JUSTICE AND PEACE STUDIES

Structural Violence and the Castro Regime

The Evolution of Attitudes and Values under Fifty Years of Communism

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José Martí:

“La libertad es el derecho que tienen las personas de actuar libremente, pensar y hablar sin hipocresía.”

Dedicated to all that lost their homeland in order to preserve personal freedom and defy oppression.

Introduction:

Although the Cuban Revolution took place over fifty years ago, the detrimental effects that accompany this type of uprising are still felt on the island. The consequences of the Revolution were seen immediately after Fidel Castro's usurping of power, with the mass exodus of the elite, middle class and the continuing migration of hundred thousands of Cubans in subsequent years. More important is the effect the Regime has had on those who stayed behind. As isolated as the Castro Regime has tried to keep its citizens, there is no denying that the outside world has influenced the daily structure and core principles of the Revolution, the largest contributing factors being the fall of the USSR and the exodus community abroad.

In this paper the Castro Regime will be analyzed in terms of structural violence, which is also known as institutional violence or indirect violence. I believe that the state-perpetrated structural violence is one of the lead causes for migration from the island. In as much, the fifty-two year endurance of the regime has also had detrimental effects on portions of Cuban society that do not have means to leave the Island. The focus is to analyze the effects that fifty plus years of Fidel's communism has had not only on Cubans in general, but particularly on the younger generations, those born to communism, and examine the generational differences in values and attitudes the younger generations have in comparison to their predecessors. The implication these differences may have on a possible leadership change in Cuba will also be analyzed.

Structural Violence

Structural violence can best be described as circumstances, intentional or not that limit human potential due to the structure of a political and/or social system. The term gained salience in the academic community when it was introduced by Johan Galtung in 1969 as an attempt to

better understand the cause of conflict and to provide a different lens in the field. Galtung defined violence as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what actually is. [1] In other words, if a man died victim of the Bubonic Plague in twelfth century Europe, it would not be considered violence; but if a man today were to die from the same virulence, then it would be consider violence since the means exist to prevent death by these diseases. Death by earthquakes would not be considered violence because technology yet does not exist to completely eradicate earthquakes. When the 'actual' is unavoidable, then violence is not present even if the actual is at a very low level, violence is present when human beings are influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations.[2] In essence, this type of violence is between the potential and the actual, although in reality there maybe circumstances in which the potential and the actual may not coincide, the huge stretch between the two is worrisome. Structural violence differs from the more mundane definition of violence in the sense that structural violence lacks an actor that perpetrates the act of violence, people may still encounter physical harm but it is not possible to trace the damage to an individual. It is apt to consider structural violence when the violence is built on to the system and it is perceived as inequality in resources, power and opportunities that go unquestioned because they are in many cases understood to be the norms by which society functions.

Indirect violence questions the conventional understanding of violence in which an actor actively inflicts harm on a victim. Indirect (structural) violence manifests itself through poverty, sexism, and racism contrast with forms of direct (personal) violence including beatings, rape, kidnappings, and killings, in that the former is not “visible as action” as in the case of the latter.

[1] Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research" Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-19
[2] Ibid.

Recently, acclaimed anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer has used his experiences dealing with health inequities to further enhance the definition and understanding of structural violence. His work has expanded our understanding of structural violence by stressing that violence that occurs in the absence of an agent takes place in an environment where underlying social structures constrain the individual agency of the poorest, and thus puts them at risk of tragic fates such as disease or even political violence.[3] Farmer's study of structural violence has also moved from simply identifying the manifestations of indirect violence, to more comprehensively analyzing the broader processes that frame both direct and indirect violence. To elaborate, Farmer considers that the AIDS pandemic afflicting Haiti is due to the political disenfranchisement and economic marginalization that oppresses and leads so many Haitians to poverty. Poverty in itself is an important risk factor for HIV/AIDS. A key distinction between the pronouncements made by Galtung and Farmer is that the former disregards the importance of human agency associated with indirect violence. Instead, Farmer places a greater emphasis on the agents that create and perpetrate such socio-economic structures. Thus, Farmer's contributions help us expand our understanding of structural violence.

