here and you got the civil rights movement and you got the war in Vietnam. Those are great events in the world and I was right there and experiencing and going through it. So you get to look at things from a different perspective, at least for me. And then also getting involved in politics, meaning being an activist against the war, racism, in the job; all those things.

MH: Were you actively involved in the movements?

José : I became active in my senior year in high school against the war in Vietnam and then just reading through that period, reading Malcolm X, just what was going on, all of the things you see on TV. And you identify with those things. When you see people in the sixties objecting to something that you say, yeah that's how I also feel, that's what I'm also going through. You identify with that.

MH: What sorts of things were you involved in?

José: When I was in high school you read things, and my friend a black American, we used to talk about Malcolm X and all that kind of stuff and then in my senior year we became involved...keep in mind there's a lot of things happening in this country at the time...the War in Vietnam. Then we formed a little group with some friends of mine. One of them is a light skin Puerto Rican with a big afro; he had mostly black friends and he grew up in the projects and he was also coming in with the influence of blacks. We formed this group called the Student Reaction, and then I became involved in the Progressive Labor Party, a communist party, became more active in understanding Karl Marx and society and all that, and then active in the union and the job and demonstrations and the war and all that. So I would have to say that my early years of adulthood were being shaped and molded by politics.

MH: Were you ever interested in joining the Black Panthers or the Young Lords?

José : I certainly identified with both of them very much. I probably would have joined one or the other but the people I came in contact with made it sound much better...

MH: The socialists?

José : Yeah, the communists—The International Party of the Youth. They looked into nationalism, as to whether this would be the right choice. I was lucky to have been born in a period when all these things were going on

Liliana's Story.

Liliana arrived at age ten and as a child lived in Jersey City. Liliana had a highly politicized racial group consciousness, which for the most part did not conflict with her affinity for Cuban culture. In the excerpt below she explained the development of her

racial consciousness as a function of her experiences with anti-black racism in Cuba and the United States, but more so her socialization into African American political culture when she was in college. In the first excerpt she described her experiences with racism:

You know how in high school...I had this woman (a white woman), and she died. She was the first person that was in my face about race, and I always gave it right back. And one day... she would come up and there was a mixture of racism and...she one day looked at me and said, "I didn't know you people had purple gums." I couldn't hit her, which is what I wanted to do, so I said, "Yeah, and I have dark nipples. You wanna see?"...I knew that would shut her up. And she got my yearbook unbeknownst to me and there it is, "To my favorite nigger. I like you even though you're a darkie." That's what I'm talking about, building character. I didn't tell my parents about this. For me success is the best revenge. Another one who wasn't as bad, her name was Grace. She was a pretty good student. When she heard I got into Barnard she said, "You know you probably got into Barnard because you're black and Cuban." And I said, "Yeah Grace, I probably did, but if I stay and graduate it's because I'm damn good." And I walked away. And that's the kind of hostilities we had to deal with. It wasn't in blows.

The following describes Liliana's socialization into African American political culture, though note the impact of her early experiences in Cuba as well:

Remember one crucial thing. The truth is there were uprisings, there were all kinds of tensions (in Cuba), but there was no civil rights movement. That is the crucial difference between black Cubans and African Americans. So in a sense I sort of adopted the civil right movement as my own when I lived in New York and went to Barnard and then to Columbia, and sort of internalized...I was always very conscious of being black, whether it was because I was darker than my mother, or because coming to the US. First of all in Cuba I had several encounters with kids calling me blackie because I went to a private school and was the only one. I didn't understand why they were saying blackie.

Liliana knew about being black from Cuba, but she learned a way of thinking about and responding to anti-black discrimination from the liberation struggles of the 1970s. For example, she learned to think collectively, the utility of collective struggle and about confronting racism directly:

Liliana: So Hispanics here (in Miami) are very fearful, unlike the north (New York). That's why I say, having been brought up in the north gave me an appreciation of African American culture that yeah it had been planted by my grandfather, but then I lived it.

MH: You lived it in Union City?

Liliana: Yeah, but I went to Barnard all my formative years.

MH: Were there a lot of African Americans at Barnard?

Liliana: At Columbia, sure. And Chicanos and Puerto Ricans who were there on special scholarships. We're talking 1972, the revolution happened at Columbia in '68. And it was still a very radical time. So that became my time in college to learn, even though I had already learned in high school and knew what was going on, but I dated and participated in events held by the African American women at Barnard, and to this day I'm very involved in the Black Journalist Association and the Hispanic Journalist Association. I've always felt very comfortable in both.

Miriam's Story

Miriam grew up in the Bronx in a community that was heavily Spanish-speaking, but included African Americans within and/or next to it. Miriam arrived in 1967 at age sixteen. She did not speak English. She completed high school in New York and attended Hunter College in 1968. She migrated to Miami in 1992 because that's where she could get a job. Whereas José and Liliana identified primarily as black and with African American political world-views, Miriam identified as both Afro Latina and Afro-Cuban. She claimed a strong immigrant identity and did not see herself as sharing much politically with African Americans. Though José, Liliana and Miriam arrived in the United States during the 1960s and lived in similar communities, Miriam arrived an older teen who did not speak English. Not knowing English, Miriam did not follow the black liberation movements. Instead, she followed and was influenced by the Puerto Rican and Hispanic movements. Though, as she described it, she and the Afro Latinas she associated with were influenced by the black affirmation philosophies of the black

liberation movements, which allowed them to reject the racism endemic in Cuban and Latino culture.

Miriam's experience is the best illustration of the complexity of group relations, community options, and identities that characterized New York City. Her integration into Hispanic communities was strong especially because she was not English proficient. However, the lines between the city's Hispanic and African American populations were not tightly drawn. Indeed as Miriam's narrative makes clear the city's Hispanic population, and particularly its black sector, was transformed by the black liberation movements.

From Miriam's story we can also see the nature of the Hispanic movement, whose nationalism led it to be simultaneously linked to, but separate from, the African American movements. Her narrative also hints at the ways in which minority communities were dealing with the white "power structure" as individual communities. Native and foreign-born minorities fought one another, but they knew who the bigger "enemy" was. In the first excerpt she described the effects on her identity of the community in which she lived and the people she associated with. She also explained the effects of age and language on what she knew and how she came to think of herself. This excerpt is part of a conversation we had about African Americans being the "other."

MH: But how did it happen that they (African Americans and Latinos) were separate? Why weren't they one community?

Miriam: 'Cause we're culturally different.

MH: How are you culturally different?

Miriam: I think the Latino communities that I lived in, cause I didn't live in a barrio where Puerto Ricans lived, I lived in the Bronx, which wasn't a historically

Puerto Rican community. I think most people around me spoke English as a second language. There was enough prostitution and drugs to drown in, but everyone around spoke Spanish and Spanglish.

MH: So was that the big difference: the language?

Miriam: And everyone had...again you know...yeah everyone had, with the exception of...no even Puerto Ricans...everyone had an island or a country outside the United States to refer to, 'cause even Puerto Ricans referred to, I'm sending my kids back to the island; it was constant. So that was always there. I didn't talk to a black person until I was in college. I had them in high school, but there was no English, so I didn't talk to a black person until my second year of college, that I got enough courage with English to engage in a talk. So I'm not saying I didn't have them around me, and that they were not kind to me but they were the "other", and they are unknown, totally unknown.

MH: And I imagine that a lot of the people you were living with here in the Bronx were similarly...

Miriam: First Cubans and then Puerto Ricans.

MH: But the Puerto Ricans should have been a lot more...well maybe not...

Miriam: No they were not, because they had their own struggle.

MH: But many were inspired by the black struggle.

Miriam: True. Remember I went from a country in '67 that the issue was freedom and the Soviet Union to a country where the first time I had body bags from Vietnam. I didn't even know about Vietnam, you hear me. All of a sudden all my Latino friends were talking about my cousin died, my brother was sent to 'Nam, and I'm like, "What are you talking about?" And my first boyfriend was shitting in his pants because he was going to be sent, and all the Latino kids were talking about going into college and will they be accepted into college so they wouldn't have to the draft. The conversation among the Latinos was half about the draft, and who's coffin came...I remember that clearly impacting me like, wow! 'Cause I was trying to get my green card. I was in like la la land. All of a sudden there was Vietnam. Blackness just faded 'cause that was more what impacted me.

MH: Were you also discouraged to...were there discussions that said, "Oh those blacks over there, those blacks are this, those blacks are that?"

Miriam: Yeah, because the blacks in New York are called *los morenos*.

MH: So there was a lot of talk about those *los morenos*?

Miriam: Absolutely!

MH: And was it like *los morenos* are the "other?"

Miriam: The "other," but not oppositional. The oppositional was the white power structure, which it still is. There weren't enough in the hood, in my hood. I remember my first walk in Harlem. The Harlem of the 60s with heroin and all these black men salivating on the streets, and that was the first time I saw Harlem. I was frightened to death.

MH: You must have felt these are bad people.

Miriam: No, because at the same time I saw them in school. Where I was working at night there were black kids, and they weren't doing drugs. I was just frightened, but it was the "other." I don't understand them. And it took years for me to get that phase out because for me it was like I don't understand them. But I was immersed

enough for me to have to understand the white power structure, so it took a lot of time.

MH: And it was not until college that...

Miriam: Yeah.

MH: So what was it in college? Was it actually talking with people or was it courses you were taking?

Miriam: No, it was when I was tutoring Spanish; they were all black. So they befriended me and they would stay with me chatting until 11pm, and they literally in a very slow English explained to me the one-drop rule and stuff like that. Because I had no African American history; still don't. I've never taken an African American history course.

MH: Oh really?

Miriam: None, nothing!

MH: You did a masters. You began your PhD!

Miriam: I have no reason to take an African American history course. I remember when I was made to read "Invisible Man" I had no idea what was going on. And I was very angry because the professor assumed that everyone in the classroom was American, and for a non-American you better explain a lot of this shit because it's very American.

MH: I read "*Invisible Man*" maybe a couple of years after I got here, and I didn't know what it was about. It's when I read it maybe about 4 years ago after I had been studying African American history.

Miriam: And you become American enough to understand!

MH: Yeah.

Miriam: I need someone to walk me through this stuff. For me all of that is the "other". I learned around it because of all my friends and I've watched enough films.

MH: But they are the "other" because you haven't learned about them. They could have become "my people" had you learned about them?

Miriam: Absolutely! Oh absolutely. The positions could be very much in reverse.

On another occasion Miriam explained to me her transition from being a Cuban exile to being an Afro-Latina. She stressed the influence of Latinos in her identity formation, but these were Latinos who were black identified. Thus she developed an identity that was simultaneously Latina and black, and affinities that include both her racial and ethnic identities. Also significant is the distinction she makes between life in Miami and in New York:

In New York the black Cubans are part of those Latinos. They're not separated. They marry each other. They're in the same building. I went to my black Cuban

mother's girlfriend and she's taking care of the Puerto Rican children next door, and the super is Columbian. In New York I didn't feel pulled between Cubans and African Americans; there were more black Latinos, and Puerto Ricans were more inclusive of black Latinos. In the late 60s, Hispanic-ness, the development of a Hispanic identity was becoming important. The Puerto Rican studies department at Hunter didn't exist, and I became involved in that, and at a certain point gave up my exile identity. My dominant identity is black Latina. My Cuban-ness was refueled in Miami... I do accept the Anglo conception of race, and am feeling comfortable with blackness. I have been Americanized. The process of Americanization began in college. It was in college that I made a huge transition, began to question what is black, who is black, what is racist about how we define ourselves. In New York it was Puerto Ricans, women of color, who helped me through this process. In New York I associated with black Latinas. A black Panamanian woman heard me talking my nonsense and turned my world upside down. Then as my English improved I talked more with African Americans. In the late 70s I began to integrate the positiveness of blackness; black power and black is beautiful concepts were very influential. It was then that I realized I had been socialized around hair issues; every single Friday my hair had to be ironed. The first time I wore an afro, I loved it.

Nicolás's Story:

Nicolás was one of thirteen informants who migrated to the United States as adults (over seventeen years old). The majority (nine of fourteen) of these adult immigrants were Afro-Cuban classified. They distinguished themselves from African Americans and emphasized their ethnicity. The other five adult immigrants reveal the importance of socialization by African American information networks in the formation of a politicized racial consciousness. Four of the five were not in the United States during the mass mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s. They were, however, politicized through other means. One man followed the African American movement from Jamaica and took part in that country's own black liberation movement; and two women attributed their consciousness to the courses they took in college. One of these women went to Hunter College where she took courses in the Black and Puerto Rican Studies Department, and the other went to a black college in Florida where she took courses in African American

history. Samuel, who arrived in 1966 at age twenty-two, told me he watched the movement from Spain (where he went before coming to the United States), recalling especially seeing the Watts riot of 1965 on television. He was also very influenced by the anti-American sentiments among Europeans. When he got to the United States he learned English quickly and went to a “black college” where he became active in various organizations. He also dated and then eventually married an African American woman whom he described as very radical.

Nicolás is the other informant who was so influenced. His story also illustrates the impact of social class on the formation of identities. Nicolás migrated to the United States in 1980 after the popular mobilizations associated with the black liberation struggles. He was forty-two years old then, and was English proficient because of his Jamaican heritage. He initially settled in the Bronx with relatives who lived in a working-class community of primarily West Indians, African Americans and Hispanics—mostly black Cubans of West Indian heritage. As Nicolás told it, the politicization of his black identity began in Cuba, where he followed the various black liberation struggles around the world. He was one of only two participants who made a direct link between their racial consciousness and the policies of the Cuban government. The government supported and publicized the struggles that were going on in Africa, the United States and the Caribbean. From Cuba, Nicolás followed the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in the United States and the anti-colonial struggles in Africa. He told me he was very impressed with the African leaders at the time whose intellect he felt “surpassed European leaders.” He admired what they stood for, and their blackness. He described the

all-night “intellectual” discussions he had with friends in *Parque Cespedes* (the central park in Santiago de Cuba) on Saturday nights, where he debated his preference for Malcolm X and the Black Panthers over Martin Luther King and Gandhi.

Nicolás’ racial consciousness was also a function of his social experiences in the United States. Shortly after he arrived Nicolás met up with a coworker who he described as a “black nationalist.” His co-worker invited Nicolás to “black people’s meetings,” where he met other “black conscious folks” such as Elombe Brath³⁴ and Samori Marksman,³⁵ two well-known grassroots activists and radio personalities. Through these meetings he became an activist on behalf of the 1980s struggles for the liberation of South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. He was also active on local New York City issues. One group he spearheaded was aimed at conflict resolution between African American and West Indian teens in Brooklyn. At the time of this research he belonged to the African American Cultural Center in his town in North Florida, and was leading African American tour groups to Cuba. His activism in the United States was closely linked to his activism on behalf of blacks in Cuba, particularly blacks of West Indian heritage. He founded an organization for that purpose. In this explanation for his organization we can see his pan-African perspective. For him there is no conflict between his patriotism and his racial loyalty:

³⁴ Elombe Brath is co-founder and the chairman of the Patrice-Lumumba Coalition formed to support Angola’s right to self-determination. He was producer and host of *Afrikaleidoscope*, a public affairs program on Pacifica station in New York City, WBAI.

