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Cuban Success Reexamined: Women's Role Changes and Contributions to the Cuban Household

Norman Correa

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Abstract: Scholars who have written about the Cuban success story tend to tell it from a man's perspective. By using only this voice, scholars overlook the differences between Cuban and American society for women, while neglecting the importance of gender in the transition experience. This mixed methods study examines how the role of Cuban women immigrants changed and how these changes contribute to both family and individual success. Through interviews, this project chronicles the experiences of Cuban women and their newly emerging roles. Findings indicate that when Cuban men came to the United States, they maintained the same role that they had in Cuba, while Cuban women reported more freedom, more access to education, and more opportunities to work outside the home. These differences let Cuban women contribute to the educational achievement of their children while providing additional income to the household.

Keywords: *Cuban American experience, education, women's roles*

When I was a child I asked my mother what nationality we were. Her answer was quick and straightforward—"we are Cuban and American." My family has always been proud that we were Cuban and American: the best of two worlds, as they would see it. While growing up my family, especially my mother, reinforced transculturation, which is the mixing of American culture with Cuban culture. Not only keeping my culture, but also adding the dominant societal culture helped create family stability and success. This new culture instilled in the newer generation of Cubans born here, helped me and my siblings, and the generation of Cubans born here, become successful in the United States. My family, especially my female relatives, was able to achieve success, although everyone came at different times, in different waves. Although each wave contained Cubans of different socioeconomic backgrounds and demographics, their general success was not dependent upon neither of those traits, but rather on the hard work that individuals put forth in their new homeland.

When Cuban women arrived here in the United States, they had different experiences and options that were afforded to them, than what they had in Cuba and as a result, they were able to

create new individual and collective identities. After the civil rights movements, the idea of hyphenated identities was created enabling Cuban women to no longer choose between being a Cuban or an American, but rather a combination of both (Brewer, 2007). They could keep the identity that they had known for so long and adopt American gender roles and culture. With this new identity, the creation of a new Cuban woman was born, giving them a voice that they lacked in Cuba because they were stepping one foot into American culture where they had new roles that were similar to that of men.

Some scholars have examined the role that gender has played in migration and how their migrations has differed from men, but most studies of Latin American migration are normally portrayed through the voice of men. Studies done from only a male's point of view promote a flawed masculine migration experience because men are not the only people to migrate. To understand the true experience and success of Cubans and Cuban Americans in the United States, the voice of women needs to be heard and considered because gender "is not simply a variable to be measure, but a set of social relations that organize immigration patterns" (Brewer, 2007). The role that Cuban women have held in

defection has played a huge role in the transition of the family, because of their transition from being a housewife to being someone who works in the home as well as outside the home. As a result, the experiences of Cuban women have helped enable the family to gain success here in the United States.

Cuban women began to experience the United States before their exile to the country. American companies in the early 20th century began to invest in factories and businesses in Cuba, which increased American cultural and economic influence on the island. These influences helped promote the ideas of gender norms and the importance of femininity. Cubans that defected in the 1960s represented the middle class, with a small percentage being a part of the upper class. Later women refugees would have the idea that they were a part of the middle class, although they came from the working class in Cuba. When these working class women came to the United States, they were forced to become social welfare recipients, which created a desire within Cuban women to work, so that they could to help their families make ends meet. With this, the definition of Cuban women began to adjust to their new environment, creating a new definition of what it meant to be a Cuban woman in the United States. This shift from being middle class to a welfare recipient created the idea in Cuban women that they needed to work outside the home to get back to the social class that they preferred, which demonstrated that the experiences of Cuban women were fundamentally different from Cuban men (Brewer, 2007).

Focusing on the experiences that Cuban women went through provides an understanding of what it meant to come to a new country and have your roles drastically switched. Spotting the Cuban woman experience helps give women a voice, especially to those whose transitions have not been told. By focusing on these changes, this paper shows how the Cuban success story should also be attributed to Cuban women. The Cuban success story will be examined using the different roles of Cuban women 1) in the domestic private arena while in Cuba, 2) their economic public

versus private roles here in the United States, and 3) as mothers of Cuban-American children. These roles will help show how the roles of Cuban women changed and how they had a profound effect on the success of the Cuban family here in the United States.

CONCEPTS

I will refer to individuals born in Cuba as Cubans and those who were born in the United States, but are of Cuban descent as Cuban Americans. The source of the participant population involves many different terms for the different waves of Cubans that defected to the United States. There are the Golden Exiles (Exiliados de Oro), sometimes called *Viejitos*, who are the older generation from the Golden Exile wave in the 1960s. *Viejitos* is also a term of endearment, rough translation “Cuban Old Timers.” There *Marielitos* who are viewed as non-skilled Cubans who defected in the 1980s. This wave carries a stigma within the Cuban community because Fidel freed murderers, rapists, thieves, and other criminals at the same time. There are ex-Political Prisoners or *Presos Politicos* who were arrested and imprisoned because of their economic status or political standing. Lastly, there are the *Balseros*, who belong to the new wave of Cuban defectors and seek economic refuge here in the United States. Many of the groups mentioned were tortured and imprisoned by the Castro Regime.

Similarities amongst the Waves

The literature about the Cuban success Story presents the idea that the Golden Exiles set the foundation for Cubans who defected after them. There is truth to this idea because of these exiles helped with the passing of the Cuban Adjustment Act, and established tightly knit communities in Miami, Florida; Elizabeth, New Jersey; and Chicago, Il that allowed newer Cuban immigrants to have a place to adjust and belong in the United States. But as Table 1 shows, the two waves that followed were quite similar demographically. The *Marielitos* had fewer people with college education and more with 9th grade or less.

Otherwise, each group's educational levels were similar, and this commonality certainly played a big part in continued Cuban success.

Cuban Women's Education and Role in Cuba

Instead of giving a lot of credit to the first waves of Cubans, more credit should be given to the other Cuban waves because these waves had the same motivation to become educated that it allowed Cuban success to continue. Cuban

success would have stayed stagnant if not for the opportunities afforded to Cubans in the United States because educational institutions are much better than those in Cuba. However, Cuban success cannot be accredited to those only educated in Cuba. In Cuba, women were not educated as well as men, and I believe that the reason behind Cubans continuing success here in the United States is due to women and their new opportunities.