This approach is crucial in grasping the complexities that characterize the violence that compels migrants to leave their homeland: the systematic nature of its perpetration, and the social forces, policies, and institutions that perpetuate it. These afflictions are manifested in the highest rates of disease and death, unemployment, homelessness, lack of education, powerlessness, a shared fate of misery, and the day-by-day violence of hunger, thirst and bodily

[3] Paul Farmer, "An anthropology of structural violence." Current Anthropology 45: 305–325

pain.[4] This everyday violence is experienced by many Cubans who live today in the Island, albeit, not equally as the Revolutionaries would like to expose to the international world. The effects of the Revolution, while not regarded the same way by all Cubans, has without a doubt created different life experiences for the different generations that have been ruled by the Castro Regime. As a consequence of their exposure to the varying conditions, the different generations of Cubans have developed different values and attitudes that defined their daily behavior in order to align their own wants and needs to the restrictions imposed by the state. To best grasp the perspectives of Cubans in the Island today I will analyze differences in migration experiences of different waves of migrants through the lens of structural violence and culminate with surveys of the opinions of recent Cuban migrants, since they would most closely correlate with the inhabitants in the Island.

Revolution and the "Golden Wave" of Migrants

The Revolution that embarked in Cuba in the late 1950s and culminated by the end of the decade was never categorized by its leaders as a communist manifesto. Instead, Fidel Castro and his Revolutionary allies branded the revolt as their constitutional right. The Cuban Revolution was the creation of two opposing *caudillos*- leaders that depended on their personality cult to maintain supremacy- Fulgencio Batista, who relied on the support of the national army; and Fidel Castro who began his trajectory with hopes of freedom to the common people. The Cuban people were divided between these two figureheads. Ultimately Batista's charisma could no longer charm his disillusioned countrymen and he fled the Island leaving it free for Castro to usurp. Tired of the corruption, ill-economy and unemployment that ran rampant under Batista,

[4] Arthur Kleinman "The Violence of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence" in Violence and Subjectivity. Ed. Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2000

Castro was at first able to garner unprecedented numbers of popular support, among the previously disadvantaged mostly black, rural and poor members of society. Extreme social inequality also drove many Cubans from humble backgrounds to join the Revolution. The Island was divided into an urban, middle class splendor and one of rural poverty in '*el campo'*, the countryside. Nearly all Cuban peasants, *guajiros,* suffered from malnutrition and poor health. It is easy to understand why Castro would have such a strong following, especially when he made promises of restoring the constitution, safeguarding the property of small landowners, profit sharing for employees and workers of large industries and to seek solutions to unemployment, education and health, "together with the conquest of civil liberties and political democracy"[5] He was able to promote himself as a legendary figure, a romantic leader.

By the end of the decade, Batista's support base was minimal, consisting only of the politico-bureaucratic clientele he had developed and a small minority of capitalists beholden to him. With Batista gone and the Revolution established, Cubans were eager to restore the constitutional elections that the former dictator had terminated in his 1952 coup. The 1940s Constitution had introduced the notion of social rights and set the blueprint for a social welfare state. The perception that democracy could once again be reinstituted quickly began to disappear. Gradually, the radical nature of the economic, social and political changes that the new government began to promote became increasingly apparent. The first to feel hesitant and antagonized were the upper class, many of them *Batistanos*- supporters of Batista. Whether *Batistanos* or not, the support of those who had the most to lose, such as the upper-middle class liberals, began to wither. Many opponents of Castro that chose to stay and criticize the new government were imprisoned, supporters of the old government were placed in public tribunals

[5] Rolando E Bonachea, and Nelson P. Valdes eds, 1972, *Cuba in Revolution*. Garden City, NY: Doubelday, Anchor Books.

and many were executed. According to Thomas Boswell and James Curtis, the initial retributions against *Batistanos* were not contested in the social sphere because they were seen as retaliation for the past brutalities of the Batista dictatorship.

Among the first to become dissatisfied with the Revolution, were the ones closest to Fidel, his fellow commanders that felt that the ideals of the Revolution were being betrayed with the ruthless executions of *batistanos.* Rafael Pelaez, one of the first exiles, believes that the first act of treason consisted of Fidel's "betrayal of all the political people of all the movements that gave them their backing, and thanks to whom both he and the Revolution triumphed".[6] Apart from those that felt personally betrayed, were many that began to feel targeted simply for being of a the upper class. In May of 1959, the Castro government put into practice the First Agrarian Reform Laws, which consisted of placing a limit of 1000 acres of land that could be privately owned. The law also created the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (Institucion Nacional de Reforma Agraria-INRA) who was now in charge of planning future agricultural development. The land that was confiscated became part of large state farms, similar to those in the Soviet Union. The law was later complemented in 1963; now large private holdings were reduced to 167 acres, but this was only if landowners could demonstrate support to the Revolution, if not all of the land would be confiscated. The purpose of this law was to further suppress the rural landowners and upper class that had not been affected by the previous law adjustments.