³⁵ Before his death in 1999 Samori Marksman was Program Director of WBAI and the producer of a daily program on that station, “Behind the News.” He taught African history at the College of West Africa, and was Director of the African Division of the Pan-African Skills Project, an organization that recruited individuals to teach in Africa.

Nicolás: What this situation has provided to me is an opportunity to be able to do something for both parties.

MH: Cuban black?

Nicolás: Right, without making the distinction. First, I'm able to do the little thing I am doing right now like send donations to people in Guantanamo, in Banes, Santiago (areas in Cuba Eastern with heavy concentrations of West Indian immigrants). I'm not saying that that's the reason I do it, but coincidentally that's the darkest part of the country. So I'm thinking that when I send a wheelchair to Guantanamo the possibility of it landing in the hand of a black person is much greater than anywhere else. But on the other hand I'm trying very hard to relate Afro Cubans and Afro-Americans, let them know that it's that big old boat that made a number of stops, that you living in Georgia or Louisiana, these guys are your cousins.

As with some of the middle-class West Indian men in Vickerman's (1999) study, Nicolás's middle-class status played a role in the development of his politicized racial group consciousness. When he arrived in the United States Nicolás was already a highly educated professional, a veterinarian, and pathologist. His early years in the country were taken up with trying to establish himself in his profession, which at his level meant interacting with white Americans. The obstacles he ran into, which he attributes to racism, eventually led him to give up and instead to try to establish his own business. Below, Nicolás recounts two experiences he had where he felt he was being discriminated against:

I had a volunteer job in New York at the animal medical center. First day I arrived at the staff meeting, thirty people there. I said "good morning." Nobody answered. Probably thought I was head of the janitors. Eventually the person who hired me arrived and introduced me as doctor, a veterinarian from Cuba. My God! My God! It was an explosion and when you could add to that, I'm also a pathologist, my God, it just can't be!

Me: Were these Cubans?

Nicolás: Jews. In the morgue was another thing. They didn't treat me as one of them; they were very proper: "Doctor, what do you think of this?" They kept testing me. It was constant. It is a struggle to make your mark. Blacks are taken with no regard.

Nicolás' social class background also brought him in close contact with middle-class, educated and professional African Americans, which gave him a set of experiences with, and perspective of, African Americans that was different from the experiences of most low-income participants in this study. Nicolás explained this in the conversation excerpted below. This was a conversation with three men about tensions between African Americans and black immigrants.³⁶ Note that the men astutely identified competition as the source of the conflict between native and foreign-born blacks. Nicolás also attributes the tension to a lack of knowledge, but goes further by suggesting that this ignorance is deliberately produced:

MH: Do you have difficulties with African Americans?

Victor: I don't.

MH: I know there are lots of Cubans, Jamaicans too and some black Cubans want to distinguish themselves from African Americans.

Victor: I know. I think black Americans being here for the longest, sometime they really think they belong here.

MH: Oh, so African Americans resent you because you're new here?

Victor: Sometimes. I've worked in places before where people tell me, "Go back to Jamaica"... I've been in that situation, but is not all of them. I'm not generalizing everybody now.

Nicolás: I have a partial picture. Most of the African Americans I have relations with are more educated. When I deal with these people as a rule I don't see that thing that you find at a lower level of education where people can be programmed much easier. For instance I go at least once per month to (mentions an historical black college in Florida) and I have the best relations with the president all the way down. No one feels threatened by me. Only thing is they cannot understand my accent.

Victor: The truth is it is at the lower level where all the problem is, most of the problem is.

MH: What do you mean?

Victor: The less intellectual people, because they feel more threatened.

Sergio: Absolutely, because you replace them.

³⁶ These three men are all of Jamaican heritage who had known each other from Cuba

Miami

Miami was originally a black and white city with typical black and white divisions and conflicts. Unlike New York, the city did not have a significant Spanish-speaking population until the first set of Cuban exiles began arriving in the early nineteen sixties. Spanish-speaking groups, including pre-Castro black Cuban immigrants, preferred New York for the obvious reason of Jim Crow segregation in the southern states. Thus the majority of black Cubans that had settled in Tampa, Florida because of the cigar industry had fled to New York to escape Jim Crow segregation. The relationship between African Americans and Cubans, then, began after 1959, and occurred in the context of Cuban privilege.

The privilege extended to Cubans by the U.S. government engendered enormous hostility between African Americans and the exiles (discussed fully in Chapter 6). Thus the cultural and social exchange that took place between New York's Latino groups and African Americans did not occur in Miami.

Miami: the Liberation Movements

The two cities also had different patterns of race relations, and they fought somewhat different civil rights struggles. Miami earned the reputation of being more northern and less southern in its race relations. The tourist industry and the large Northeast-origin migrant population partly accounts for the more liberal nature of the area (Mohl, 1999). This image, Raymond Mohl (1999) argues, was more of an appearance than the reality. Racial bigotry was intense, and the city was segregated in every area of social life. White

supremacist groups such as Ku Klux Klan, the White Front, the White Citizens' Council and members of the Miami police department deployed the usual southern terror and intimidation tactics against blacks and Jews. There were dozens of cross burnings, some house burnings and bombings. Various national civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and CORE and a number of local organizations led some of the same forms of struggles that were seen throughout the rest of the south. The struggle was fought largely through the courts, but there were also dozens of sit-ins, demonstrations, pickets and economic boycotts (Mohl, 1999; Dunn, 1997). Consequently, according to Mohl (1999), even before the more celebrated sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina (1960) segregation was effectively challenged in Miami. Marvin Dunn (1997) wrote that the integration of housing was a fact by the early 1970s, and beaches, public parks and lunch counters were integrated in the early 1960s. Also, Dunn points out, while Dade County's school system is not completely integrated—as late as 1990 the full integration of the public schools had not yet occurred—its colleges are more integrated than other Florida colleges.

Nevertheless, some informants felt that Miami did not have the radical political culture they found in New York. Several who had lived in New York and then moved to Miami remarked on this. One example is Omar. His family first settled in New York and this is where he became radicalized. His family eventually moved to Florida, and he went to college there. This is his impression of the movement in Florida:

Remember late 60s into the 70s with the Civil Rights Movement, Miami wasn't touched by that. I say to my fellow African Americans in the south, "You know, you guys slept through many of the things that were going on here. Folks in New York were shooting down cops, in Chicago there were all kinds of things going on and you guys were sitting under the tree. I went to Brooklyn College for one year, there were demonstrations, Biafra, the movement, the revolution shall not be

televised, all that stuff. Come down to Florida, Gainesville and thinking, where are the people? More power to the people. They were like down in the basement playing cards, drinking wine and smoking weed and wanting to join fraternities. I said, "Fraternities? We have a hard time being black, we wanna be Greek!" It's like, guys there's a world out there that needs to be conquered, that needs to be addressed, that needs to be dealt with by the leadership that extend from this university and all of you are sitting around waiting to get laid.

Omar's impression is of course colored by the fact that he arrived in south Florida after the period of direct-action in late 1950s and early 1960s. What is evident, however, is that unlike New York's Hispanic population, Miami's Hispanic population of recent Cuban exiles did not take part in the civil rights struggles. The literature on the struggle in Miami makes no mention of Cuban participation, and the literature on Cuban immigrants also does not mention their participation in the struggle. Some of my informants reasoned that the recent Cuban arrivals experienced it as too radical. Disaffected from the revolution that had just occurred in their country, the exiles reacted negatively to black America's own revolution. The exiles might also have been affected by the anti-communist witch hunts of the McCarthy era, which continued into the early 1960s in Dade County and which slowed the county's civil rights reform (Mohl, 1999). Thus, to most in the Cuban community, Ramón explained, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. were communist sympathizers. But the fact that the U.S. government awarded Cubans all sorts of privileges also meant they might not have seen themselves as oppressed peoples. They identified with whites, as Maria argued:

Remember, Cubans have never had a civil war, and to see wonderful white Americans hunting Blacks down with dogs must had been shocking. Many Cubans believe that if the police was going after you with dogs, you must had done something really bad or were the scum of the earth.

It appears, then, that Hispanic groups in Florida and New York had different experiences with, and responses to, the black liberation struggles. New York's groups were radicalized, while Cubans in Florida were alienated by it. The different ways in which these Hispanic groups were received in the United States is clearly an important factor. We see the consequences of this differential treatment for the relationship these groups have with African Americans, and their attitude towards black empowerment. Caught in the middle were those black Cubans living in Miami. How did this different environment shape their identities, the groups with whom they felt allied, and from whom they felt estranged?

Those early black Cubans who settled in Miami found that white Cubans had established a pattern of social and spatial segregation. There was segregation between white Cubans and African Americans, and there was segregation between white and black Cubans. Black Cubans apparently could not find housing in white Cuban areas. They settled either in African American communities or in Allapatah, a community between the African American community of Liberty City and the Cuban community of Little Havana.

Until the 1980s when other Caribbean immigrants began settling in south Florida, black Cubans had two groups—African Americans and Cubans—with whom they could socialize. The black Cuban contingent, especially the children, was very small, forcing them to choose between being with African Americans or with white Cubans. Some individuals apparently found conditional acceptance from their white co-ethnics. One man whose family initially settled in New York was encouraged by a white Cuban friend

to relocate to Miami where he could take advantage of the building boom; the family relocated in the 1970s and did fairly well. They, however, could not find housing in white Cuban neighborhoods, and eventually settled in Liberty City. Ramón, whose parents had sent him to the United States as a Pedro Pan child, was also accepted by his white co-ethnics.³⁷ He, however, told me he was forced to look to African Americans when it came time to socialize and date. In addition his acceptance was apparently conditional; he was accepted as a child and among a close and select group of his co-ethnics, but as he became a man and moved away from the protection of this small group his experience changed. These experiences are reflected in the narratives below, particularly the experience some had of being pushed away by their white co-ethnics at the same time they were being pulled by African Americans.

Miami: Post-1970s

The 1980s brought important changes to south Florida. A significant number of black Cubans came in the Mariel boatlift; Dominicans and Puerto Ricans began settling in greater numbers in Dade County; and West Indians began settling in Broward County. This has meant more community and group options. Now, black Cubans in Florida do not have to choose between African Americans and white Cubans. One *Miami Herald* article (Goldfarb, 1991) tells the story of black Hispanics who live in Allapatah, which has become a community of primarily Dominicans and black Cubans, but still one that sits between African American and white Cuban and Hispanic areas. There, black Hispanics

³⁷ Operation Pedro Pan refers to the 14,000 children who were flown out of Cuba between 1960 and 1962. This was a coordinated effort of the Roman Catholic Church in Miami and the United States Government (*NYT*, Jan. 12, 1998).

find acceptance. As one black Cuban man, quoted in the report noted, “People are friendlier. They help me more.” In a commentary on the physical and social exclusion of black Hispanics, including black Cubans, from their white co-ethnics, Lisandro Pérez, chairman of sociology and anthropology department of Florida International University, remarked that Allapatah is “sort of an in-between area, and it’s probably appropriate as this is a group of people who are in-between, who are not fully members of one group and not fully members of the other.” Black Cubans, then, were still experiencing discrimination from their white co-ethnics.

The first two narratives are from participants who were raised in Miami, and reflect the socializing processes specific to Miami. These two participants identified with blackness and African Americans and felt alienated from the larger Cuban community. In their narratives, white Cubans play a major role; they are the opposition. African Americans also play a major role as the most viable alternative to white Cubans. They migrated to the United States at an early age, learned English early, and settled in Miami. Denise lived in Miami; Ramón grew up in Miami, but was not living there at time of the interviews. The third story, Maria’s, is included here because like Miamians she did not have access to the alternative community and group options New Yorkers had. Also, Maria moved to Miami as an adult. This experience had a powerful effect on her identity. The final story is Ana’s. She grew up in Miami and has always lived there. Her narrative illustrates the role of age and English language proficiency in Miami’s milieu. She also talked about a push/pull experience, though in her case she was pushed away by African Americans, and welcomed by Cubans.

The nature of their black identity reflects the different time period in which they were socialized. Ramón experienced the pre-civil rights racism of the south and participated in the Civil Rights Movement, which explains his highly politicized black identity and consciousness. His experiences with white Cuban anti-black racism also played a role. Denise came of age after the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, and so was not directly influenced by them. Her black identity comes partly from her parents, but more so from the push/pull experiences she has had. As she described it she was pushed away by white Cubans and embraced by African Americans.

Denise's Story

Denise arrived in the United States in 1969 at age eleven, learned English at an early age and in New York, and then moved with her family to Miami where she attended junior high. Denise was African American identified and had a highly politicized racial group identity. Below she described her experiences of being pushed by white Cubans and pulled by African Americans:

Denise: I never felt really close to the white Hispanic population and culture and it could have been the fact that when I first came to the United States I was eleven years old. We stayed in New York for four years and then we came down. And I saw the blatant racism from the white Hispanics toward my family, and I couldn't understand. Here we were with the same people that we lived with in Cuba, that we were neighbors, that my father who was the only one who had car and a phone, at the time one of the few, and they used to use his phone anytime they need it; here now we were coming back to Miami and asking for housing and they were saying no. We would call on the phone, "Oh do you have this apartment available?" "Oh yeah it is, come see it." As soon as would get out the car and they would see a black man, even though he would speak Spanish and say "Oh I just called you,"... "Oh, I'm sorry I didn't realize my wife had already rented it." So to me, that kind of threw a real big monkey wrench on my feelings toward white Hispanics,

specifically toward white Cubans. I mean I thought, what's the difference? We're all from the same country. As opposed to the black Americans who embraced me even though they knew I was Hispanic. So that's when I came to the realization that when you see me you see a black female. You don't see a Hispanic female. Unless I tell you I'm Hispanic, you don't know that.

MH: When this was happening, were you aware it was happening or it's now that you think back on it? Do you remember at fifteen knowing this was an issue?

Denise: I remember knowing that at fifteen I wasn't liked or embraced by the white Hispanics, but that the blacks at the school for example, Miami Senior High, would not have a problem with having me sit at the table with them having lunch, would not have a problem saying, "hey we're gone have a party this Saturday, do you want to come?" The boys did not have a problem with wanting to go out with me, as opposed to the white Hispanic... I mean it was okay for you to say hi and talk to but you couldn't come over to my house. "No, I'm not gonna date you 'cause you're black;" so that's when I realized there's a black/white issue here. So once that became clear to me it was like, bump you! You don't want me; I don't want you. And then there wasn't that many Afro Cuban males around for me to say I have a choice of black Cubans that I could pick from to start dating and so on. Of course there were more black Americans so that's who I dated. The association in school was all with African Americans. I realized then, these are my people!