Table 1
Cuban Exiles Waves

Years	Golden Exiles 1959-1974 (1959-62, 1965-72)	Marielitos 1980	Balseros 1994
White	85.7	77.3	N/A
9 th Grade or Less	18%	25%	11%
9 th -12 th Grade	10%	15%	14%
High School Graduate	48%	47%	49%
College Graduate	24%	13%	26%

Sources: 2004 Pew Hispanic Center and 1990 U.S. Census

Before the Cuban Revolution, Cuban women held inferior positions in the labor force. Although women in Cuba were able to hold jobs, it was very uncommon for women to work outside of the home. They comprised of only 13 percent of the labor force. Ferree (1979) argued that the reason women were mainly in the home is because having women dependent upon men ensured that the wife's "fidelity and the husbands authority, and employment among married women of high status is seen as compromising the honor of both the individual and the family" (Ferree, 1979). Because respectability and honor were more important, Cuban women stayed in the home instead of adding to the family income

In Cuba, a working woman meant that she was independent from the social constructs of the dependency of men. A woman supporting herself was not viewed as acceptable in society. Instead, it portrayed the woman in a negative light. The woman was viewed as someone who did not want

to build a family and that she did not care what society thought of her. These stereotypes did not only affect the image of that particular woman, but also her family. Cuban society believed that a woman working outside of the home was not respectable and dishonored her family who must not have raised her to be respectable (Ferree, 1979). The role of Cuban women in Cuba was traditionally restrictive, controlling their bodies and what they were allowed to do in public. Women were seen as physically and intellectually weak, so there was no need for them to work outside the home or to be educated beyond being able to read and write. Women were also seen as sexually pure and superior to men with their morals, but because of being intellectually and weaker physically their innocence along with their family honor could be tainted by men (Harrison, 1974). In Cuban society, the cultural ideology of *machismo* deemed women dependent upon men. This meant that women needed the protection of men out in public so the best place for them was

in the home. This created the concept that “good women stayed home (la casa) and bad women work outside (la calle)” (Brewer, 2007). Allowing women to leave the home to enter the workforce changed what was acceptable in the behaviors of women.

To avoid a lack of morality in women, the education of women was not a priority as shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that in Cuba, in 1953, ninety-five percent of women had only an elementary education or no education at all. Since there was no need for women to go out into the work force, then there was no need to educate them because education helps promote and

advance oneself in the workforce. With the labor market in pre-revolutionary Cuba was not developed enough Cuban women who were apart of the middle and working classes that did not have the opportunity to work. With the lack of employment opportunities for women combined with the lack of social mobility and gender-role orientation, opportunities for Cuban women were nonexistent and these opportunities would not have been permitted. Also with the lack of a developed labor market and the Cuban values, women were greatly discouraged from going out into the labor force and attempting to work (Perez, 1988).

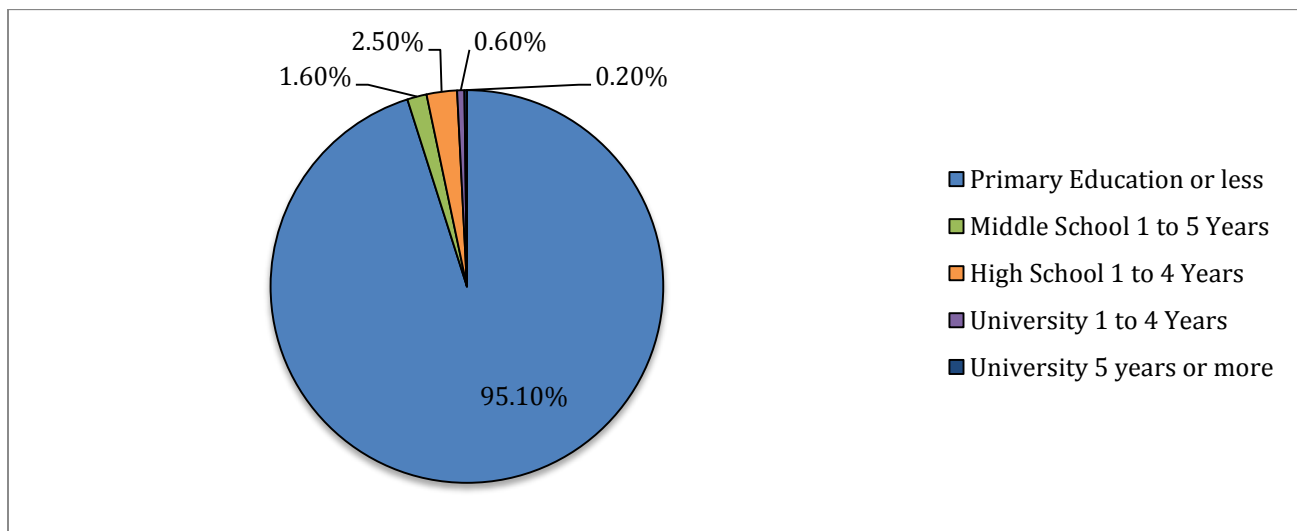


Figure 1. Highest Level of Educational Attainment by Women in Cuba, 1953

Cuban-Americans in the United States

The first wave of Cuban immigration in the 1960s, which were white, educated, upper to middle class professionals, helped create a foundation for future Cubans to be successful here in the United States. This wave of Cubans helped create a tightly knit community that aided future Cubans because of their political success. The first wave of Cubans helped create acts, such as the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, which enabled Cuban exiles to gain citizenship upon arriving in the U.S. Cuban Americans undergo “transculturation”, which allows them to keep their Cuban culture, while at the same time

mixing it with American culture. The most important aspect of the Cuban American life is their nuclear and extended family, which is an integral contributor to their success, because of their loyalty and unity within the Cuban community.

Anthropologist Fernando Ortiz introduced Cuban transculturation in the early 20th century as a way to oppose acculturation. He defined transculturation as another culture coming in and adding to the culture of a group of people. Fernando Ortiz believed that the new addition of another culture not only added to the culture, but enriched the culture that was already established, creating a type of “stew,” with everything

building off of one another. Cuban transculturation is the impact that American culture has had on Cuban culture. Cuban transculturation placed emphasis on a combination of continuity, mutual transformation, and cultural changes (Bernal, 2005). This adaptation of culture began in pre-revolution Cuba, because of the rise of consumerism mirrored the American middle class. In Cuba, women were the primary consumers of goods, just as American women were the primary consumers of goods in the United States. With the United States investing heavily into Cuba with companies and businesses such as United Fruit Company, casinos, and hotels, Cuban women began to emulate American culture with fashion, films, and behaviors that “countered traditional norms of femininity”(Brewer, 2007).

Since the start of the emigration from Cuba in 1959, the people coming to the United States have been composed of people that possessed a disproportionate amount of complex skills, aspirations and experience, which gave them advantages over many other immigrant groups. Today it is unlikely that Cuban defectors will ever have the opportunity to return to Cuba because they have created a new life here in the United States and have invested heavily in the labor market, especially education (Perez, 1986). The reason behind why immigrants emigrate from their home country to the U.S. is very critical to the success of immigrants. Because Cubans motives are political, they are motivated to improve their community because of the loss of their home and country. The Cuban refugee families from the Golden Exile Wave had “education[al] and occupational characteristics, combined with a middle class ethic that was not too dissimilar to that of the dominant...host society,” (Perez, 1986) which made it easier for them to fit into society and advance up the social mobility ladder. With the similarities between Cubans and American society, Cubans were able to incorporate American values and culture and create success because of their ability to incorporate transculturation.

This wave of Cubans created an economic enclave wherever they went. Cuban immigration helped Miami’s economy to improve and caused Miami’s banking to become the United States second international banking center. Other immigrants and their descendents do not have business training or even access to apprenticeships because they lacked established businesses by their own people. This is not the case with Cubans because they have had the opportunity to come to the United States and work with their own people who have given them jobs and have helped them gain a better understanding of the American way. Locations like Miami have helped Cubans succeed because it had a huge Cuban community there and because of the heavy Latin American influence there, Cubans have been able to dominate trade with Latin America. So Cubans who are new to this country have had doors opened to them by fellow Cubans, while other nationalities, like Mexicans were not employed by fellow Mexicans with there being less than 1/6th (Portes, 1987).