Denise continued to describe to me some of the anti-black racism on the part of white Cubans that were influential in her decision to be with African Americans. Note that though the attitudes white Cubans expressed were aimed at black Americans, not black Cubans, Denise experienced them as personal because of her racial group consciousness. In the following excerpt Denise and I were discussing the hostility between Cubans and African Americans in Miami.

MH: So you were saying that the hostility originates from the Cubans?

Denise: I really think it's how we treat African Americans. For example when we first moved here from Miami I remember going down to Miami senior high and having to catch the bus on 8th Street. Of course I get on the bus and nothing but white Hispanics. I get on the bus, and I do this often, I don't tell people I'm Hispanic. I just sit there not saying anything, not acting like I understand what's going on. And when I walked in there were two ladies on one seat and I sat at the seat. And one of the ladies sitting there goes, "Hold on to your purse 'cause you know these blacks like to steal." And that opened up a whole can of worms, "Yeah, they're lazy, there's this and they don't like

to work." And I stood there and listened, didn't say a word. One stop before my stop I stood up and said to them, "You're so full a crap because had it not been for the blacks in this country your stupid ass would not be here." At this point it was complete shock. Of course I went on to tell them that there's nothing they could have in their pocketbooks that I probably don't have twenty times over in my own pocket.

Ramón's Story:

Ramón arrived in the United States in 1962 at age thirteen. He learned English quickly and was an active participant in the black liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Ramón exhibited a strong racial group consciousness and felt closely allied with African Americans. As he explained his identity and political attitudes, the important socialization experiences was racial discrimination, his involvement in the black liberation movements, and his need to socialize. His initial years in Miami were during the time of Jim Crow segregation, but because he lived in the Cuban enclave he was somewhat sheltered from it. From his recollections, what was most influential in his embrace of blackness and his rejection of the Cuban community was white Cubans' response to African American struggles. Like several other respondents he became involved in the black liberation struggles in college:

Ramón: I grew up in a political time and am very political... I got here in '62 at thirteen. I was in college during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. In the Cuban community they were chastising Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. as communist sympathizers, but all I could see were the dogs biting into black flesh and the "colored only" signs. I lived that, so for me maybe that's what...I had an experience in '68. I was in college—Biscayne College in Miami; we went to play the University of Jacksonville. There were only two blacks on the team...we became good buddies...we went to a restaurant and the waitress refused to serve me. I was like...

MH: So you had never experienced that in Miami?

Ramón: I did, but I didn't speak English at the time. I had never put myself in a situation like that. It stung me! The whole team got up and left. Their solidarity was interesting.

MH: Was your mother not afraid of sending you here or she didn't know about the situation here?

Ramón: My father, a very African man, was very much aware and despised the U.S. My mother was a very religious woman and since Pedro Pan was religious...she felt with the priest I was safe. She won.

His personal and direct experiences with racism were mostly from his own community, and especially as he became more radical. Ramón's experience of being pushed away by white Cubans was profound. In one of our conversations he recalled: "I was told I'm a black man, why don't you behave?...I've been told because I'm black I should be grateful that I'm alive."

Pushed away by his white co-ethnics Ramón turned to African Americans, the only real alternative in Miami in those early years. He was to eventually find the nascent black Cuban community that was being established in Allapatah. Nevertheless he felt compelled to leave Miami and to live his life as a black person rather than as a Cuban:

...After I finished high school I think I had to make a conscious decision. I was living in Miami. I saw how the Cubans reacted to me so I had to decide: do I live life as a Cuban or as a black person? Dating, for example, I could not date a white Cuban girl, and at the time there were not...I did not know any black Cuban women. I was an athlete so...I'm thinking I migrated to African Americans because I had to socialize. That was a tough time for me because I ended up marrying the first Afro Cuban woman I dated because there was an affinity, a comfort.

During this research Ramón moved back to Miami and was having cordial relations with white Cubans. He told me this was possible because he came back to Miami in a position of strength, having become successful and educated. He, therefore, was no longer dependent on white Cubans for his livelihood or his sense of himself. They no longer had the power to make him feel inferior.

Maria's Story³⁸

Maria was raised in California. She is included here because her experience is similar to those who were raised in Miami, in the sense that there wasn't a Hispanic identity movement in California that she felt identified with. Like Denise and Ramón, Maria had a strong racial group consciousness and identified with African Americans. Maria did not have the push/pull experiences described by Denise and Ramón when they were young. She told me that in California she had not experienced rejection from white Cubans because there were very few, and the few she came in contact with were friendly and accepting. Her push/pull experiences occurred in Miami when she moved there as an adult, and began experiencing racism from white Cubans in Miami. Several respondents also differentiated between Cubans in Miami from Cubans elsewhere. While in Miami Maria tried to organize black Cubans to challenge white Cuban racism. She was not successful, and eventually left Miami with bitter memories of both the racism she experienced from white Cubans and the resistance on the part of black Cubans to confront the racism of white Cubans. Most of our communication was through email, but we also spoke on the telephone. In the first excerpt Maria describe her childhood experiences, and how she came to feel identified with African Americans and to have developed a racial group consciousness:

Well, I came to the U.S. when I was five years old. I grew up in South Central LA in the mid 60s, which was a mildly mixed community. The first neighborhood that we lived in was in part of LA where recently arrived Latinos from Mexico and South America lived. Many of the Blacks who lived in the area had to do a double escrow (a white friend buys the house and sells it to the black friend in the same escrow). In those days it was not cool to be Hispanic or Latino. No one even

³⁸ Maria and I communicated primarily through emails. I have made very little editorial changes to her narrative.

considered that Hispanics needed representation. The Hispanics did not dare to make any type of demands on any of the governmental services. At that time programs such as "English as a Second Language" were some educator's dream, but there were a few teachers who tried to get us to understand what the hell was going on. However, they were doing this out of the goodness of their hearts, which meant that they did it if there was time during the day. So most of my 1 & 2nd grade I was in the fog at school. My saving grace was that when my Dad came home, since he speaks English, he would explain the handout and books that the teachers sent home. By the third grade, we had moved to South Central LA. At that time (1966) South Central was transitioning from being an all white neighborhood to becoming a mixed neighborhood. So, we started school and we (my little brother and I) would get beaten by the white kids in the AM, for being black and not able to communicate, and in the PM we would get beaten by the black kids because we had "good" hair, spoke broken English (English vocabulary was limited), did not dress in the latest "hip" clothing, and the teachers were always protecting us. That year, the closest person in school that resembled a Spanish speaking person was a girl of Italian decent that spoke Italian and she would try to communicate with us. Some of the teachers that showed the most kindness to us were either African Americans or white Liberals. I remember a white teacher named Susan Miller, she was a hippie, went to protests and everything. Her parents were financially comfortable and since they could not change her mind about her traveling to protests, they gave her a new car that would be reliable, a VW bus. She constantly had problems with the other teachers because of the way she dressed. She had taken Spanish in High School and College, had traveled extensively through Mexico and Latin America, so she was able to communicate with me pretty good. She introduced me to the hippie movement. Then, teachers by the name of G— C— (Jewish married to a black man) and J— B— (African American), introduced me to the Civil Rights movement, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, apartheid. At that point, in the mid to late 60's, there was still no full "English as a Second Language Program." So, I continued to rely on my dad to translate the things that I really did not understand. Mr. B— also headed his church choir and introduced me to gospel and the blues. It was easier to stay in the classroom with the teacher during recess and lunch, because we would not have to fight the other kids. So, what ended up happening was that the teachers would share their books with me, and at times we would discuss the books. Once we learned English life got a little easier. Can you imagine how hard it was for a child in elementary school to answer ethnicity questions all day long? Once we emerged ourselves in the African American community, we were given a chance, people did not judge us immediately because of our accent and our different culture.

Maria also explained the experiences she had in Miami that led her to feel estranged from white Cubans. While her childhood included some push/pull experiences, it was in

Miami, because of her experiences with racism from white Cubans, that she began to feel estranged from white Cubans and where she became “political,” as she saw it. This was not the point at which she developed a racial group consciousness, however. From her narratives it is clear that she arrived in Miami with a racial group consciousness, having been socialized by the black liberation struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. It was her racial group consciousness that led her to perceive what was happening to her and other black Cubans in Miami as racism. Her racial consciousness also led her to want to confront and to collectively struggle against it. Indeed the participants in Miami who knew Maria often remarked that she came to Miami with an African American perspective, by which they meant she was angry at how black Cubans were being treated by white Cubans and wanted to directly confront it, a style which some of them were uncomfortable with.

I found it very difficult to be a Latina in Miami, it was very degrading. Can you imagine going on a job interview and your potential boss telling you that his grandfather told him that a man has not lived until he's had intimate relations with a hot Black Cuban woman. So, it became easier to allow people to assume than to try to explain why I have Black friends, why I love Black men, why did I marry one, why did I not come to Miami and find a Cuban husband? The guy that told me about what his grandfather had told him was a white Cuban. He was a VP of a company that I wanted to work for. I had to explain to white and black Cubans why and how I had assimilated into being an African American. Remember, 98% of the Cubans in Miami have never tried to survive anywhere else. Their perception of "assimilation" is very different than yours or mine. Miami's a rough place for black Cuban men and women who will not accept the status quo. You probably would not be surprised of how many black Cubans I met in Miami that had been so battered and sabotaged (lost jobs, were evicted from apartments, black listed all around) by white Cubans, that they were afraid to even talk about it in their own home.

When I first got to Miami in 1988, I got hired by the Cuban American National Foundation. They hired me because in their eyes I spoke what they called, "perfect" English and knew the national political ins and outs. Their Chairman at the time, Jorge Mas Canosa, had told my supervisor to make sure that she kept me from the media (I was not made aware of this). If there was a reason to talk to the media she, a white blonde Cuban, was responsible for appearing on camera and

she was the only one to be quoted in the media. Then one day, she did not come to work, shit hit the fan and I had to step out and make the media rounds. The next AM Mas Canosa called me to his office. He was furious! He fired me. When I asked why. He said that "When people in Washington, state and local politics see a black face, they associate it with poverty, welfare, crime and the message that they're conveying loses power. Their color becomes the message." He felt that since the media had now become familiar with me they would look for me and that would be a distraction to the program's goals.

No reporter in Miami dared to tell my story, except an African American woman named D— G— that now writes for the Wall Street Journal. She was about to leave Miami, so she did not care about being harassed by the Cubans, so she wrote the story for the Herald and they printed it. But they did not translate it to the Spanish version of the paper.

The experiences related by the three participants above differ significantly from the final story. Ana's story sets into sharp relief the importance of age of arrival and English language ability in exposure to African Americans political philosophies.

Ana's Story:

When Ana arrived in the United States in 1971 she was sixteen years old and did not speak English. Ana did not select any of the labels mainly because at the time of our conversations I was not as aware of the distinctions. Ana was firmly black-identified, as is the case for the vast majority of the other participants. For example, she was one of the most fervent in refusing to check "Hispanic" on forms because to her Hispanic meant white, and she constantly challenged white Cubans on their racism. She did not, however, exhibit a particularly strong politicized racial group consciousness; neither did she express feelings of alliance with African Americans in a collective struggle for racial justice. Though she did not express hostility or articulate the extant stereotypes of African Americans, she felt estranged from them. She did talk about her experiences with racism,

but these were confined to white Cubans and Hispanics, the major groups in her environment. Indeed there was a marked difference between participants who did not live in the enclave and those whose lives more oriented around the enclave. For example, when the former talked about racism they gave societal wide examples, while the latter talked primarily about racism from white Cubans and other Latinos. Also, those informants who lived outside of the enclave were more inclined to see the utility of collective struggle as a strategy against racial injustice, while those who lived in the enclave were more inclined to the sorts of resistance strategies outlined earlier (refusing to select “Hispanic” on application forms, and sometimes “looking black” by refusing to comply with the Latin dress code).

The relative weakness of Ana’s racial group consciousness compared with the Black-Cuban identified participants can also be explained by her socialization experiences. Like Miriam above (who self-identified Afro-Cuban and Afro-Latina) Ana arrived in the United States during the period of the black liberation struggles, but did not follow the movement because she did not speak English. What was most significant in her identity was the rejection she experienced from African Americans and the support she received from white Cubans and other Hispanics. Interestingly enough, Ana was one of only two Miamians who described being supported by white Cubans. Rejection by African Americans continued to be important in Ana’s identity. For example, when I asked her if she thought there were differences between black Cubans and African Americans she responded: “They don't see us as black Cubans; I told you that before. They see you as Hispanic, so for them it's like a boundary right there... Your problems are not my

problems.” Her primary associations continued to be with white Cubans and other Hispanics with whom she lived and worked.

I came when I was sixteen, no English. So the African Americans...I went to Miami Jackson in a black neighborhood... they would tease me because I didn't speak English. So I learned to hate them because they made my life miserable. And I was in the ESOP where you learn to speak English. I was the only black there because most of the people that came to this country about the same time were white Cubans. There was one kid who was Indian from Guatemala. I didn't deal with African Americans much because I couldn't communicate with them. So to me that was...I don't care what was going on. My problem was I didn't speak the language and they were treating me bad, and I was frustrated because I wasn't doing well in school. I wanted to go back to Cuba where I felt safe because I could relate. It's a very bad age because I was sixteen. To me I hated them because they were very bad to me. I remember in one English class, I got As because I could read it, not speak it. And when the teacher got to me, they started laughing and then one of the white Cubans that had been here for a long time was the one that defended me. And some of the teachers were even mean to me. I remember this white, blond, blue-eyed teacher... she was a biology teacher, she treated me bad because I couldn't understand what she was saying. Then the second year...I keep hanging around with my Cuban friends because that's who I felt comfortable with; then the last year, senior year, was better. But it was very hard...They (African Americans) would pull me out and offer me drugs. I mean it was bad.

The stories above illustrate the identity formation processes of eight of this study's participants. In the following chapter I explore the political significance of the ways in which the study's participants identified. I am interested in the significance of their identities for the types of social policies they support. In particular I look at what their identities mean for coalitions with African Americans and the struggle for black empowerment.

Chapter 6

The Politics of Black Ethnicities

Alliances with immigrants are critical for black empowerment. In *The Struggle For Black Empowerment In New York City: Beyond the Politics of Pigmentation*, Green and Wilson (1992) concluded that a pan-African struggle is imperative; native and foreign-born blacks need to wage a united struggle, and leave aside insular interests. As Dewind and Kasinitz (1997:1105) articulated it, this is especially so because of the dramatic growth in the nonwhite immigrant population:

What does the incorporation of the new immigrants and their children mean for the native population?...The meaning of such demographic changes for the fundamental “American dilemma” of race is often neglected and far from clear. Despite the projected decline of whites and the emergence of a nonwhite majority, the black portion of the U.S. population is projected to rise only very slightly. In fact, if the descendents of today’s black immigrants are discounted, the share of blacks would be likely not to increase and could even slightly fall. In the context of a nonwhite majority, what impact would the larger growth and size of other nonwhite populations have on the standing of blacks?

The ways in which Latino immigrants identify— whether they form alliances with African Americans, pursue ethnic group interests, or a pan-ethnic Latino group interest— is a source of concern for the same reasons (Kaufman, 2003). Some observers have noted that black Latinos are a potential bridge between African American and Latino communities. In their article in *Black Enterprise* Milca Esdaille and Alan Hughes (2004) expressed this view:

And while historically attempts by Latinos and African Americans to forge economic, political and social alliances have yielded lackluster results, it can be argued that this group—many of whom feel comfortable in both black and Latino communities—could be the key to a much-needed business and political link between America’s largest minority groups.

In light of the concerns expressed above this chapter explores the implications of my informants' ethnic affinity and/or identity for political coalitions with African Americans. The development of an ethnic group and identity, in so far as these formations are linked to competition for resources, suggests a possible political schism between ethnic groups. The literature on West Indian and Latino immigrants, however, indicates a much more fluid and contextual situation whereby ethnic identity is sometimes linked to a political schism, but at other times is not.

Political Views and Behaviors: West Indians

Scholarly interest in the identities and political attitudes of black immigrants and the relationship between native and foreign-born blacks is not new. Scholars have long commented on the behavior of early West Indian immigrants, particularly their ethnic chauvinism and their tendency to distinguish themselves from African Americans (Bryce-Laporte, 1972; James, 1998; Ira de Reid, 1939). However the interest has increased with the dramatic increase in black immigrants since the Immigration Act of 1965. Recent scholarship points to an ethnic differentiation process, which has been occurring in the black population (Vickerman 2001; Waters, 1999; Basch et al, 1994). As discussed in Chapter 2 this differentiation is characterized by the increasing salience of West Indian identity. The tendency for West Indian immigrants to identify ethnically and/or nationally suggests a possible political schism between native and foreign-born blacks. To what extent is this true? Does the immigrants' ethnic identity indicate that they do not see common cause with native-born blacks? Is West Indian ethnic pride and mobilization primarily an expression of separate and insular political interests and goals?

There is some indication that West Indian ethnic group formation does not necessarily mean a political schism, or perhaps that this formation has not yet reached the point of a political schism. Kasinitz (1992), for instance, suggest that many West Indian organizations are more cultural than political, with goals that are shaped by and in response to social situations, which are in flux. The West Indian Day Parade, which is the most public expression of West Indian ethnic identity, was primarily a cultural event, which began to take on a more political dimension in the 1980s. Its politicization was the work of various political leaders—West Indians, African Americans and whites—who saw it as an opportunity to mobilize a constituency. It is therefore questionable whether it was an expression of the views and interests of the West Indian population or not.

Green and Wilson's (1992) research also suggests that ethnic identity does not necessarily represent a political schism between native and foreign-born blacks. They examined the political behavior of West Indians and African Americans by systematically analyzing three electoral races in New York City in the 1984 election: the 42nd Assembly District in Brooklyn; the 82nd Assembly District in the Bronx; and the 6th Congressional District in Queens. All three have the largest concentration of African American and Caribbean residents. Their study, they wrote, "appeared to contradict existing arguments that an intractable schism exists in the black community that limits the possibility for unification." In their examination of the three races they failed to find that it was "the polarization of African American and Caribbean communities that led to the reelection of white incumbents."

To corroborate their conclusion Green and Wilson point to a survey of African Americans and Caribbean subjects conducted by The Caribbean Research Center at Medgar Evers College of CUNY in 1987, which indicated that while “there was acceptance among African American and Caribbean respondents of the fact of cultural differences, there was equal agreement that they embrace many of the same political objectives and should work in harmony for the community good” (1992:132). A New York Gallup poll of Caribbean and native-born blacks came to the same conclusion. The poll found that in almost identical percentages Caribbean and American blacks believed that racism is the most serious problem facing blacks in the city. Both groups also identified unemployment, drugs, housing and education as major problems in their communities. Thus, though there are undeniable cultural differences between native and foreign-born blacks and an increasing salience of ethnicity among West Indian immigrants, these black immigrants sometimes find common cause with African Americans and support cross-cultural coalitions.

Political Views and Behaviors: Puerto Ricans and Dominicans

The political relationship between Spanish-speaking groups and African Americans is even more complex, with some groups having closer relationships than others. Some of this difference derives from the unique experiences of each Latin-origin group. Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans have quite different socio-political experiences in the United States (Oboler, 1995; Flores, 1996; Grosfoguel et al, 1996). Each has subject to different treatment by the U.S. government, which shapes the socioeconomic adjustment, and

political attitudes and behaviors of each group. Grosfoguel et al (1996) capture the differences between the three Spanish-speaking Caribbean groups—Cubans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. Because of their colonial status Puerto Ricans were incorporated into the United States as a racially inferior group rather than as an ethnic group; Dominican immigrants have been similarly racialized, while the pre-1980 Cuban immigrants have not. Grosfoguel et al (1996:199) write:

Global state ideological and symbolic strategies as well as the racial/ethnic symbolic field of New York City are crucial determinants to understand the differences among these migrants. An important distinction for Caribbean migrants is whether they come from colonies or nation states. Colonial migrants have a longer history of racialization in the white metropolitan imaginary due to the US's long colonizing history. The racialization of immigrants affected their incorporation into the United States. This was the case of the Dominicans, who were adversely affected through their association with a Puerto Rican racial/ethnic identity in the white imaginary. The Cubans managed to escape the negative symbolic capital of Puerto Rican racialization with an infusion of over one billion dollars from the U.S. government's Cuban refugee program (as exiles from a communism during the Cold War). Every local government perceived Cuban settlement as a financial gain for the city rather than as a burden, 'whitening' the perception of their difference in the imaginary of white America.

What has been the effect of this differential treatment on the identities and political perspectives of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans—the two Caribbean groups with some members who would be considered black by U.S. standards? Some scholars argue that though they are racialized and linked to African Americans in the white imaginary, and even though some are black by U.S. standards, Puerto Ricans have not come to identify themselves as black and with African Americans. It was assumed that like other immigrants Puerto Ricans would be forced to choose between being white or black. With whiteness virtually foreclosed to them (no matter the color of their skin, their last names and accents marked them as not white) the expectation was that they would come to

identify as black. Many, however, have resisted both designations and have steadfastly identified themselves in cultural and national terms as Puerto Ricans or Boricuas, and in racial terms as “other” or “mixed” (Rodríguez, 1980, 1996; Rodríguez –Morazzani, 1996; Duany, 2002).

Clara Rodríguez (1980, 1996), who has been studying the ways Puerto Ricans identify on the census, designated them the “Rainbow People” for whom cultural identity rather than racial identity was primary. Rodríguez argues that by identifying as mixed and in cultural rather than racial terms Puerto Ricans are resisting U.S. hegemonic racial ideologies. The “rainbow theory” has been challenged by Roberto P. Rodríguez -Morazzani (1996) who argues that Puerto Ricans’ identity choice is not racially neutral because the Puerto Rican nation is imagined to be white. Identifying as Puerto Rican, then, “may serve as a means of identifying as non-black, not as a way of identifying as non-white (Rodríguez-Morazzani (1996:159). Similarly Duany (2002:257) argues against Rodríguez’s notion that it is a choice that repudiates the dominant American racial schema. As he sees it, in a context where “Hispanic” and “Puerto Rican” is conceptually equivalent to “brown,” (not black or white), Puerto Ricans who choose these categories “may be assigning new (racial) meanings to existing racial and ethnic categories.”

Does the desire of some Puerto Ricans to assert a different racial identity present a barrier to coalitions with African Americans? Does their preference for their ethnic and national identity indicate an intractable schism between them and African Americans?

These are the questions raised by Angelo Falcon (1988) in his critical examination of the “minority” banner under which blacks and Latinos in New York might coalesce. Falcon argues that while most foreign-born Latinos do not find common cause with African Americans, Puerto Ricans are different.³⁹ Puerto Ricans’ longer history in the United States has led them to develop similar views to American blacks on their minority status. Falcon also predicts that Dominicans are moving in the direction of Puerto Ricans. Similarly, Juan Flores, (1996) and Raquel Rivera (2003) have remarked on the similarities between Puerto Ricans and African Americans and the “unprecedented cultural fusions” between the groups. This is partly supported by the ways in which these groups are identifying on the U.S. Census: a higher percentage of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans than any other Hispanics origin group identified as black on the 2000 Census (Logan, 2003).

Though some Puerto Ricans are developing similar views and even cultural practices as African Americans, this does not necessarily mean they find common political cause with African Americans (See for example, Goode, 1998; Urciuoli, 1996). Apparently the relationship between the groups is very much affected by local conditions, particularly the form that competition and distribution of resources take on the ground.

³⁹ Falcon (1998) argued that most Latinos are foreign-born and they bring “views toward race, nationalism, language, the role of government and so on that have not been developed within a specific U.S context.” These differences lead most Latinos to not see themselves as minorities, people of color, or disadvantaged. Hence though they share some concerns with African Americans, the communities are divided on issues such as bilingual education, immigration, the role of government, and differential access to government resources, including jobs.

Bonnie Urciuoli's (1996) study of Puerto Ricans in the Lower East Side of Manhattan illustrates the role of competition for resources in generating conflict, even when the groups in question share much culturally. Urciuoli found no fixed boundaries between African Americans and Puerto Ricans in their social life. Both groups had a common *habitus*, which led them to shared dispositions and perceptions. Cultural fusion and shared *habitus* apparently does not always lead to shared political goals and coalitions, however. While her Puerto Rican informants felt more comfortable with African Americans than with whites, they greatly resented the better access African Americans had to employment in public agencies and in banks and post offices⁴⁰.

Judith Goode (1998) also found competition for economic and political resources in Philadelphia. There, her Puerto Rican informants saw blacks and whites, who are well established in a number of institutions, as joined against them. Puerto Ricans, Goode (1998: 46) writes, "see themselves as competing with African Americans... (who seem) to 'own' the civil rights apparatus." Clearly, then, groups can be culturally similar but in conflict because of competition for resources.

Relations between Dominicans and African Americans are also in flux, and very much shaped by social conditions in the United States. For the most part Dominican immigrants are seen as living transnational lives, which generally means they are more involved with politics in the Dominican Republic rather than U.S. domestic political issues. Though racialized as non-white and suffering the economic consequences of this racialization,

⁴⁰ Based on 1980 census data, blacks were 30.9 percent and Hispanics 20 percent of New York City's population. Yet in 1982 blacks held 32 percent of city jobs and Hispanics 8 percent; the figures for state jobs was 17 percent versus 3 percent respectively (Green and Wilson, 1992:154).

many resist being identified as black, and an association with African Americans. Their strategy, Duany (1998) holds, has been to emphasize their racial diversity as well as the cultural bonds of a Dominican identity in the United States, made all the easier because they were successful in recreating a Dominican ethos in their enclave in Washington Heights, New York. Ana Aparicio's (2004) research, however, indicates that some second-generation Dominican immigrants are exhibiting different behaviors and developing different identities from their parents. The activists who Aparicio studied are more involved in U.S. domestic politics. They form coalitions with African Americans and Puerto Ricans as they seek resources for their communities. They also articulate an identity Aparicio found to be multiple, contextual, and much more accepting of blackness than their parents' generation.

Political Views and Behaviors: Cubans

And what of Cubans? As I have demonstrated Cubans have a different socioeconomic and political profile from Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and West Indians because of the economic and moral support Cubans have received from the U.S. government. Observers note that this support has created deep divisions and conflict between the exiles and African Americans in South Florida. There, the communities are very often on different sides of the political spectrum and on policy issues (Dunn, 1997; Warren et al, 1986; Croucher, 1997). The sources of conflict between the groups are multiple, including the unequal treatment meted out by the federal government, the massive influx of Cubans into Miami since 1959, competition for resources, and different views on a number of political and social issues. With the mass migration of Cubans, American blacks very

quickly became outnumbered. Before the migration of Cubans, Hispanics were one percent of the population and blacks 13 percent. By 1990 the Hispanic share had increased to 49 percent and blacks to 20 percent, with the majority of the Hispanics being white and Cuban. Hispanics also came to own and operate the vast majority of the businesses. Thus, in 1990 blacks owned only one percent of the area's businesses, with 88 percent of these having no employees. Black business ownership seemed to have deteriorated. For instance, in 1979 blacks owned 9 percent of Dade County gas stations, whereas in 1960 they owned 25 percent (Harris, 1994). One reason for this inequity is the incredible disparity in loans from the Small Business Administration, an affirmative action program which Cubans qualify for as a member of a minority group (Dunn, 1997). For instance between 1968 and 1979 blacks got only 6.4 percent of the \$100 million dollars the agency distributed to area businesses, while Hispanics received 47 percent and non-Hispanic whites, 46.5 percent (Harris, 1994; Dunn, 1997). This inequity was especially unjust in the early years of the migration when black Americans were facing Jim Crow barriers to *their* self-actualization. Some of my informants noted this: "At one point, I, as a Cuban, could have gotten a Cuban loan for college...I didn't get it because I got a scholarship...that my next door black neighbor could not get, and he is American!"

Residential segregation also plays a role; blacks are segregated in Overtown and Liberty City, outside of the Cuban ethnic enclave economy. But blacks also perceive white Cubans as racists who discriminate against blacks. One Liberty City activist described it this way:

Cubans are afraid of Blacks. Their experience in the United States has made them more racist than they were, and this gets translated into fear...As they go up the

totem pole trying to become successful, many Cubans find out that these white Anglos don't like colored folks, so if I'm going to progress, I must take on some of the same behaviors of the Anglos. You don't discriminate, but as a way of doing business you begin to laugh at racist jokes, you talk about those niggers over there in Overtown...because you're surrounded by racist people and because it is more important in this moment in your life to pursue your agenda (quoted in Stepick and Portes, 1993).

Dade County's two-tiered form of metropolitan government, explained Daryl Harris

(1994: 87), also disadvantages blacks:

Perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of Dade County's governmental structure is in its makeup of municipalities. Although metropolitan Dade County has twenty-seven cities, the predominantly Hispanic cities of Miami and Hialeah being the first and second largest, respectively, there exists within the country large concentrations of black people (60%) who are surprisingly, yet systematically excluded from any of the county's twenty-seven municipalities. The most obvious political implication of this conscious political subterfuge is that it eliminates from electoral competition substantial blocs of black voters who could determine the outcomes of important contests. Reduced to ineffectual political status, blacks living in unincorporated areas repeatedly observe that their concerns get moved to the back burner of the institutional agenda.