Cuban Enclave and Family

George Borjas (1982) argued that Cubans were successful here individually because they had no choice to immigrate here not because of economic reasons, but because of political reasons. He argued that Cubans had little time to decide to defect because of the circumstances of the takeover by the Castro regimes. Borjas used the human-capital theory, that Cubans were fired by their country and must go out and seek another place to work so that they can prosper. Because they cannot return home to Cuba, they have no other option than to adapt to America’s capitalistic ways and become educated, so that this is possible and helps Cubans become successful (Borjas, 1982).

As the 1960s and 1970s passed the advantages that the Golden Exiles had, began to wane; but the following waves of the Marielitos and Balseros, who did not have the same characteristics or skills that the Golden Exiles possessed, have not caused the success of Cubans to decrease. These two additional groups of Cubans have helped cause

Cubans and Cuban Americans to continue to be successful as opposed to other Latino groups. This is shown by the success of education within the new and younger Cubans, most importantly the success of the Cuban American woman. With this continued success, it has caused theories such as Borjas and others who attribute the success of Cubans to the Golden exiles, to be extremely weak. (Perez, 1986) The newer Cubans who have defected to the United States are no longer coming for political reasons, but rather economical reasons because of the failures of the communist economy in Cuba. The Cuban economy has failed to provide for its people and as a result Cubans are looking for a way to progress, so they look to the United States and defect here. These newer Cubans are a part of the working class, yet they are able to work hard and move up the social ladder to reach the American middle class. This can be attributed to the additional income from Cuban women.

Cuban Family Roles and Organization

The success of Cubans and Cuban Americans is now attributed to what the family does as a whole; it is not based on an individual's high income. Perez (1986) argued that when one individual is the bread winner, the gap between the income of traditional American families and Cuban and Cuban American families widens significantly. What causes this to occur is "1) high rates of female labor-force participation; 2) low fertility; and 3) the importance of the three generation family and the economic contribution of the elderly." (Perez, 1986) So this shows that Cuban women now because they live in the United States have the option to work, do not have many children and everyone in the family contributes, enables them to work more, have more money for the family due to the small amount of children, and can gain more education as a result. This shows that the key to Cuban success is with the Cuban woman.

Cuban Women's' Role in the United States

Cuban defection to the United States had a profound effect on the Cuban woman. Prior to Fidel Castro taking power women did not

participate in the labor force, a vast majority of Cuban woman were housewives. Upon arrival to the United States, Cuban women began to take on a bigger role of helping to provide for the family by beginning to work in the United States labor force. This not only helped provide for the family, but it also helped Cuban families achieve the American dream of upward mobility. The American dream of upward mobility helped justify the entrance of Cuban women into the workforce because of the Cuban traditions that kept women in the home (Pedraza, 1996).

It was found that in the 1980 United States Census that Cuban Women were more likely to work than not only Latinas, but amongst American women. Due to the employment of Cuban women, the income of married couples with families of children under 6 years old was higher than the U.S. population as whole (Perez, 1988). Cuban women are able to continuously work because they have lower birth rates than not only Latinos, but also lower rates than white women in metropolitan areas. This allows them to have more money and have more time to work because they do not have to take off from work because of pregnancies. Another opportunity for Cuban women to work is because immigrant businesses and enterprises that were created offered a chance for Cuban women to work with friends and family. These businesses sold goods in retail sales, services and nondurable manufacturing, which primarily catered to women. Perez pointed out that in the 1950's, of the Cubans that emigrated to the United States, a majority of these Cubans were women (Perez, 1988).

Although in the United States, the idea of American woman joining the work force as a liberating concept, "Cuban women overwhelmingly saw work as the opportunity to help the family, rather than as an opportunity for self-actualization" (Pedraza, 1996). Cubans in the United States added to the tradition of the role of women to now include employment. Myra Ferree (1979) argued that *Machismo* and the *Vergüenza* values that have kept other Latinas out of the workforce have not kept Cuban women out of the

workforce and that Cuban women in the workforce continued to increase through the years, 27% in 1967 and 54% in 1972 (Ferree, 1979). This extension of the role of women shows that the help and the additional income that Cuban women add to the family portray an importance of the role of Cuban women not only to the family, but to the whole success of the Cuban community.

Cuban Women as Mothers

When Cuban women defected to the United States, gender impacted the capacity to earn a living because a majority of women workers earned less than their male counterparts. So many Cuban women came to the United States as a result of Fidel Castro who had limited Cuban men from defecting because of the need to have them in the military or because they were imprisoned by the government. This caused Cuban women to turn to the CRP (Cuban Refugee Program) for additional assistance. The CRP supplied additional funds, but also taught Cuban women English and trained them in a vocation, such as nursing, sewing, clerical skills, nursing, and domestic work (Brewer, 2007). By 1970, 55.1 percent of Cuban women worked in the American labor force, which exceeded the percentage of white, Latina, and African Americans and almost tripled the 18.3 percent of Cuban women working in post-revolutionary Cuba (Brewer, 2007).

With their new role of working outside the home, gender equality was not gained in the household between men and women, but Cuban men were now more likely to help with chores and parenting. Cuban mothers also began to alter the role of their son's explaining to them that in the United States, their roles as brothers and husbands had changed so that now they had to take up some of the responsibility placed upon women, such as cooking and cleaning. These mothers also changed the roles of their daughters. Now Cuban daughters, not only were supposed to have the same traditional gender roles as Cuban women had in Cuba, with the suppression of sexuality and being a housewife, but they also had to attain high levels of education and full

workforce participation. Cuban American women followed and mirrored their mother's new roles here in the United States. Cuban American women gained the ability to have a family as well as a career, and were not forced to choose one over the other (Brewer, 2007).

Cuban Women's Education Advancement

Education is viewed as the key to being successful in the United States. In Cuba, education for women was not essential for the family to be successful because of the societal restrictions and cultural values placed upon women. These restrictions were due to the concept that women were and are dependent upon men and as a result they are better suited to be stay-at-home mothers and should only work inside the home. But after coming to the United States and having to adapt to a new country with different types of cultural views towards women and what is acceptable for them in society, Cuban women were given more freedoms than what they had before in Cuba. Table 2 shows that Cuban women that came to the United States were not educated very well, with about 65% of Cuban women only having a high school education and less. In the United States, having only a high school education limits the job opportunities and the income that a person can make, and it is even tougher for women because they are paid less than men already. This table shows that the generation of Cuban American women that followed Cuban women who defected here to the United States, improved educationally. Almost 60 percent of the female Cuban American population was educated with some college; had degrees, such as an Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degrees, Master's, Graduate School, and Doctorates. This has had a identifiable effect on Cuban success because across the population Cubans are becoming more educated, which adds to their ability to be hired into very good positions in the work force adding to the household income of each family. In Table 2 it also shows that Cuban women's education is now being surpassed by American born Cuban women.

Table 2
Educational Attainment of Cubans in the United States, 1990

Women 25 Years or Older	Cubans in the U.S.		Cubans born in the U.S.	
	Population	%	Population	%
Less than 5 th grade	34,307	8.6	1,141	2.8
5 th to 8 th grade	74,762	18.8	2,046	5.0
9 th to 12 th grade, did not graduate	66,111	16.7	4,546	11.1
HS Graduation and GED	80,843	20.4	9,151	22.3
Some College	55,009	13.9	9,839	24.0
Associates Degree, Vocational	10,572	2.7	1,620	4.0
Associate Degree, Academic	16,059	4.0	2,352	5.7
Bachelor's Degree	34,987	8.8	6,849	17.0
Master's Degree	13,555	3.4	2,535	6.2
Graduate School	6,646	1.7	834	2.0
Doctoral	3,871	1.0	185	0.5
Total	396,722	100.0	41,098	100.0

Source: 1990 Census of Population, Persons of Hispanic Origin in the United States

Cuban Women in the U.S. Work Force

After coming to the United States, Cuban women have become more educated and have begun to participate more in the labor force than they had been in Cuba. Aragon (1997) argued that the gap between Cuban men and women was now closing educationally and in the work force. This occurs because the Cuban traditional values that had been so fundamental in Cuba were now being rethought in United States as new generations of Cubans were being born in the United States. Because of this passing of the older generations, this has allowed women to make substantial gains on men in the work force. In tables 4 and 5, when looking at the populations of Cuban men and women working in the American labor force, the populations are quite similar and women in certain job positions have matched Cuban men. Tables 3, 4 and 5 show that the job types that women are working in the United States and at one time required the expertise of men.

Table 3 shows the occupations of Cubans in pre-revolutionary Cuba. The percentage of Cuban women who worked show that they were active in service, professional, and administration positions was 66.4 percent of the population that worked.

The total population of Cuban women working was just 256,440, which is a miniscule number compared to the 1,715,826 of men that were in the labor force. During this time in Cuba there was an estimated 2,132,651 women and with only 256,440 women working, this showed that women were just not active in the workforce. This was a result of society's view that women were dependent upon men and lacked the education needed to work in positions in the workforce as shown in Figure 1.

Table 4 shows that percentage wise Cuban American women were surpassing Cuban born women in professional and administrative positions in American society. This can be attributed to the foundation set by the Cuban women who defected here because of how they took advantage of the new opportunities here in the United States. By taking advantage of these opportunities, Cuban women were able to become roles models for future generations, which created the new Cuban woman. The new Cuban woman was someone who worked outside the house and became educated, but she also did her duties as a mother at home. Cuban American women were able to continue the success of their gender by being a role model to younger Cuban American

Table 3

Occupations of Cuban Workforce, 1953

Occupation	Men	%	Women	%
Professionals, Administration	238,634	14.0	82,266	32.2
Vendors	111,527	6.5	11,713	5.0
Farmers, fishermen	795,715	46.4	11,799	4.6
Miners, quarries	6,063	0.4	105	0.0
Transportation	85,098	5.0	799	0.3
Artisans, Fabric workers	309,036	18.0	52,458	20.0
Manual labor	63,761	3.7	8,848	3.5
Service	72,626	4.2	87,780	34.2
Total	1,715,826		256,440	

**Table 4
 Cuban Women in United States Labor Force**

	Cubans in the U.S.		Cubans born in the U.S.	
	Population	%	Population	%
Administration, Professionals	56,121	24.1	12,842	27.8
Technical, Vendors, Administrations	105,910	45.5	25,739	55.9
Service	31,826	13.7	4,982	10.8
Agriculture, Fishermen	733	0.3	173	0.3
Artisans, mechanics	8,294	3.6	646	1.4
Operators, Manual Labor	29,898	12.8	1,675	3.6
Total	232,782		46,057	

**Table 5
 Cuban Men in United States Labor Force**

	Cubans in the U.S.		Cubans born in the U.S.	
	Population	%	Population	%
Administration, Professionals	67,037	22.5	11,853	24.2
Technical, Vendors, Administrations	75,219	25.2	16,046	32.7
Service	38,144	12.8	6,927	14.1
Agriculture, Fishermen	5,947	2.0	810	1.6
Artisans, mechanics	54,012	18.0	6,438	13.2
Operators, Manual Labor	57,882	19.4	6,927	14.1
Total	298,241		49,046	

women, and by bettering themselves helped better the Cuban family as a whole.

Table 5 shows the jobs that Cuban men did upon arriving to the United States and the jobs

that Cuban American men worked also.

Comparing Table 4 and Table 5, it shows that Cuban women and Cuban American women were making huge gains on Cuban men and Cuban

American men because they were starting to work more in white-collar jobs and this can be attributed to educational gains. There is also a rise in equality between men and women in the work force because the populations are extremely similar in their amounts with 347,287 men in the American labor force and 278,839, so the ratio between men and women in the workforce was 1.2 to 1. This is a huge change from the way of life in Cuba before the waves began to defect to the United States. The population of men working in Cuba in 1953 was 1,715,826 and 256,440 for Cuban women, with the ratio for men in the labor force to women being 6.7 to 1.

Figure 2 shows how much money Cuban and Cuban American women make annually compared to other Latinas in the United States. These are the top three Latino populations, here in the United States and Cuban women dominate their Latina counterparts in terms of annual income. With this additional income, Cuban families are able to have more access to better opportunities such as education and can have their voices heard more in politics because they can contribute more with more money. Also with more money, Cubans and Cuban Americans have access to a better life in terms of housing, clothing, and food.