A major consequence of Dade County's political structure is that it has fostered a sense among African Americans that Hispanics are competitors and usurpers. Blacks find themselves pitted against Hispanics in a zero-sum competition over resources, with Hispanics as the central economic, political and cultural force in Dade County. To blacks, Stack and Warren wrote (1992:166),

...the economic and political benefits of the civil rights movement ...had not been realized in south Florida. To many it seemed the massive federal assistance throughout the 1960s and 1970s was primarily directed at the social and economic needs of Dade County's newly established immigrant community rather than at the needs of blacks.

It is important to note here that the question of whether Cubans displaced African Americans in Dade County's job market is still being debated. Dunn, for instance, argues

that blacks have benefited from the economic expansion: “The arrival of the immigrants might have blunted black advancement, but it did not push more blacks into poverty” ((1997:332). Sheila Croucher (1997) also wrote that there is no empirical evidence to support the contention that Hispanics displaced blacks in the job market. The “discourse of displacement,” however, has played an important political purpose. The displacement discourse gained strength in the 1980s when African American leaders began to articulate it as a means of bringing attention to the plight of the black community, which had not improved much since the civil rights movement, and which existed before the arrival of the Cuban exiles.

Marginalized from traditional forms of getting their needs met, blacks have turned to unconventional ways to deal with their frustration. There were riots and what Dunn (1997) refers to as “mini disturbances” in 1968, 1970, 1971 and 1979. In the 1980s alone there were four riots (1980, 1982, 1984, 1989), each a response to the police shootings of blacks (Warren et al, 1986; Harris, 1994; Stack et al, 1992; Dunn, 1997). The tension also boiled over in 1990 when President Nelson Mandela visited Miami. Mr. Mandela was snubbed by Miami city officials and the Cuban community, which refused to welcome him because of his close ties with Fidel Castro. In response, Miami’s black community called for a convention boycott of Miami. Thirteen national organizations cancelled their Miami conventions (Dunn et al 1992; Croucher, 1997). In July 2003 Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Peneles, a Cuban American, apologized to Mandela. Many in the exile community were unhappy with the apology.

One of my informants put the blame for the inter-community conflict squarely on the Federal Government. While the majority of respondents did not express the idea that there is a deliberate policy of keeping the groups apart, many shared Omar's opinion that it was the U.S. government's preferential treatment of Cubans that started the conflict.

Many also shared Omar's rejection of Cuban exceptionalism:

The government, I feel, made a very conscious decision to not provide people who could bring these two groups together. Remember the folks who fought in Bay of Pigs were trained by the CIA in guerrilla warfare, etc were highly frustrated when Kennedy did not send in air support to the invasion. So here is a Cuban exile community, very, very angry that the stay in Miami was gonna be longer than originally anticipated. Then you find an African American community that is not cognizant to the political issues of the time. The federal government buys off the Cuban community by providing the Cubans with tremendous amount of financial support for them to become established...My dad bought our first home at an interest rate lower than an African American could have bought it, and we had not been here six years. So those were the kinds of differential treatment that we received as a group that allow us to excel; that is Cubans. African Americans resented Cubans for that.

The topic—inequality and conflict between the two communities— is sometimes debated in the Miami media. For instance in his column “Shattering a few Latin-black myths in South Florida,” Sergio Lopez-Miro (1989) argued that Cubans are not to be blamed, neither should they try to make amends for the “soaring unemployment, crime, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy rates in the inner city.” He argued that anti-racism is an intrinsic part of Cuban national identity, as evidenced by white Cubans' support for the abolition of slavery in the 19th century, and how shocked the early exiles were when they encountered Jim Crow segregation in Miami. In his response, “Latin-black myths: shattered or perpetuated” (1989) Ricardo Gonzalez (a black Cuban) pointed out that the large influx of Cubans “at the very least played a role in limiting the gains achieved by

other blacks in other parts of the country.” In particular Gonzalez took issue with Lopez-Miro’s perpetuation of “the myth about Cubans not being bigoted and that racism in Cuba did not exist.” He reminded readers that “in 1958 Cuba, there were also white-only beaches, clubs, schools, etc.”

Federal policy continues to engender conflict between the groups. Perhaps the most egregious in the view of many African Americans, and some of this study’s participants, is the unequal treatment meted out to Haitian and Cuban refugees. While Haitians who make their way to the United States are sent back or incarcerated by INS, Cubans who make it to American soil are given amnesty (Dunn, 1997; Stepick, 1992).

Political Views and Behaviors: Black Cubans

Where do black Cubans stand in all of this? What sorts of social policies do they support? I am particularly interested in what we can learn from those participants who were ethnically identified since this is the segment of immigrants that suggest a schism. Is their ethnic affinity an inherent barrier to cross-cultural coalitions?

Black-Cubans

In this section I describe and analyze the political perspectives of Black-Cuban classified participants, especially in relation to African Americans, and to a pan-African struggle for black empowerment. Black-Cuban participants exhibited a politicized racial group consciousness, or a minority status consciousness. Racial group consciousness is used here in the way defined by Ruell Rogers (2001), as “the dimension of group identity that

shapes political evaluations and behavior.” Racial group consciousness includes: 1) a sense of racial group attachment and awareness that is more politically significant than others, such as Latinos and Asians; 2) a linked racial fate outlook, in which individuals see their fate as linked to blacks as a whole; 3) an awareness of the economic disparity between blacks and whites; 4) a support for group mobilization and collective struggle aimed at getting government to redress the inequities; 5) the feeling that government must play a significant role in ensuring political and economic equality.

Though these participants had a politicized racial group identity, there was no unanimity of opinion about the best strategy to achieve racial equality. They resembled African Americans (as discussed in Chapter 2) in that some supported solutions associated with neoliberal ideologies and conservative black nationalism: entrepreneurship and black capitalism, personal responsibility and self-help, a belief in the private sector, and “trickle down economics.” Others supported integrationism and symbolic representation, believing that black political leaders should represent the interest of all blacks, for example. And a few supported a transformative approach, seeing the source of inequality as capitalism, racism and sexism. What is more an individual might simultaneously hold all these positions. In some cases there was a shift in their position as they aged, and their class status changed. It was therefore difficult to “fix” their perspectives. What follows, then, should be read with an understanding that informant’s positions were a complex amalgam influenced by their personal interests and experiences and what they believed about the nature of inequality.

Black-Cuban classified respondents tended to compare the different opportunities blacks and whites have and to feel that blacks are disadvantaged relative to whites. Consider Juan's analysis. This excerpt is from a discussion Juan and I were having about racial discrimination. He had been telling me that he had not directly experienced racism:

...but I'm very much aware...come on man if the population of black is only like about 28-30 percent of the population of the US, but if you look...that 80 percent of the population in jail is black, come on, give me a break. Now this person kills somebody and this person gets twenty years; a black kills somebody and he gets life. I mean give me a break! "Oh, I didn't have a good lawyer;" good lawyer my rear-end! I'm going to lock this person up; it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out. Look at McDonalds in the area, you know you go to Queens or Brooklyn, 80 percent of the employees at McDonalds are black, but 90 percent of the managers are white! Give me a break!

Like Juan, José compared white and black economic positions. For José, seeing the problem as societal or systemic not only relieves him of the burden of personal failure, but offers him something to struggle against, and hope that struggle can achieve change:

Having an understanding of how racism fits in our society allows you to not get discouraged and not look at people as black and white...understanding systemic racism, and not get discouraged. I go through it every day. Me as a black man constantly being challenged about who you are, your capabilities, one way or another constantly being challenged. So I think that the understanding of politics allows you to look at the world a little bit different, not as if it's black and white. I mean growing up here especially in the sixties in the Bronx, even in this neighborhood where I live now...I went to Clinton High School and it was basically Irish and Jewish, you could walk into a store and there are 20 people in front of you, they want to take care of you immediately; walking behind a person, they think you're going to mug 'em. In the job in general, why is it that the people with the better paying jobs, the power and the decision-making are mostly white, while the black is still in the low-paying job? I work in the hospital industry where as you go up professionally you see less and less people of color. So all of these things. You can claim people of color are latecomers or are not as smart as whites. I refuse to accept that.

Many had a clear sense of the political significance of identifying as black. They were mindful for instance that numbers mattered in the apportioning of resources. Consider Omar's response to the "Other" category on the 2000 census:

MH: You put Cuban and black?

Omar: Oh yeah. I was making sure that everybody, even...my brother's wife is white (Hispanic) and so the issue of what the girls wanted, so they called me and I told them how to be in terms of race, 'cause there is the "Other" category, which just makes...

MH: What do you think of that "Other" category?

Omar: In the last census it gave you an opportunity to really nail it down to white/black, Indian/black, Indian/Chinese. It allowed you to mix and match, but what it does is dilute the black diaspora because the moment that you are "Other," the moment that you divide the group doesn't make us any stronger... By saying "Other" you're putting yourself somewhere else. Who else is like you? A handful. The census is a political tool...it's for allocation of resources.

Most Black-Cuban classified participants supported collective struggle for resources, even though they no longer participated in demonstrations as they had done in their youth. They especially supported the goals of the black liberation struggles as articulated by organizations like the NAACP: The integration of blacks and other oppressed groups into the dominant society's social structure. Consequently, most strongly supported social policies such as affirmative action. Indeed they credited affirmative action with their own achievements. The excerpt below was one of the more articulate, but was typical:

MH: How do you feel about affirmative action?

Ans: I think after 200 years of slavery affirmative action is a necessary evil. You have to find a way to level the playing field and I think white folks have had affirmative action all their lives. How else would George Bush have gone to Yale?... I am an example of affirmative action. Had it not been for affirmative action my boss's godson would have gotten the job. I got it, so you have to level the playing field. I'm for it.

MH: Is the playing field being leveled?

Ans: No. I think it's one of the many steps that will help to level it, but the field is not level yet...Middle class blacks are middle class because of affirmative action. Without it there would be no middle class blacks. If it were not for affirmative action I would probably be serving meals, cooking meals, serving drinks.

Indeed the majority of participants who articulated this position were middle class professionals who had attained their middle class status because of affirmative action. Their support clearly reflected their class interest. For example, they supported affirmative action policies, but were ambivalent about welfare for the poor. Most were also strong proponents of the private sector, which through their middle-class lens provided better opportunities for blacks than the public sector. Their class interest, however, was rarely crass; their personal interest is closely tied in their minds to the interest of the race. They saw themselves as working in the interest of the race. For instance, several who worked in public and private sector management said they tried to use their position to gain access for blacks to their organizations, resources for black communities, and fair treatment for blacks.

Their sense of responsibility for the race sometimes took on the characteristic of racial uplift, particularly because of the moralizing they engaged in. This discourse of racial uplift actually was found across all categories. Not surprisingly, as with their African American counterparts it was the women who were most concerned with uplifting the race.⁴¹ Over and over again they worried about the dysfunctionality of poor blacks: Their poor family values, teenage pregnancy, poor work ethic, disregard for education, their dress code, poor English language skills, and poor public behavior. They were particularly aggrieved by the image of blacks which blacks themselves project, arguing that this not only represents a degeneration of black culture, but that it gives whites the

⁴¹ For African American women's involvement in racial uplift see for example Mullings (1997); Hall (2000); and Guy Sheftall et al (1995).

wrong impression. Maria was particularly eloquent in this regard, but several women articulated similar concerns:

I've always tried to tell my friends in the media that we must always put a positive image out, because TV programs and commercials do not come with explanations. If someone sees Nelly (the way he dresses), Snoop, Tupac, Ozzy Osbourne, and some of the almost naked women that parade up and down the stage without dignity, no one explains to the individual watching that this is just their stage persona. As far as some people are concerned, your image is who you are. When I see some of the entertainers today and how accepting black society has become, I also think about the civil rights movement and how you had to have certain character and moral standing before organizations like the NAACP, etc, would stand up on your behalf.

Though the women mostly talked about the moral failings of African Americans, they also expressed the same concerns about black Cubans, especially low-income black Cubans. Lower income participants also expressed concerns about the dysfunctionality of poor blacks. The difference between middle-class (particularly Black-Cuban identified) and working class participants is that the latter tended to see the dysfunctionality as *the* major barrier to black advancement, while the former felt it was both dysfunctionality *and* institutionalized racism.

Middle class participants, then, talked about the role of individual effort in achieving as well as the structural constraints on individuals. This led them to support government intervention and social policies similar to the policies supported by many African Americans. One particularly interesting perspective came from Omar who contrasted his views with his ex-wife, who is African American:

And I say, just because you were given an opportunity or you had the talent or the skill, or your parents had the discipline and the vision does not justify the fact that there are lots of people who did not have any of those elements. And you may have had the opportunity at a given time to be able to move forward. But assume

that your dad would have died in an accident and that your mom would have connected with a man who was a drunk, what would your life have been like? It would have ended completely differently...I'm just giving you a possible route in your experience that justifies the lives of many people you see and that you are poo- pooing on just because they do not have the wherewithal to do the things that you have been able to do and to attain what you have. And that's where the society needs to step in. The different elements of government need to address...the educational system, the health system and that it doesn't happen. My sister who is an assistant principal says her school is in the worse area of the community and she sees these horror stories, and those are the kinds of things that many times...sure the parents, drug addicts, this that. But, what about the children? What kind of expectations can we have of children that were born out of that environment?

In Miami, in particular, the relationship black Cubans have with African Americans and their attitudes towards African Americans have concrete consequences because black Cubans often occupy an intermediary role between African Americans and Cubans. They were very aware of their role. For instance, at the launching of the Cuban Roots Foundation in 1991 one of the founders, Lucia Rojas, talked about one of the goals of the organization: "We are going to establish a bridge of communication between the two communities" (*Miami Herald*, 1991). Black-Cuban identified participants tended to be especially mindful of themselves as intermediaries. Most were middle-class professionals who held their jobs, they felt, because they are black and Hispanic and could act as a bridge between the two communities. Often they were the only black person in an organization, and were the spokesperson for all blacks, and most specifically for African Americans. This was true in their professional lives where they felt they had the opportunity to advance and protect the interest of all blacks, or as Omar who is in the public sector dramatically and somewhat facetiously put it: "I represent my people." In

fact Omar felt that being a black Cuban gave him this unique opportunity. Thus, he saw his position as an opportunity to mediate between the two communities.

Another participant, Liliana, who was an editor for a Spanish-language newspaper, reported having to monitor and correct racialized reporting; for example alerting the paper to the many times they referred in a report to a man as “*un negro*” (a black man), when in her estimation the man’s race was not even important to the story. This participant also told me: “With me they see a black woman ‘cause I would speak about it all the time. I was a pain in the ass about it.”