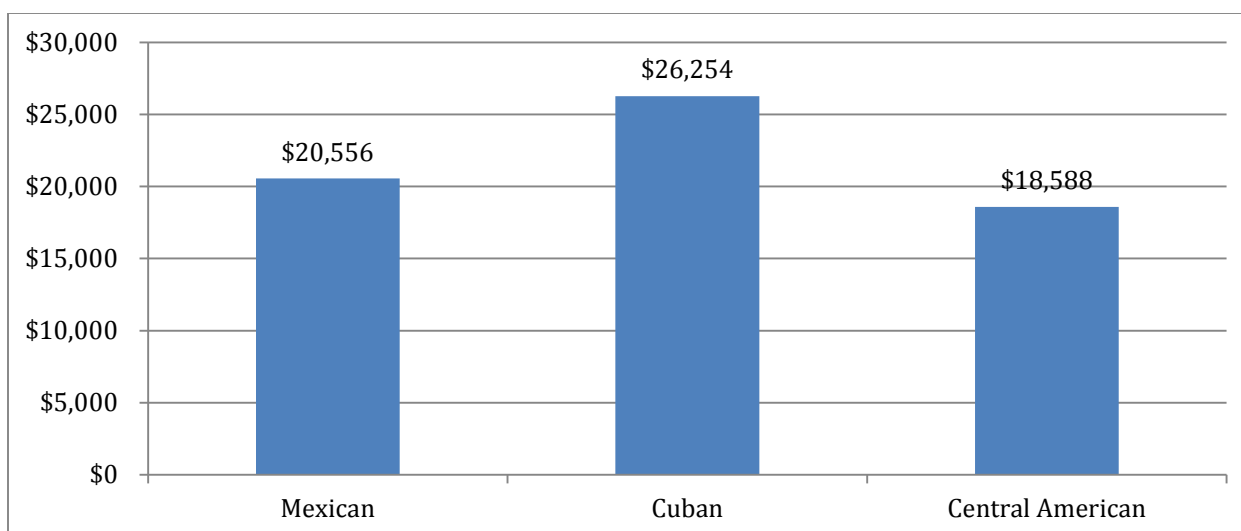


Figure 2. Annual Income of Latinas based on the 1999 U.S. Census

Literature Review Reminder

The experiences of Cuban women provided an understanding of how they were able to come to a new country and create a new success that had been denied to them in Cuba because of their gender and roles within society. Although they had to learn a new language and take in a new culture, Cuban women were able to adapt exceptionally well to their new roles here in America. The Cuban woman experience gave women a critical voice that they for so long did not have and by doing so they were able to share what helped make their families as well as themselves successful here in the United States.

This literature review focused on these changes and demonstrated how the Cuban success story should also be attributed to the Cuban woman. The Cuban success story was examined from a different light, which showed how the roles of Cuban women expanded to not only include the private arena that they were so accustomed to, but also included the public sector, which normally was taken care of by men.

Now that their roles were no longer restricted this affected them as individuals and as mothers of Cuban-American children, while at the same

time played an integral part in contributing to Cuban success. Although Cuban women have been successful, they have continued to attribute their success to not themselves, but rather their family. This is because everything they did and do is not just for them, but they are motivated because of their family and the future of their children within American culture and society. With these newfound opportunities and motivations, Cuban women became a new type of role model for their children, which had a profound effect on not only their success, but also the success of their families. With this new recipe, Cubans have found a way to continue their success and their future continues to look promising.

METHODS

Through the use of structured interviews, the participants answered a series of open-ended questions which pertained to their transition from Cuba to the United States and how that affected role changes and their parenting styles. I analyzed the data that I collected by transcribing and translating the recorded conversations, with thematic analysis, I identified key similarities and differences among the responses.

Recruitment methods that were used were talking to Cubans at the Dominoes Park on Calle Ocho (8th Street), friends of my family, and some of my relatives. The demographics of my participants were mostly white Cubans because 90 percent of Cubans living within the United States are white. The participant population pool were Golden Exiles (Exiliados de Oro), Marielitos, children of these two groups that were raised in the U.S., Preso Políticos (ex-Political Prisoners), and my family members that defected from Cuba in the 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's. Five out of nine participants were only able to communicate Spanish and their interviews were conducted in Spanish. All of my participants were given consent forms in the language that best suited them, so that they could understand what my project will entail.

FINDINGS

The experiences of each participant spotlighted many themes that stuck out amongst the participants. In general, each participant mentioned how roles changed amongst women in Cuba and the United States, their transition experience to the United States, their individual goals, cultural differences and how they adapted to American culture and values that they wanted to pass on to their Children, especially about education to their children. Men discussed how their transition to the United States was not extremely difficult, but they spoke about how life in the United States changed the roles within their family. Female participants spoke about how their roles changed and how they accepted their new responsibilities of being an additional breadwinner for the household here in the United States. Lastly, participants spoke a lot about how their goals as immigrant parents affected how they raised their children here in the United States by wanting to keep their culture, their values, and how they stressed the importance of education.

It is important to first understand the experiences of each participant that participated in this study, most notably the waves that they defected in and their occupational changes. One of the most important reasons for using the exile type is because each wave brings different experiences with them because of the continual change that Cuba has undergone over the past five decades, especially amongst women. Although there was a limited sample size, the experiences of women were extremely similar, no matter with which wave they defected. All of my participants lived in Miami, Florida or in the surrounding greater Miami area. The number of subjects that were interviewed was nine. Below is a general outline of each participant and their experiences as Cubans in the Cuba, as well as exiles in the United States. Each participant was also assigned a pseudonym to protect his or her identity.

Table 6

Characteristics of Research Participants – Biographical Sketch

Participant	Exile Type	Occupation in Cuba	Occupation (s) in the United States	Significant Relationships
<i>Marisol</i>	Golden Exile	House Wife	Housewife & 1) Zenith Factory 2) Hilton Head House Keeper (Retired)	1 Child (a son)
<i>Maritza</i>	Golden Exile	House Wife	Housewife & 1) Zenith Factory 2) Helped run husband's businesses (Retired)	3 Children (2 sons, 1 daughter)
<i>Manuel</i>	Golden Exile	Business Owner	Business Owner	3 Children (2 sons and a daughter)
<i>Jose</i>	Marielito Political Prisoner (12 years)	Worked in Bautista government; Truck Driver	Foreman Manual Labor Operator	2 Children (2 sons)
<i>Yvette</i>	Golden Exile	House Wife	Accountant & Housewife	3 Children (2 Daughters and a Son)
<i>Eliut</i>	Marielito Political Prisoner (13 years)	Worked in Bautista government	American Airlines (retired)	No Children
<i>Vanessa</i>	Marielito Defected as a child	N/A	Housewife & Nurse	1 Child (a son)
<i>Miriam</i>	Marielito	House Wife Nurse	Housewife & Hilton Maid	2 Children (2 Sons)
<i>Carmen</i>	Marielito Defected as Child; Father was a Political Prisoner	N/A	Housewife & Kindergarten Teacher Aide	3 children (2 sons and a daughter)

Portrait of Participants

In order for the reader to gain an understanding of who each participant is, a short biographical synopsis is given. The synopses will explain when the participant came to the United States and some background information about the individual in Cuba and the United States.

Marisol

Marisol came to the United States in the early 1950s with her husband because the Cleveland Indians signed him to a contract. She came from a middle class family in La Habana, Cuba. In her family, she had three brothers and four sisters and was extremely close to her siblings. She was the oldest of all of her siblings and was responsible for helping her mother take care of them. When she left Cuba, this responsibility fell upon her sister Maritza. While in the United States, her husband's baseball career did not pan out and she began to work at Zenith, which was an electronics company, and she began to provide an additional income to help her family. Marisol had one son, who has had a successful career working for the Chicago Police Department.

Maritza & Manuel

Maritza and Manuel left Cuba in the mid 1950s after being married. They left for economic reasons, although both of them came from middle class families in Cuba. They immigrated to New York, where they met with Maritza's sister Marisol and they all lived together in a small apartment. They also began working at Zenith with Marisol. After years of working hard and saving their money, they all moved to Chicago, where Maritza and Manuel began purchasing businesses. They had three children, two boys and a girl, who all are college educated. In the early 2000s, after selling off all of their businesses they moved back to Miami, where they are retirees.

Miriam

Miriam is a mixed Cuban, with her father being white and her mother being black. She has a sister and a half-brother. While growing up, it was her responsibility to help her step-mother take care of her siblings, but she was able to go to school to become a nurse. However, her husband did not allow her to work. Miriam married Jose and had two children with him. When her husband was arrested and imprisoned, she was forced to go and work in Cuba, so that she could support her family. She came to the United States in 1980 with her family, Marisol helped her in get a job at Hilton, and she continues to work there today.

Jose

Jose worked in the Bautista government in the 1950s before Castro came to power. He was arrested with two other men for going against the government and was not given a due process. He married Miriam and had two children in Cuba. In 1980, when Castro opened the ports, he was freed and told to leave the country. Upon arriving to the country, he began working as a foreman in Texas, then moved to Chicago to be with his family. He worked many jobs for companies, such as Staples and Office Depot.

Eliut

Eliut worked in the Bautista government in Cuba and when Castro came to power in 1959, he was imprisoned for being against the regime. He has one brother and one sister. He defected from Cuba in the 90s to Spain, later he immigrated to the United States in the 90s. He worked for American Airlines and he retired with full benefits. He has no children, but he helps take care of his nephew and niece's children.

Vanessa

Vanessa came to the United States in 1980 as a child. When she came to the United States, she had problems with the older Cubans because of how they treated the newer Cubans. She works as a nurse in Miami and has one son. Both her and her husband work and they use the help of their mother-in-law with taking care of their son, when they are not around. They live in the same neighborhood as all of their relatives in Hialeah, Florida.

Yvette

Yvette defected from Cuba in 1965 with her parents and her sister. They defected because they were an upper class family, who were strongly against the Castro regime. Upon arriving to Miami, she worked in a sewing factory so that she could help provide economic support for her family. She became college educated and an accountant and her husband is a doctor. Yvette has two daughters and a son while she worked, so she worked outside the home as well as in it. She has helped her family become incredibly

successful in Miami and her son graduated from college in Miami recently.

Carmen

Carmen defected from Cuba in 1980 because her father had been imprisoned for going against the government. Growing up, she helped her mother with everything around the house and with her brother. Another role that she had to take on was helping her parents with anything that involved English, so she handled all of their medical appointments, finances, and personal matters. She has two sisters that were left behind in Cuba and a brother here in the United States. Carmen worked as a kindergarten aide to provide additional income for her family, as well as working as a housewife. Carmen has two sons and a daughter, with her sons graduating college in 2014 and 2015 and her daughter just beginning college in the fall of 2013.

Importance of Family

Throughout the interviews with my female participants, family was a dominant theme amongst their answers. I felt that this was extremely important to everything that my female participants wanted to accomplish. It was never really only about themselves or just their immediate family, but about their family as a whole in Cuba, the United States or both. The impact that the Castro government has had on shaping the Cuban American family may be thought to have been extremely polarizing towards the formation of the family in the United States. With the ability of the Castro Regime to control when people could defect from the country, the Cuban family is a unique situation because of how families come at different times, yet still share a strong bond. This is due in large part because of the same-shared experiences and the yearning for the opportunity to return to their home country. My female participants, who all have immigrated or defected at different times, feel that the family is affected by their motivation. With that in mind, each Cuban woman that came to the United States had one goal in mind, which was to work as hard as possible to help keep their family here in the United States stable; and they

also wanted to help their family back in Cuba out as much as possible.

New Country, New Goals

By leaving their home and family in Cuba and coming to the United States, my participants had a long road ahead of them until they reached the success that they desired. Some came with family, others came by themselves, but fortunately, some already had family here in the United States. Although some came with family and others had family here, Cubans still had to start from square one because they defected to the United States with nothing but their skills, goals, and dreams. When I interviewed Marisol, she emphasized that the most important goal of hers was “to be happy in my new country.” By being happy she believed that she could accomplish a lot and earn all the things that she needed to survive and be successful here in the United States. She also thought that by being happy that her family would prosper. My other participants felt that being happy was critical to their success here in the United States because they did not know when they would be able to go back to Cuba, so they had to make the best of what they had in the United States.

When talking with Yvette, her personal experience of leaving Cuba really affected her goals because of how Cuba had changed drastically while she grew from a child to an adult. While she was growing up in Cuba, her family could speak their minds and do what they wanted. However, because her family had lost their freedoms in Cuba because of communism, she really stressed the freedoms that America offered her and her family in her goals. Yvette said that her family and her own goals “were trying to make it into a free country and to [do] the best we could.” Her goal of trying to be successful in Miami, helped motivate her so that she could provide for her family and instill hard work into her children. Yvette said that other goals that she had were to learn “the cultures, become an American citizen and learn and practice real democracy,” because learning the

culture would allow her to adjust and adapt to her new surroundings.

Yvette's hard work paid off after coming to the United States because when she first arrived she worked as a factory seamstress, but later she would become an accountant. Although her number one goal when she arrived to the United States was to succeed and help her family be successful, Yvette said that another one of her goals was to never forget Cuba. She said that, as an exiled Cuban, you "feel for your native country even though you're far away...[you] keep all the Cuban traditions and...pass it on to the other generation." This goal was important to her because by always remembering Cuba and Cuban traditions, you are able to keep Cuba alive within the family. This not only helped her continue to be a Cuban in America, but it allowed her children to be Cuban and American.

When I interviewed Vanessa, at first she talked about the differences between Cuba and the United States. She said that "here you could work hard and get the things you wanted, and you could speak your mind here also. This helped make a better life." She shared similar feelings with Yvette, about having the ability to speak up when you wanted and that in the United States you could get whatever you wanted because you were free. The difference between Vanessa and Yvette was that Yvette defected to the United States in 1965, while Vanessa came in 1980. This showed that the experiences for these two women were quite similar, although Vanessa defected a decade and a half later.

Vanessa also said that in the United States, Cubans could get things that were not easily accessible in Cuba and by working hard here you could get the things you desired. This is why America offered a better life for Cubans. Vanessa's most important goals "were to work harder and to become a better person. This is what I wanted to instill into my children." When Vanessa came to the United States, Fidel Castro had opened all the ports and allowed criminals to leave also. This created a negative stigma towards Cubans that came on the El Mariel boatlift by

fellow Cubans and by Americans in South Florida. Vanessa wanted to work hard and become a better person to break these negatives stereotypes that were closely associated with Marielitos. She also wanted to instill in her children to become hard workers because by being a hard worker you can move up the social ladder here in the United States, something that was denied to her family in Cuba after Fidel Castro came to power.

Making the Most Out of Their New Opportunities

When Cuban women immigrated or defected to the United States, they had new opportunities that they did not have in Cuba because of culture and their roles in society. They took advantage of their new opportunities here in the United States and it helped the success of their families. By taking advantage of these opportunities, Cuban women found a new motivation that they did not have in Cuba. This motivation allowed them to become as successful as men, maybe even more successful. When talking with Miriam about the opportunities that America offered her, she said that "here in the United States you have good opportunities because you have a good job and when you work, you make money, and you can buy whatever you want [for your family]."

Miriam said that she had a lot of her opportunities taken away from her in Cuba because her husband was arrested for going against the government and had to serve thirteen years in Cuban jails. She said that this was tough because he was constantly moved from jail to jail and she had take care of their two infant children by herself. Because of this, she had to work any job that could help her take care of her children. When she defected, she felt that the United States offered her new opportunities as a woman because she was able to work in a job that she liked and as a result, she prospered at her job. This helped her motivation to succeed and brought in additional income with her husband, helping her to be able buy whatever her children wanted.