For the Miami contingent, their racial loyalty was tested often. Some reported feeling torn between African Americans and Cubans. For the most part, they were allied with African Americans on domestic issues, but not necessarily on Cuban issues. Participants referred to two events where their loyalty to their two communities was tested, both of which had to do with Cuba. The first was the incident in which Miami Cubans boycotted Nelson Mandela’s visit to Miami in 2000 because Mr. Mandela had expressed solidarity with Fidel Castro. Angry about the reaction of the Cubans, African Americans called for a boycott of Miami. In August 2003, while I was doing research, the mayor of Miami-Dade, Alex Penelas, decided to apologize to Nelson Mandela. I spoke to several people about this affair. Most Black-Cuban identified participants shared Ramón’s perspective. Ramón explained that he had wanted the black Cuban organization he was a part of (Afro-Cuban Association or ACA) at the time to give Mandela a plaque of honor, but

also at the same time to remind him of what was going on in Cuba. The organization did nothing, as he explained:

Ramón: I don't agree with the Cubans' position that the friend of my enemy is my enemy. We're as African as everybody. Mandela represents blackness. Nothing was done! They (the organization) were afraid of the reaction of white Cubans.

MH: Is that true?

Ramón: I believe so, but also there are many black Cubans who didn't like Mandela's friendship with Castro. But a black Cuban should understand that above all else he represents blackness.

MH: But only if your politics is race first.

Ramón: I disagree with that! I expect a white Cuban to put Cuba above, but for a black Cuban, there is no excuse. For the ACA to have said anything would have been confrontational.

I also asked some informants how they felt about Penelas's apology. Several shared

Maria's cynicism:

My attitude about Nelson is that if you are in jail, and people extend their hand in support, you are in no position to be picky. Where were the Miami Cubans when he was in jail? Did the Miami Cubans ever take a position against apartheid? No, because they were living a form of apartheid in Cuba and in Miami. I think that the Mayor's apology is just politics. Penelas wants to run for Senator or Governor.

Omar, who took a different position, felt that both communities were being manipulated by the "powers that be," a point he repeatedly made:

I felt we had every right to be upset at Mandela for saying Castro and Arafat are his best friends, though I think the way the Cubans reacted was ridiculous. It's like a foreigner saying nice things about David Duke. The Jews did not react the way we did. They went to him and explained, unlike us who pouted. This led to an ethnic backlash... When this happened I talked to an African American friend who was bent out of shape and I said if someone had come from Europe, like a Polish solidarity leader, and said "My best friend is David Duke," and the Cubans received him, African Americans would have every right to object. This was not an action against black people, but against Mandela. Many times the issue of race creates a knee-jerk reaction. None of the reactions, the boycott for example, had anything to do with Mandela, but were the result of pre-existing hostility between African Americans and Cubans... Both groups responded in the way the people who manipulate them wanted them to... The differences are encouraged by the powers that be, and there are those who benefit from the division. For example,

when Haitians come in the decision is made about sticking them into Krome, and the response of African Americans is to say there are differences between blacks and Cubans. This divides the communities.

The other incident, which tested their allegiance, was the case of Elian Gonzalez. Elian is the Cuban child who, in November 1999, was the sole survivor of a number of Cubans, including his mother, who attempted to cross the Florida straits on a raft. The Cuban community in Miami mobilized to keep Elian in the United States, but the U.S. government returned him to his father in Cuba. African Americans, along with Americans across the board, supported his return, while the most vocal of Cuban Americans did not. Here Marisol explained how torn she was and the impact of the incident on the way she identifies:

Marisol: I've always related more with them (African Americans). And when I was in middle school... we went to one of the worse middle schools-Madison... and they used to always have fights. And I remember one time they had a fight, like a riot and it was the blacks against the Cubans.

MH: What did you do?

Marisol: I stood in the middle...like how you gonna have this? I'm black and I'm Cuban! And the Cuban people would look at you, but the blacks were like, "Whacha talking about, you're black, let's go!" So I've always related more to them...I never had to choose. The only time I felt I had to choose, and that was the hardest time of my life, was during the Elian...

MH: Why did Elian have that effect on you?

Marisol: Because I didn't want him to go back. Me and my best friend...we're just not going to talk about this anymore. A lot of people just saw him as a white kid and Haitians are just being sent back. For me, I don't know what happens when Haitians get sent back, but I know what happens when Cubans get sent back. I know they get hurt, killed and their families get harassed. That time I really had to choose. I was either black if I was agreeing with them, or Hispanic if I didn't. I had a really, really hard time. At work I associated more with African Americans and when the issue came around they only saw the idea that if they send the Haitians back, they should send Cubans back. Maybe I was wrong but I just saw more than that. I think my mom put her life in danger for me too and if she had passed and if they send me back to my father...

Even though Marisol felt this to be a significant turning point in her identity she continued to live her life as she had, more closely allied with African Americans than with other Cubans.

For Liliana, Elian was an example of a general dissatisfaction with the position African Americans took on Cuba. Here, Liliana, who normally is allied with African Americans on domestic issues, explained that when it comes to Cuban issues she parts ways with African Americans. The excerpt begins at the point where a group of informants were speculating on the likely response of African Americans to the execution in June 2003 of four black Cubans who hijacked a ferry in Cuba:

They're going to keep quiet...the Randol Robinson and Alice walker. As much as I respect Alice walker I don't like her politics. We (a reference to a conversation she and I had in a separate interview) were talking about how black Cubans react against politics in general, and I said I don't know about many others but I am very moderate, and I'm a Democrat, and I'm very moderate except when it comes to Cuba. I guess I turn into, not a reactionary... although certainly after Elian I was a reactionary.

Others understood the position African Americans have taken. Marie, for example, did not necessarily always like the position African Americans take, but she felt it was the responsibility of black Cubans to educate African Americans. Another response is from José who completely rejected Liliana's views. In the excerpt below José identified the ideological cross-fertilization that occurred during the 1970s between the various black struggles, and the links some blacks drew between liberation in other parts of the diaspora and liberation in their own countries (Hay, 2005):

Blacks have been supportive of Cubans in Cuba. Cuba, in many ways, was a shot in the arm to the Civil Rights Movement, to see this country make steps against racism, and then Fidel came up here and stayed in Harlem. This galvanized the

movement. And the support that Fidel gave to blacks here in addressing the issue of racism. So if they (other black Cubans) are against that, then they don't understand the history here, because that support comes out of that identity that black Americans and Cuba has created over the question of racism, even though Cubans could do more about racism. So I think black Americans should support anyone who is against racism, provided that person isn't a nut. I think that is the beauty of black people here, that they recognize the struggle is not just here, that they identify with any group that is fighting oppression around the world.

In our discussions about the conflict between African Americans and Cubans in Miami, Black-Cuban classified individuals tended to side with African Americans, and rejected attempts by some white Cubans to create divisions between themselves and African Americans. Their own racialized experiences led them to feel this was a divide-and-rule strategy:

I always found it, and I don't know if it's a conscious decision, but it's kind of like a "separate and conquer," because it's like, "You're not black, you're Cuban." Interesting. When we first came to Miami we could not find places to stay in the Cuban neighborhoods. We ended up having to live in a neighborhood that was populated mostly by black Cubans, Allapatah.

This also sometimes happens with white Americans. Samuel, for instance, told me how he responds when white Americans tell him he is not black, but Cuban:

I know when they try to establish that distinction usually it's because since you are different from them and I'm accepting you, then you can become that person's ally or you be neutral to a situation, which I do not allow that. That's usually why they tell you that, so they can talk about black Americans...I am black too. The only difference is they were born here and I in Cuba.

Black-Cuban informants defended African Americans from white Cubans, arguing that in fact some white Cubans did discriminate against African Americans. They knew this because some white Cubans made derogatory statements about African Americans to them assuming they had their sympathy. White Cubans also made derogatory comments

about African Americans in their presence without realizing they spoke Spanish. This was a very common experience, which occurred a lot in stores. They would walk into a Cuban-owned store and the store attendant, assuming they were African American who did not speak Spanish, would say something like, “*Cuidado, aqui un Negro que va a robar*” (careful, here is a black who is going to steal). Sometimes they were quiet, allowing the attendants to incriminate themselves, and then they eventually confront them. Sometimes they simply left the store in disgust.

Almost all participants, regardless of their identity, also argued that African Americans were justified in resenting Cubans because Cubans as a group have benefited at their expense. The excerpt below captures this:

MH: Some Afro Cubans I’ve spoken to have this big issue with black Americans, and that is the position they take towards Cuba. Is that an issue for you?

Ans: It isn’t, because I understand what they mean. Most black Cubans do not understand. We came here; we have taken from what black Americans would have had. For example, when it comes to jobs, I as a black Hispanic woman can fill two spaces for any employer; I’m black and I’m Hispanic and I’m a female, so hey, I hire her and I got my quota. And so a black female is gonna say, “I can’t compete with her.” Most black females cannot compete with me. If we go up for a principal-ship, let’s say, I’m gonna get it before a black female.

MH: Because you’re bilingual?

Ans: Because I’m bilingual. They can place me in any school, either Hispanic or American; I’m female and I’m black. So there has to be jealousy so I understand it. I don’t blame them for that hate they have toward Cubans. I don’t blame them because a lot of the white Hispanics have come and put down blacks as you’re lower than I am when in Cuba they were lower than most of the blacks that are here... But they came here and capitalize on the fact that these white and black people got this issue about whites and blacks going on: “Hey we can come right in between and act like we like them but we’re taking their spot.” So most black Americans have that resentment.

Black-Cuban identified participants were those who exhibited a clear politicized racial group consciousness, with an awareness of blacks as a minority. This led them to

emphasize their racial identity, to feel allied with African Americans, and to see utility of cross-cultural coalitions. They differ from Afro-Cuban classified individuals in the extent to which they emphasized their racial identity, but as I will demonstrate below the ethnic identity of Afro-Cuban classified informants is not inherently inimical to cross-cultural struggles against oppression. This has implications for the ways in which progressive groups perceive and respond to the ethnic identities of other black immigrants.

Afro-Cubans

At first blush, it appears that Afro-Cuban identified participants differ a great deal from the Black-Cuban classified participants in this study. While the latter emphasized their racial identity and felt allied with African Americans, the emphasis Afro-Cuban classified informants placed on their ethnic identity suggests a schism between them and African Americans. Below I discuss the nature of their distancing, making the points that: 1) the relationship they have with African Americans is a combination of distancing and affinity that is best seen as ambivalence rather than estrangement, and definitely not as hostility; 2) there are specific social situations that engender distancing, and others that engender affinity; 3) their ethnic affinity is more symbolic than social in its nature, and therefore does not necessarily represent a schism.

Symbolic and Social Boundaries

Afro-Cuban classified informants exhibited a mix of racial and ethnic affinity, which might be attributed to the multiple and situational nature of identity; individuals have multiple identities which they call upon in different situations. In addition to this

formulation of identity, I found it useful to employ a variation of the distinction made by Lamont, et al (2002) between symbolic and social identities. According to these authors differences between populations—language, skin color, religion— can remain on a symbolic level and without much social significance; that is differences are not used to establish hierarchical boundaries. Under certain circumstances, however, cultural differences become the basis upon which social and hierarchical boundaries are established. This was the case for Afro-Cuban identified participants; the distinction they made between themselves and African Americans did not seem to me to be of much social or political significance.

Most Afro-Cuban classified informants did make distinctions between themselves and African Americans. Some subscribed to stereotypical renditions of both black Cubans and black Americans: black Cubans are more successful, work harder, are more skilled and have healthier family forms. African American culture is dysfunctional, welfare dependent and without a strong family form.

Other scholars have observed the same behavior among West Indian immigrants (Vickerman, 1999; Basch et al; 1994). Vickerman (1999) reasoned that this distancing was not because his West Indian informants denied being black; rather it was their attempt to escape the stigmatized images of African Americans that pervade the society, and to articulate a positive kind of blackness. Basch et al (1994) have argued similarly that West Indian immigrants look to their ethnic and national identities because of the assault on their personhood as black people. They, in essence, use their ethnicity as a

psychological exist option. Here is how Susan Buchanan Stafford (1987:147) framed this same phenomenon among Haitian immigrants:

Haitian ethnicity also reduces some of the stigma of being black in New York. Despite class and other divisions among Haitian immigrants... the distinctiveness of being Haitian marks them off in their own eyes—and they hope in the eyes of white Americans—as superior to black Americans.

This was also the case for some participants in this study. It is as they contemplated the popular images of black America (dysfunctional families, drugs, crime, poverty, welfare dependency) that they distinguished themselves as Afro Cuban, different from African Americans. Being Cuban gave them a sense of superiority, and allowed them to escape the stigma and the limited view of blackness that pervades the society. Being Cuban can also benefit them materially because of the higher symbolic capital Cubans have. This encourages them to construct social boundaries between themselves and stigmatized groups, primarily African Americans, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. They were encouraged in their boundary construction by some white Americans and some white Cubans who told them they were different from, and better than, these groups, and who treated them better. Thus, being Afro Cuban was most salient when it was most advantageous; for instance when negative things were being said about African Americans, or in employment situations. One woman told me being Cuban has given her more access to resources, for instance the apartment she has been living in for thirty years. She was quite cognizant of the prestige Cubans have:

Filomena: For us nationality always was the most important thing, and then when we came here and saw the prejudice that they had with Afro-Americans and Puerto Ricans and all the other Hispanic communities, it was proud to say I'm Cuban. Don't mix me with anybody else; I come from that island, you understand?

MH: So you didn't want to be Puerto Rican because it was a bad thing? African American—bad thing?

Mercedes: That's right...I used to say, boy it's nice to be Cuban!

Another man told me: "Sometimes I make people know I'm Cuban to get better treatment." One participant, Santiago, explained that Cubans had more prestige than Jamaicans and Puerto Ricans as well:

The whole society has more consideration with Cubans...on my job I get better treatment as a Cuban than African Americans and Jamaicans. I feel special when they tell me I'm better than African Americans. It's true that Cubans are better, more willing to work. We never say, "this is not my job," like African Americans. Cubans have more job skills than Puerto Ricans and African Americans. I heard that 50 percent of Puerto Ricans are on welfare.

They sometimes found themselves in social situations where they felt compelled to distance themselves as a way to avoid being tarred with the same brush as African Americans:

Dalgis: There are times I separate myself from Afro-Americans.

MH: When?

Dalgis: Especially if I go anywhere, and like once in the bus this lady had a little boy and the boy was not acting right and the curse words that woman used on that little child, it was disgraceful. I didn't say anything because you know these people, they curse you out. But there was a Spanish lady side of me and she knew I was Spanish because I was reading the "Daily Word" in Spanish, so she turned to me and said, "Look at that; that child is going to grow up and"...I separate myself right at that moment. She's black and I am black, but I'm Cuban and she's not. And then the same lady said to me, "These black Americans, some of them have no training, you know."

MH: What did you say to that?