Vanessa discussed the opportunities that the United States afforded her, she talked about how

hard her parents worked and how this affected her thoughts about what she could accomplish. She said she saw her parents work hard and push themselves, so that she could have things that she never had before. Vanessa also said that the language barrier played a role at first in her family's success but "coming here helped my motivation, you can work at it, study and better yourself, then you get nicer stuff, and help out... another family member, that kind of thing, become a better person and have a better life." She said that in Cuba that she and her family did not have the liberties that the United States had and as a result she took advantage of this because her parents had not been able to take advantage of them. With the opportunity to become educated, she did so because she wanted to help give back to her family. With the motivation and desire to take care of her family, Vanessa became a nurse.

Women's Roles Changing

My female participants reported that in Cuba their roles were restrictive to the household, while in the United States they gained new freedoms and opportunities. My participants also reported that in Cuba, as women, they needed and were expected to act the way that their parents had raised them with respect and honor. By leaving the household to work or unaccompanied they were going against social norms and could ultimately dishonor their family's name. Most importantly the roles of my female participants were to do as their husband and/or parents wanted, take care of the household, and become a mother who raised respectable children; for example, Miriam said that her "role in Cuba was to do everything perfectly, get married, and to be a mother." Women were restricted to the domestic private arena in Cuba because of cultural expectations and because Cuban men felt, threatened by strong women (Nunez Sarmiento 2005, 180). Many female participants felt and understood the expectations of being a woman in Cuba and knew what they could and could not do.

My role in Cuba was to act how my parents raised me and I was not allowed to go out by myself without anyone

accompanying me. It was that way until I was married. When I came here [United States] I started to work. (Marisol)

Marisol's statement showed that in Cuba she had to follow the social norms, but when she immigrated to the United States, her life and role as a woman began to change. The transition for Cuban women was different than men because men's role did not change from Cuba to the United States, whereas for women they were given opportunities that had not been afforded to them in Cuba, such as an education and the opportunity to work outside the home. Maritza said "in Cuba, I never worked outside of the home. In the United States American women had freedoms [we did not]." These new freedoms involved being able to go places without men, being able to work outside the house and to not be judged by society for wanting to do things that normally in Cuba were only done by men. Now Cuban women were entering the public arena that in Cuba had only been for men. Cuban women's new roles outside of the home, combined with their roles of domesticity, home care and management, were now mixing with the male domain of making a living for the family. As Miriam put it, "the American women's role was to work" and because of this, both Cuban men and women had to adjust to their new country.

When asked about how her role changed, Yvette said that she "had to become more independent in the sense that I had to work outside and [on] my own to be able to support my family." With this new independence, Cuban women could no longer rely on the comfort of just being the caretaker of the house and a mother, they now shared responsibilities that were normally only shouldered by men in Cuba because women now were being held accountable and responsible to help provide for their family. These responsibilities were felt by Yvette because she "worked 12 hours a day in a sewing factory to be able to keep [her] family stable," so that her family could pay for their house, utilities, and necessities such as food and clothing. Not only that, but it was still her responsibility to come

home at the end of the day and take care of her children.

These responsibilities were felt early for some of my participants, especially Carmen. In her teenage years, Carmen said that she “took responsibility for translating for my parents and as I got older I took care [of] their business [relationships] and medical [appointments and prescriptions].” She became a kind of American-Cuban crutch to help her parents get over all barriers that they had because they lacked the ability to communicate with non-Spanish speakers. When she finally married, she said that her role “as a married woman was to help and support my family and raise my children with values,” because she felt that if she did not contribute more to the family that she was not helping her family succeed. She felt that it was incredibly important to be a role model for her children and she needed to ensure that her children were raised correctly or it would have reflected negatively against her and her family’s image. These were added responsibilities that helped shape who she was and what she accomplished.

Additional responsibilities that Carmen, Vanessa, and Yvette faced affected their role changes here in the United States. The new roles that Cuban women were able to receive not only affected their ability to make it here in the United States, but also affected how well their family lived back in Cuba because they would send money back to their family. It was critical that these women helped make enough money so that everyone could benefit. Because they needed money to help their family, they went to school and graduated with degrees in nursing, accounting, and education to be able to find jobs that paid well enough for them to support their families here in the United States and have enough money for their families back in Cuba to get more food and clothing. This showed that everything that these women did was because of their desire to put their families before themselves.

How America Affected Their Parenting Strategies

When my participants were asked how they wanted to raise their children here in the United States, there were some reoccurring themes. My participants all emphasized raising their children with values, whether their children would be America, Cuban, or Cuban American, and they instilled the importance of education into their children so that they could be successful in the future. Vanessa said “Cuban values did stay [together] family wise... [to] stay close. Family values stayed [because] it helped [me] treat [my] family best.” Vanessa believed that values allowed her to treat her family with the respect that they deserved because of how different American values were from Cuban ones. The importance of respect in the family was incredibly important to my participants because of how society would view them if they lacked morals. Maritza felt strongly about how she raised her children because she wanted children who respected everyone, no matter who they were. She also wanted to emphasize the fact that her children were not only American, but also Cuban because they came from two different cultures although they were not born in Cuba.

I always raised my children my way with respect and with a lots of morals. They were not allowed to be ill mannered in our house. Our house always had a little bit of Cuba in it. My three children were raised with Cuban values and that they would not be immoral. I raised my children to know that they were Cuban American. (Maritza)

When Marisol was asked about how she wanted to raise her son here in the United States, she said that she “taught [her] son Cuban values since he was young, so he could be well mannered in school and be successful.” The idea of respect or being well mannered in public was heavily discussed among my female participants because they felt that by being respectful and well-mannered towards people outside of their family that their children would be treated extremely well by outsiders. It was especially seen as essential

because they were brand new to this country and they wanted to make a good name for Cubans. With their children being respectful, in the future they could get the help they needed from people in positions of power, such as teachers, so that they could go to college and have the best chance to better their education.

Both Marisol and Carmen felt that it was important to raise their children as Americans, but they also felt it was important to bring Cuba into their lives. With her children, Carmen talked about her father, who had been a political prisoner for ten years and all the things he did in Cuba. Carmen said that her children only ate Cuban food, listened to Cuban music, and taught her children Spanish, but because her children were raised as Americans, that being American would be at the forefront of everything. Everything Cuban was restricted to the house, so that her children could be successful in America; this is why she gave her children American names. Marisol shared some of the same feelings as Carmen because the success of her son was of the utmost importance.

I taught Henry to speak Spanish, showed him photos of Cuba, of our family, my mother, my father... I raised [him] to be an American... [and] I influenced him with my country. (Marisol)

This showed that America and American culture affected the way that my female participants raised their children because they were always conscience of the American way of life. For their children to be successful they needed to have a better understanding of American life and this took precedent over anything else. Although they said that being American was how they raised their children, they still instilled Cuban culture and Cuban values into their children. I felt that this was because they wanted their children to know where their family had come from and what their family had gone through to get to the United States. By their children understanding the sacrifices and struggles that they went through to leave Cuba and get to the United States, this would have motivated their

children to succeed more than their parents had. This is why my female participants spoke about education to their children because it was something that they had not been afforded in Cuba.