Dalgis: I say it's true. I agree

Their distancing did not appear to me to have significant political consequences, however. It did not affect the types of social policies most supported or the political candidates they supported. They fully acknowledged racism, saw all blacks as

disadvantaged relative to whites, supported many of the social policies most African American leaders promote, and in some situations allied themselves with African Americans.

Dalgis, who has been in the country since the 1950s, is a good example of the “symbolic” nature of most Afro-Cubans’ ethnic identity. It was important to Dalgis that people know she is Afro Cuban and not African American, and she told me of situations when she distinguished herself from African Americans. At the same time, however, Dalgis applauded the Civil Rights Movement and its achievements, and she consistently supported African American political candidates. She also was quite cognizant of the prevalence of racism in American society, presenting incidents of police brutality and blacks’ treatment in the media as evidence.

Dalgis also had a great deal of racial pride, which led her at times to feel an affinity with African Americans and to distrust whites. For instance, she recounted to me her response to the film *Roots*⁴² when it first aired as a television series in 1979. She talked about how much she enjoyed the discomfort whites felt with the film. She had a good laugh when she remembered how the morning after each episode whites were nervous when young black men came on the train with their new attitude.

Miriam who arrived in the United States in the early 1970s is another example. Miriam has the most politicized identity of all the Afro-Cuban identified respondents. When she

⁴² *Roots: The Next Generations* is a dramatization of Alex Haley's family line from post Civil War America to the writer's search for his roots.

arrived she lived in a community of other Hispanics (mostly Puerto Ricans), and attended Hunter College, CUNY where she was politicized by Afro-Latino activists. For her, her immigrant status meant that her concerns, interests and loyalties marked her off as different from all Americans, including African Americans. Here she airs significant grievances with African Americans:

I wasn't included among African Americans. They were *los morenos* (the blacks). I don't feel politically allied with African Americans. We share some policies; we should be working together on education, health, racism, housing. We part around issues of immigration. Also I am tied to a motherland that's not this country, and not Africa either, as in the case of some African Americans. I didn't join the NAACP because I couldn't join an organization that would conflict with my feelings about Cuba.

Yet Miriam was also clear that African Americans were not her opposition; whites were:

The "other" is not against. It's not oppositional. It's difference. It's just different from, without being in opposition. You must recognize that New York was, still is if I remember, you have the Latinos, you have African Americans and then you have all these whites that you constantly have to defend yourself from. In my days of youth it was this huge Irish, this huge Jewish and these few Italians here. The Jewish controlled the school system. We learned slowly to...finally understand what they were doing. The Italians were the ones beating us up on the gangs, so you learned what blocks not to go to, quickly! And the Irish were the cops. And there were the Hispanics and the blacks...I quickly understood, we were on the side of the minorities.

Miriam also told me the following:

My black consciousness is formed here. I feel an affinity with all blacks. In the cafeteria at work there is a black Dominican woman; I always say hi to her because she's black. I'm more supportive of and mentor blacks and women.

And finally there is Mercedes who arrived in the United States in 1960. Mercedes was emphatic about her Cuban identity, saw herself as distinct from African Americans, and fully acknowledged the privileges associated with being Cuban. She also subscribed to

immigrant exceptionalism, theorizing that Caribbean people place more value on education than African Americans. Yet, Mercedes also fully supported the gains of the Civil Rights Movement and social policies like affirmative action. Here is an excerpt from one of our conversations:

Mercedes: I love Malcolm X; he was my savior. I liked Malcom X because he was there for black people. I love Martin Luther King too. I saw them as black people doing good for the black community of these United States of America.

MH: But you didn't consider yourself black American?

Mercedes: No, but when I came here I was black...I was living in America. I was a black Cuban living in America where black people was discriminated...I think of myself as black, but not as black American. I was into black power. I would go to the meetings in Harlem, listen to it on the TV. I was more radical than my husband. I was more into African Americans. I always vote for the brothers.

MH: You do? So I don't understand, you admired Malcolm X and you vote for the brothers, yet your primary identity is Cuban?

Mercedes: Yes, yes, but I am black, but Afro Cuban. I always say Afro because it is about Africa.

MH: How do you feel about affirmative action?

Mercedes: I feel very positive about affirmative action...It gives black people in America the opportunity to do what they are qualified to do. Well, because before you would think that if they don't do this is because they are not qualified, they're not educated to do it. But with affirmative action everyone has the right to do whatever regardless of their culture or their race.

The attachment Afro-Cuban identified participants felt to their ethnic group does not, then, suggest an intractable schism between native and foreign-born blacks. The distinctions they made were more symbolic than social in their consequences. Most cleaved to their ethnicity in order to escape the stigma attached to blackness in the United States, and out of an experience where on a day-to-day basis Cubans were treated with more respect and got more resources. Yet very few were so wedded to their ethnicity that they totally excluded African Americans from their social worlds. Instead, most articulated a sense of belonging to, and shared fate with, all blacks, including African

Americans. Their narratives are filled with examples of solidarity with African Americans, and support for social policies advocated by African American political leaders.

To summarize, the vast majority of informants held affinities to both their ethnic and their racial group. They had experiences that encouraged their ethnic affinity, and experiences that engendered an affinity with their racial group and with African Americans. Their ethnic affinity, however, rarely led them to take a different political position from many African Americans.

Conclusions

This study of black Cubans living in the United States addresses several issues in the sociology of “new immigrants.” First, it analyzes the socioeconomic characteristics of black Cuban immigrants, comparing them to their white co-ethnics, and identifying some of the factors involved in group mobility. Second, it looks at the ethno-racial identities of the study’s participants, examining the social experiences that shape their identities, and shedding light on the ways in which black and Latino immigrants are integrating into the society’s racial and ethnic hierarchy. Finally, it explores the relationships between native and foreign-born blacks, with an eye for the political significance of these relationships.

Ethno-Racial Identity and Social Mobility.

This study reveals that, contrary to the evolving discourse that the significance of race has declined, for people of African descent race continues to be salient and to represent a powerful barrier to social mobility. By comparing black and white Cubans, people from the same culture and who are immigrants, this study investigated a central aspect of the contemporary discourse around race and social mobility, which is that culture— values and mores—play a significant role in social mobility. If black Cubans are doing as well as their white co-ethnics, this narrative suggests that culture is central in group mobility. However, if they are doing poorly relative to white Cubans then culture is an inadequate explanation for group mobility. Preliminary data, both the data collected for this research and that collected by others, indicate that black Cubans are worse off than white Cubans on all socioeconomic indicators, even though they are from the same culture. This

disparity is not adequately explained by human resource factors such as language skills, since individuals who self-identify on the U.S. Census as black Cubans are more likely to speak English than self-identified white Cubans. Again, this is similar to Logan's (2003) finding for the larger Hispanic population that self-identified black Latinos had a lower socioeconomic status even though they had more years of education than Latinos who self-identified as white or mixed. It seems then, that race remains a significant factor in black Cubans' ability to realize their dreams.

This study also found that black Cubans in South Florida might be worse off than black Cubans in New York on all socioeconomic indicators, supporting my informants' impression that their white co-ethnics discriminate against them as black people. Black Cubans do not seem to be benefiting from their group's ethnic enclave and social network. This research, therefore, supports those scholars who question romanticized representations of ethnic enclaves (Kwong, 1996; Model, 1992). Most critics of the ethnic enclave model point to class stratification and exploitation. This study suggests that we must also add racial stratification and racism. Ethnic enclaves can and do provide resources, and some measure of protection from the racism in the dominant society. However, in the case of Cubans, these resources seem more available to white Cubans, and less so to black Cubans. As a group, black Cubans lack the phenotypic characteristics that would afford them the same level of access and protection available to their white co-ethnics have. For white Cubans, whiteness is an important resource.

The disparity between white and black Cubans is rarely studied; more research and even basic demographic data is needed. There is already some statistical evidence of this

disparity, but to date no ethnographic research has examined the social behaviors that underlie this disparity. Black Cubans' experiences therefore remain invisible, increasing the racism they experience. Many I interviewed expressed the feeling that nothing would change because there was no one collecting their grievances, no agency tracking the evidence of the discrimination they experience in many areas of social life. My modest hope is that this study is a small step in the direction of more attention, especially given their socioeconomic profile, the one million other black Latinos in the United States might be undergoing similar experiences (Logan 2003).

Another consequence of their invisibility and erasure is that the socioeconomic disparity between white and black Latinos is not integrated into some of the more popular academic paradigms of immigrant incorporation, nor has this disparity entered popular and mainstream discourse. These groups, and in particular Cubans, are represented as model minorities and used to make the case that immigrants are successful and that if they can overcome the barriers thrown up by racism so can native minorities. In 1977, in the wake of the emergence of the "New Ethnicity Paradigm," Leith Mullings addressed the public policy implications of this perspective. In her essay, "The New Ethnicity: Old Wine In New Bottles," she argued:

Uncritical use of the concept of ethnicity has provided the rationale for the 'blame the victim' syndromes of the 'culture of poverty,' 'benign neglect,' and 'reverse discrimination.' The 'new ethnicity' like the 'culture of poverty' theories of the sixties, and the pre-World War II concepts of 'racialism' continues to explain the persistence of poverty in terms of inherent characteristics of the poor, despite ample evidence that the persistence of the poor is integral to the functioning of the social system. Particularly in the study of ethnicity, where social science concepts easily become tools of status-quo politicians, social scientists have a responsibility to maintain a critical analytical approach. The task of the social scientists is not to adopt the categories of the actors, but to explain the social conditions that give rise to them.

Alarming, Mullings' concerns remain true nearly thirty years later. A new set of concepts—"oppositional culture," "segmented assimilation," "model minorities," "underclass"—have emerged. What these paradigms have in common is that to a lesser or greater degree they explain social mobility or the lack thereof in terms of the cultural attributes groups possess, and downplay structural factors, such as jobs, education, and racism. Central to these perspectives is a comparison between native and foreign-born blacks. According to these observers, immigrant groups have cultural values and mores which are conducive to success, and African Americans have cultural values and mores that hinder success.

Black conservative, Thomas Sowell (1978:43-44), holds this position, arguing that West Indian success indicates that "color alone, or racism alone, is clearly not a sufficient explanation of income disparities within the black population or between black and white populations."⁴³ Another black conservative, Walter Williams, argued similarly in his book, "The State Against Blacks" (1982):

Clearly, the experience of Orientals, Jews and West Indians calls into question the hypothesis that racial bigotry can be a complete explanation of the difficulties that blacks face in America. The point is that if racial discrimination is not the most important cause, then economic and political resources need to be reallocated to address the more important causes of the disadvantages faced by many blacks. There was in the past gross denial of basic rights and gross discrimination against blacks in the United States. Residual discrimination remains. But the basic premise of this book is that racial bigotry and discrimination is neither a complete nor a satisfactory explanation for the current conditions of many blacks in America (quoted in Dawson, 2001:290).

⁴³ Sowell himself declined to say what caused the differences. Instead he argued the differences were *not* because of differences in education, color differences, preferential treatment West Indians receive from white Americans, selective migration, or differences in the systems of slavery or the period immediately following slavery

Cultural explanations do not only lie in the realm of academia. They cross discursive domains from academia to politicians, and from the mainstream media to the general public. As recently as March 2006 Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson wrote an op-ed piece in one of the most widely read daily newspapers *The New York Times* (March 26, 2006), which he entitled “A Poverty of the Mind.” In this piece, Patterson took academics to task for refusing to acknowledge culture as significant in whether groups do well or not. According to him social scientists exhibit a “relentless preference for relying on structural factors like low incomes, joblessness, poor schools and bad housing” instead of considering a group’s cultural attributes.

Patterson was responding to recent findings on the very high rates of unemployment for young black men. Patterson argued that their unemployment rate could not be explained by the absence of jobs since there are plenty of jobs, which immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean are happy to take. Nowhere in his op ed article, however, does Patterson acknowledge that in New York City, for example, where black men had an unemployment rate of 57.1 percent the city lost a quarter of a million jobs between December 2000 and August 2003 (Levitan, 2004). In New York City, black women also had a very unemployment rate of 51.8 percent (Levitan, 2004). However, Patterson ignores this reality, and instead targets young black men. They, he posited, did not work because their “cool pose culture” was too gratifying to give up. Patterson also ignores the fact that as citizens they expect decent pay and conditions, unlike those their enslaved forebearers held, and have demonstrated they will fight for better conditions.

Patterson’s “poverty of the mind” along with the above mentioned paradigms blame the

victim, reify social groups, and contribute to the obfuscation of the structural conditions which underlie the ability of some groups to achieve upward mobility and deny the same to others. Perhaps this is not intentional, but a function of the basic premise upon which some social scientists base their conceptualizations of social mobility. I am referring particularly to an ideological commitment to the U.S. brand of liberalism. In other words, some scholars evaluate group mobility from a vantage point of a strong belief in a market economy and individualism, as well as the idea of the United States as fundamentally a meritocracy in which adhering to the tenets of the Protestant Ethic is the way to achieve upward mobility. Thus while some of these scholars recognize racism and other structural barriers to upward mobility, they continue to emphasize, or at least include, a group's norms—the extent to which a group complies with the dominant culture— as a significant factor in group mobility.

In contrast, several scholars (Mullings, 2006; Harrison, 2005; Bonilla Silva, 2003; Bush, 2004; Kim, 2000) have argued that this cultural perspective is part of a new hegemonic ideology around race and social mobility that is linked to neoliberalism. As Mullings (2005:678) wrote, “like neoliberalism, these contemporary explanatory frameworks facilitate the denial of racism and conceal the inner workings of the social system by contributing contemporary inequality to individual culture or meritocracy.” Claire Jean Kim (2000:20) has also argued that the myths produced by these cultural perspectives are the “main tropes of the colorblind talk” that reproduces the racial order of whites at the top, blacks at the bottom and immigrant groups triangulated between:

Like the underclass myth, the model minority myth reflects colorblind talk, passes its test, and reinforces it. During the 1960s, journalists and scholars first reported

on Asian Americans 'success' stories as an explicit rebuke to Blacks involved in collective demand making of one kind or another... Since the 1980s, the model minority myth has worked as an effective foil to the underclass myth, demonstrating once again that groups are racialized relatively to yet differently from one another.

As a testament to the power of these hegemonic narratives severely disadvantaged, poor and marginalized native minorities also subscribe to them. In his ethnography of Puerto Rican drug dealers in East Harlem, Phillippe Bourgois (1995:54) reported that most believed individuals were responsible for their failures: "For the most part, they attribute their marginal living conditions to their own psychological or moral failings. They rarely blame society; individuals are always accountable." In his study of inner city African Americans William Julius Wilson (1996) found the same.