All of my participants spoke about the importance of education here in the United States, but the female participants spoke about it from a woman's standpoint, which was different from other studies because most studies had been done from a male's point of view. When asked about education, Yvette said that "We [women] do speak about education to our children because it's important to be educated and be successful in any country you live in." Yvette felt that education was the most important way for her children to make in an impact on society. Without education, her children could not contribute to society and could not make a living. Carmen emphasized the same ideas, saying that with an education her children would "have a bright future." Carmen wanted her children to take advantage of the opportunities that America had to offer because they had lived within American society their whole lives. With an education, children would be taught American culture and with this they could create their own success because they had a better understanding of American society. This in the end would help not only their children become successful, but help the Cuban community and most importantly their individual families as well.

Americaness Effects on Family

Fernando Ortiz created the term transculturation in the 20th century to describe how culture affected Cuba because the formation of Cuban culture was extremely unique to the island. Fernando Ortiz said that "there was no more important human factor in the evolution of Cuba than... transmigrations, economic and social" because the people that immigrated of their own free will or those who were forced "brought with them their diverse cultures." Fernando Ortiz coined the term transculturation because it explained the different phases of cultural transition from one culture to the other because it did "not consist merely in acquiring

another culture...but the process...involve[d] the loss or uprooting of a previous culture.”

Transculturation therefore, incorporated certain parts of cultures, while discarding other parts creating a new culture. (Ortiz, 1995)

Transculturation for Cubans in the United States is the process in which they trade a part of their culture for another, which created not a patchwork of culture, but a new and original phenomenon. This has allowed Cubans and Cuban Americans to keep their culture, while at the same time incorporating American culture, which has enabled them to be incredibly successful. With this in mind, not all of my female participants were happy about transculturation because these new opportunities changed the way women acted. One participant felt that these opportunities changed the way that Cuban women acted towards others.

Cuban women would be basically more housewives, they wouldn't work outside, but some would of course. They would do everything at home, but here American women...work outside, they are more like a man in a way. It is a little bit more colder, more to themselves. (Vanessa)

Vanessa said that by Cuban women becoming colder like American women that it affected the way that Cuban families interacted with each other. She said that in Cuba when a family member was sick that everyone in the family would drop what they were doing immediately, so that they could go and take care of that person, but now Cuban families were too busy with what was going on with their immediate family like Americans. This implied, at least in her eyes, that assimilation was hurting the traditions and values of Cuban families.

Many of the participants spoke about the differences between Cuba and the United States with the male participants focusing on the differences between the two countries from a political standpoint, whereas the female participants discussed the differences between life in America and life in Cuba from the family's perspective. Miriam said that her “job in Cuba

was to raise [her] children, but in the United States [her] job now is working in the Hilton Hotel,” because it was her job to add additional income to the household due to the change in culture and the loss of family. With the loss of family members, especially male relatives, this forced Cuban women in the United States to become a newfound pillar for the household. This helped keep the family afloat in their new country. Maritza had the same sentiments, but also felt the family culture was changing because of the loss of family due to leaving them behind in Cuba.

The difference between Cuba and the United States was family because I did not have my father with me. I did not have my brothers or my sisters. In Cuba, we were very close... my father had a house, when I came here to New York, we had a small apartment with my husband, sister, and brother in law...[and] I could also work outside. (Maritza)

Lastly, when I interviewed Yvette, she said that it was important for the family “to keep our Cuban heritage alive and to learn a different living style.” To Yvette, it was essential for the family to learn the ways of life here in the United States for her family to be successful. Because without understanding American culture, then her children and her family could not do well in school and find success in the American workforce. Although it was important, she wanted to keep the Cuban heritage alive because it defined who they were and allowed for her family to pay tribute to her parents and family still in Cuba.

DISCUSSION

Limitations

This study was limited by the small sample size. Saturation was not reached in the interviews with the 9 participants. This study could also have been limited because although I am a part of the Cuban exile community as a result of my mother defecting in 1980, I am not a woman. Because of the focus and importance of gender in Cuban culture, especially to the older Cuban women who

I interviewed, they may not have felt comfortable answering my questions as well as they would have with a female interviewer. The Cuban women may have answered the questions in a politically correct manner rather than revealing their true feelings about the way they were treated by in Cuba because of social constraints. They may have felt that it would have been seen as inappropriate. This would have affected the results because their true feelings and attitudes may not have been represented as well as they could have been if I would have been a female. Lastly, follow up interviews were not included in the design of this study due to time constraints and the difficulty in reaching participants because the participants were based out of Miami, Florida. Using follow up interviews could possibly enhance the credibility of the findings.

Conclusion

My topic involved the gender roles of Cuban women in Cuba and how they changed here in the United States. My research question was how the role of the Cuban woman in Cuba had changed from the role of the Cuban woman in the United States and how because of these changes it has affected the success and upbringing of the Cuban family here in the United States. This research question helped create an understanding of how the experiences of Cuban men and Cuban women defecting to the United States was significant in the upbringing of children, but it also questioned whether there are constant themes across the different waves involving men and women. There is not a lot of research done on this topic because a majority of research done on this has focused on Cuban male participants; so there is a huge gap that needs to be filled involving how the success of the family here in the United States is reliant upon the role of the woman and mother.

The goal of this study was to reexamine the Cuban success story from the female's perspective because of the lack of material on this topic. Throughout my research, I observed that a good majority of literature was only told through the male's voice. I felt that the success of the family and its children is more than just

dependent on the male head of the household because of the importance of the mother in every child's life. Through this study, Cuban women were able to personally shed light on their roles changes and experiences of coming to the United States and how each of their experiences affected their motivation, goals, and how they wanted raise their children. With women gaining new roles within American society, they have not only gained new opportunities outside of the home, but also within the home as role models for their children specifically their daughters. Many of the female participants in this study have daughters and all of them are now graduated from college, enrolled in college, or beginning their first year in college. This has showed that female participants have had a profound effect upon the household because Cuban-American women are attending college today, more than the previous generations. More importantly, the knowledge gained from the findings may provide an understanding of how vital the Cuban woman experience is upon Cuban success.

Because Cuban mothers are the main childcare provider and are main channel for which Cuban American children gain their culture and values, future research should examine their children's perception of them. This could help examine how Cuban success is continued in the Cuban American generations. An interviewer could gain a wide array of answers about what motivated the Cuban Americans to better themselves educationally and socially. It could present an understanding how these individuals were able to balance being Cuban and American and if their Cuban culture helped or hindered their ability to succeed in American society. I hope that a study about Cuban Americans would reveal their perception of their mother and how she portrayed Cuba in comparison with Cuban men. This would hopefully shed light on the decisions they made to become college educated and the career path that they chose. An aspect of the study could also focus on how the female participants perceived the sacrifices or the role changes that their mothers underwent and how that affected their choices as adults with their own families.

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