The larger society is very much influenced by a cultural perspective, which obfuscates the structural factors underlying poverty. Whites who see structural conditions as the underlying cause for the devastation of African American communities are more likely to support social policies that assist these and other oppressed communities (Bush, 2004; Lipsitz, 1998). Thus, this rhetoric has far reaching social effects. Not only does it lead many white Americans to blame inner-city residents and withdraw their support for essential social programs, it also, as Jennings (2002:72) worried, "dampened the quality of black activism emerging from the Black community" and it allows some black observers to "speak about racial matters as if they have nothing to do with the policies and practices of these (economic, education and political institutions) or with the role of wealth and power in our society."

A cultural explanation has social policy implications for native minorities. As black conservative, Glenn Loury, explains the solution is not governmental intervention or even the provisioning of jobs with a living wage, but cultural reform and self-help:

It makes sense to call for greater self-reliance at this time because some of what needs to be done cannot, in the nature of the case, be undertaken by government. Dealing with behavioral problems; with community values; with attitudes and beliefs of black youngsters about responsibility, work, family, and schooling are not things the government is well suited to do (quoted in Dawson: 2001: 293).

The cultural perspective, which creates model minority myths, is also detrimental to members of model minority groups who are not successful. In the case of Asian Americans, Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim (1989:329) write, model minority myths “serve(s) a negative function which is to ignore the real problems and needs of Asian Americans.” In the case of Cuban immigrants, it leads social scientists and policy makers to ignore the real problem of black Cubans.

Black Identities

This study also looks at the identities of black Cubans in order to shed light on the processes of identity formation, and the factors that shape the identities of black immigrants specifically. As such it examines both macro and micro processes and factors, including the role of governmental and civic institutions in shaping black subjectivities. One factor, which this dissertation documents, is the racism black Cubans experience from their white co-ethnics, and the ways this shaped their identities. In this regard black Cubans, and other black Latinos, might differ from other black immigrants, and might be integrating differently into the society. Black Latinos are from white-dominated and

white-dominant societies. This might bring the social experiences of black Latinos closer to African Americans.

Anti-black racism is endemic to many Latin American populations; somatically black Latinos are excluded from the national imaginary, encouraged to culturally and genetically whiten, their racialized experiences denied, and their communities marginalized and policed more aggressively (Wade, 1993; Windance Twine, 1998; Hanchard, 1994; Santos, 1996; Santiago-Valles, 1996). While some black Latinos respond by seeking to whiten, others challenge this system. More recently, black and indigenous peoples all across Latin America have begun to confront their marginalization and oppression (Safa, 1998; Pérez-Sarduy et al, 1995; Mullings, 2004). They do so using the language of race and racism, what Mullings (2005) calls “racialization from below.” These populations make use of world conferences such as the U.N. World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), and new information technology to popularize their issues and to form transnational coalitions.

Black Latinos in the United States apparently continue to experience discrimination from some of their white co-ethnics, which often creates intra-ethnic barriers. This was the case with this study’s participants, the vast majority of whom told me they were discriminated against by some white Cubans. This discrimination led them to feel alienated from white Cubans, and this is reflected in their social, physical and political estrangement from the larger Cuban community. The estrangement many informants

reported feeling is also evident in their hyphenated identities. The vast majority identified as both black and Cuban.

Another response to the discrimination they experienced was to seek out other communities of African descended populations for acceptance, affirmation and strategies to realize their dreams. All the study's participants claimed a black identity, and many seemed to be transitioning from a solely national identity to a corporate identity, de-emphasizing differences between themselves and other groups of African descent, and emphasizing similarities. This makes them different from most immigrants from Latin American countries who self-identify as "white," "other," or nationally (Logan, 2003).

Their ordinary everyday experiences in the United States which shaped their identities and perspectives was affected by a number of variables, including the place where they settled, the social conditions in the United States when they migrated, their age and English language skills and their social class. These variables determined their exposure to African American political philosophies, philosophies which were very influential in shaping their identities and political perspectives. Those individuals with significant exposure to African American philosophies, through black information networks, were socialized into supporting African American strategies and political ideologies, and into identifying with African Americans. The black liberation movement at mid-century was a key source of information; the movement was a time when African American political philosophies were widely publicized and available, and those participants who experienced this period were greatly influenced by it. Some participants also talked about

what they had learned in college, with a specific reference to institutions such as Hunter College and Columbia University with highly politicized African American student bodies. Thus, the middle class professionals were the most politicized and African American identified. They had gone to college, knew successful African Americans, read black literature, and were more likely to belong to black professional organizations. On the other hand, those who had not been exposed to the movement because they migrated to the United States after the 1970s, or were here but did not speak enough English to follow the movements, were more inclined to be ethnically identified, to be less racially politicized, and to distance themselves from African Americans. These participants were also more likely to be working class. They had not gone to college, and had much less access than their middle class counterparts to black information networks.

These varied experiences led to different feelings about being black. For most, blackness was clearly their master status, and the vast majority associated being black with discrimination. However, most also talked about blackness in positive ways, for instance expressing pride in being black and in black achievements. While some had developed an affirmative sense of blackness in Cuba, many developed this in the United States. In the United States they were greatly influenced by African Americans, and particularly the philosophies of the black liberation struggles at mid century. Those who experienced these movements talked about coming to feel good about being black, and coming to reject the anti-black racism endemic in their culture. Thus, contrary to the negative rendition of African American culture that is extant in the society, some of this study's participants found African American culture affirming.

But the narratives produced by the black liberation movements were not always enough to counter the societal stigmatization of blackness, and those narratives have long disappeared from the reach of ordinary Americans. In their place the new hegemonic ideology, which scholars such as Mullings (2005) and Bonilla-Silva (2003) have described, is promoted in the media, and is very much alive in folk ideology. This ideology informed the ways some of my informants saw themselves as black people, and how they saw other people of African descent. As they struggled to deal with the stigma attached to blackness in general and African Americans in particular some drew distinctions between themselves and African Americans, and tried to prove themselves respectable and a different kind of black. A similar phenomenon is observed among some middle class African Americans who draw distinctions between themselves and their low- income and inner-city co-ethnics, and find ways to signal their class status to whites (Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Anderson, 1990).

Afro-Diasporic Relations: the Politics of Black Identities

Self-identifying as black, then, did not necessarily mean identifying with African Americans. Thus, similar to other studies on black immigrants I found that while all had both a racial and an ethnic identity, some emphasized their ethnic identity and made distinctions between themselves and African Americans while others emphasized their racial identity and a strong alliance with African Americans. However, the choice to either identify with African Americans, or not, must be de-naturalized. There was nothing inevitable in either choice; they did not have to identify with African Americans or with

an African American worldview because they are black; neither did they identify as Cuban because they were born in Cuba and socialized by Cuban parents. Their choice appeared to be much more a function of the social conditions in the United States, and central to this is the stigmatization of blackness and the second-class position assigned by dominant institutions and ideologies to black people in the United States. As several other scholars have noted, this social environment engenders psychological and material insecurity (Basch, 1994; Vickerman, 1999). At the same time, there are also hegemonic institutions and agents that construct some immigrant groups as more worthy, award some immigrant groups more access and prestige, and encourage the insularity and competition associated with ethnic identity politics. Some of the participants respond to these hegemonic discourses by cleaving to their ethnic identity. Others, however, have been socialized by counter-hegemonic discourses to see more utility in identifying in pan-African terms and with African Americans, and to feel affirmed by this connection rather than a connection with their ethnic group.

What is also evident in this study is that even those participants who felt an ethnic affinity—the Afro-Cuban identified— sometimes expressed a racial affinity and saw the utility of uniting with other groups of African descent. In a sense these participants had layers of identities. Thus, at the same time that they distanced themselves from African Americans, they also sometimes felt allied with African Americans, and they supported social policies most African Americans support. Their identity was somewhat layered, in the sense that they had an affinity for Cuban culture, but they also had a racial consciousness that led them to feel an affinity with African Americans, particularly

around political issues. Their racial consciousness, and not their ethnic affinity, more often than not shaped the political leaders and social policies they supported. I propose, then, that the ethnic affinity some black immigrants profess is not necessarily and always a barrier to cross-ethnic alliances. It might reflect their cultural comfort, but not necessarily their political decisions.

The findings that their ethnic affinity is not necessarily a barrier to cross cultural coalitions departs from the projection of a schism between native and foreign-born blacks. The schism perspective is partly generated by the mainstream media. As Jaynes (2000:19) argued, the media tend to “report negative incidents involving immigrants and ‘jealous’ African Americans disproportionately to their frequency among all intergroup conflicts.” At least four issues are missing from this mediated discourse around inter-ethnic conflict: points of agreement and unity; the structural factors which underlie conflict; the fact that conflicts are sometimes between immigrant groups and not only between native and foreign-born populations; and the nature of racialization in the United States.

While the media focus on conflict, the reality is that native and foreign-born blacks agree on and unite on a number of issues, one primary one being police brutality (Green and Wilson, 1992). These populations also coalesce around ethnically specific issues. For instance, black American politicians, particularly the Congressional Black Caucus, joined hands with Haitian Americans around the Haitian refugee issue, demanding that the

United States government grant Haitians refugee status. Both groups agreed this was an instance of flagrant racism on the part of the U.S. government (Dunn, 1997).

Some African American politicians are also quite aware they need coalitions that cross racial, ethnic and class lines. For example in Chicago, Harold Washington was successful in his 1983 mayoral bid because he successfully included Latinos, white liberals, religious and labor leaders and intellectuals. Mel King lost his 1979 bid in Boston because he was not able to build these alliances, but lost by only 400 votes in 1983 when he was more successful in forming alliances (Green and Wilson, 1992).

Elaine H. Kim (1993:7) has argued that the media focus on conflict between immigrants and African Americans is “rooted in the desire to excuse or minimize white racism by buttressing the mistaken notion that all human beings are naturally racist.” This was particularly evident in the Los Angeles uprising in 1992, when the earlier media stories emphasized the points of conflict between Koreans and African Americans, and ignored efforts of the two groups to work together.

The media also tend to emphasize cultural differences as the source and to downplay the very specific economic conditions underlying conflict, and which engenders conflict *between* immigrant groups as well as between immigrants and native-born groups (Kim, 1993; Park, 1996). As Mike Davis (1992:14) explained in an interview shortly after the Los Angeles uprising in 1991:

We are in the worst recession southern California has seen since the ‘30s. And the only account of it that you tend to get in the paper concerns unemployed

aerospace engineers. It's been a vicious, disastrous recession for the newest strata of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, which is why the worst looting outside the Black areas occurred in the largely Mexican eastern half of South Central LA, and in Central American immigrant areas like Hollywood and the MacArthur Park area.

This mediated discourse also omits the differential racialization of groups, presenting the relationship between immigrants and foreign-born minorities as a dyad, and not as a triad. For instance, as Kyeyoung Park (1996) points out, underlying the conflict between blacks and Koreans in Los Angeles is the different relationship these two groups have with whites. In relation to whites, Koreans are not white and occupy a lower status, but in relation to blacks they are whitened.

While the media is a primary source of the schism perspective, as I argued above some social scientists also give the impression of a schism between native and foreign-born blacks. One factor that might account for this is methodology. Researchers who use interviews over a short time span capture feelings and perspectives at a given point in time, while feelings and perspectives are apt to change in response to changing social conditions. Additionally researchers who use interviews draw different conclusions from researchers who study the actual behavior of the immigrants. This is because there are sometimes differences between rhetoric and behavior, between what individuals say to an interviewer particularly during one interview, and what they actually do over time and in response to changing situations. Consequently we find that while in interviews with scholars some black immigrants distinguish between themselves and African Americans, they do not necessarily make political decisions that are different from and detrimental to African Americans. This is demonstrated in Green et al's study of the voting patterns of

West Indians and African Americans in three electoral races in New York City in the 1984 election (see Chapter 6). What is necessary, then, are methodologies that capture perspectives *and* behaviors, and especially in different contexts and over an extended period of time.

In this study, participant observation and interviewing over the period of a year reveals that often the study's participants shift their perspectives according to social contexts. These methods also revealed differences between what participants might say about their identity especially in relation to African Americans, and how they actually behaved politically, i.e. the social policies they supported and the candidates they voted for. . In a sense, there was a difference between some participants' cultural and political affinities. They felt and expressed a "cultural" affinity with being Cuban at the same time that they felt "politically" allied with African Americans. They, for instance, loved Cuban culture, being in the company of other Cubans and wanted it known they were Cuban, but they took a different political position from the larger Cuban community, and were more similar in their political views to African Americans. From this perspective ethnic affinity is not the barrier to pan-African coalitions that is normally presumed.

Differences and divisions between native and foreign-born populations do in fact exist. Perhaps the most important factor contributing to divisions is the institution of social and cultural pluralism, which encourages group competition. We can see this more clearly when we look at the nature of the political relationship between people of color before the 1970s and the rise of social and cultural pluralism. The early West Indian immigrants

of the early twentieth century felt themselves to be different from African Americans, and exhibited the same ethnic chauvinism scholars report for new West Indian immigrants. However, these immigrants also formed alliances with native-born blacks. Since the 1970s, as some scholars report, hegemonic institutions and agents as well as ethnicity entrepreneurs are encouraging West Indian immigrants to mobilize for resources as a separate group from African Americans. It is, therefore, important for scholars to not lose sight of the material factors that underpin this division, and to resist the tendency to naturalize divisions by attributing them to cultural differences. The naturalization of a division might actually engender a schism in the sense that those political actors who read this affinity incorrectly might be reluctant to engage these communities, thereby unwittingly producing the presumed schism.

While I did not find the schism that is sometimes presumed, I did find an important barrier to coalitions, and that is the limited knowledge some informants had about the social history of African Americans, and about social processes in general. A significant barrier to a cross-cultural struggle is the fact that some informants did not see the link between structural constraints and the life chances of minority groups, *including themselves*. Those who did not see a clear link were the least likely to be politically involved, and the most likely to distance themselves from African Americans. This is also true for white Americans. Entman and Rojecki (2000) found in their study of whites in Indianapolis that those who were educated and had known blacks were less likely to deny the existence of racism as a serious barrier for blacks, to blame blacks for their plight, and to attribute negative characteristics to blacks as a group.

As previously discussed, hegemonic institutions in the society are implicated in misinforming immigrants and native-born Americans alike. To build alliances, then, immigrants require “consciousness raising,” as one of my informants put it. Counter-hegemonic agents must mobilize to build on what Melanie Bush (2004) in another situation describes as “cracks.” Bush found that the white college students she studied were misinformed about the status of African Americans, the nature of racial equality, and the reasons they themselves were experiencing financial insecurity. Hegemonic institutions and agents have led them to feel racial equality has been achieved, and that whites are now the victims of racial injustice. However, she also found that these students had a basic concern about social justice, which she argued could be tapped into to build support for a more equal society. This study has identified similar “cracks” among black Cuban immigrants in the United States. Their pan-African identity, and their minority status consciousness—their awareness of blacks as disadvantaged relative to whites—can be tapped into to build coalitions for a more equitable society.

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