Migration Theory as Structural Violence

Traditionally, migration theory is described under the "push" and "pull" factor paradigms institutionalized by Everett Lee. The flow of migrants can be described by push factors, which

[6] Silvia Pedraza , *Political Disaffection in Cuba's Revolution and Exodus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 47

are the factors that are inadequate in a migrant's home country and encourage individuals to seek alternatives elsewhere or the pull factor: the attractive features of another country. Lee focused his theory on the individual and his reasons for migrating, the factors that "hold and attract or repel people".[7] While Lee's theory was innovative because it departed from the established cost-benefit analysis which calculated the perceived advantages and disadvantages, his push and pull framework did not provide an adequate contrasts between political and economic migrants, which is crucial for understanding the Cuban migration evolution.

In our analysis of the Cuban exodus, our focus lies on the nature of the decision the individual made to leave, as these reflect the structural violence inflicted by the changing phases of the Cuban Revolution, and the larger social structures that shaped the exodus. The first members of the exiled community were in fact" refugees" and not simply migrants, in understanding why they are refugees; we can also gain an understanding of the structural violence forces that led to their departure when we examine why they took refuge. According to E.F. Kunz the essential difference between refugees and voluntary migrants lies in their motivation:

> It is the reluctance to uproot oneself, and the absence of positive original motivations to settle elsewhere, which characterizes all refugee decisions and distinguishes the refugee from the voluntary migrants.[8]

His definition is based on the "push" factor: given the opportunity most people that become refugees would prefer to stay but instead are pushed out. That reluctance to leave, coupled with political disaffection that pushes the person to depart, is what distinguishes the refugee type. Kunz also points out that the motivation to leave is ultimately based on a perception of threat,

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[7] E.S. Lee "A Theory of Migration" Demography 1996 3:47:57

[8] E.F Kunz "The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement", International Migration Review, 1973 7:125-146

"this fear can never be tested: it is the individual's interpretation of events and self-perceived danger or revulsion, or role which motivates the refugee and justifies his stand". Political exile becomes a viable option, a necessity when refugees believe that the alternative of staying in their homeland will lead to personal harm.

As previously mentioned, among the first to grow dissatisfied with the Revolution were those closest to Castro who quickly realized the underlying communist tendencies in the policies that were being enacted. Following those that felt betrayed were those whose daily lives were being radically transformed. The direct violence the Castro regime exhorted on the past Batistianos, through the death squads and public tribunals manifested itself as fear among other Cubans that believed they could be the next targets. Fear grew rampant among the upper and middle classes and this perceived persecution caused by new legislature and death of the opposition is a clear case of structural violence. Invoking equality for all members of society meant that the privileged in Cuban society would be deprived of their resources. Even before the law reforms began many started leaving the island. The refugees of this first wave clearly came to the United States in an anticipatory move, impelled by a foreboding sense of catastrophe. The privation of opportunities due to land confiscations and severance of foreign ties with the United States created the first waves of refugees. Many Cubans were willing to take this leap, not only because they did not want to endure the deprivation of the lifestyle they were accustomed to but mostly because they did not believe the Revolution would last.

Demographically, the First Wave of Cuban migrants was quite homogenous. Its members were mostly white (94 percent), middle aged and well educated (an average of 14 years of schooling). Their political views were also aligned with those of the conservative in the

American Republican party. According to Jose Llanes, the Revolutionary conflict that had caused the exodus to the United States was seen by the First Wave as an ideological conflict between Marxist communism and Jeffersonian capitalism. Refugees of the early years believed that there was no other reason for the Revolution, and that Russian led Marxism would be its only possible outcome. This attitude fit neatly with the prevailing American political climate of the late 1950s and early 1960s.[9] The basic conceptual affinity with American values that many Cuban refugees possessed served as an immediate entrée to their new society. This wave was also economically productive in their host country; they were educated and easily acclimatized to the American work ethic and easily motivated by private incentives. This adaptation was also facilitated by the fact that many of these refugees brought capital or had some social connection in the United State that made their survival possible.

Much of the mobility that the exiles of the First Wave were able to exercise was based on the economic system of the 1950s which was responsible for the creation of the middle class. Though powerful middle classes are not usual in Latin America, Cuba was an exception

> "The Cuban middle class had 235,000 heads of household, amounting to nearly 25% of the population. Some 6,000 of these were employed as civil servants, 90,000 as business people, 86,000 as technical personnel and 53,000 as professionals with advanced university degrees. In 1958 these numbers represented 33% of Cuba's economically active population."[10]

Even though this middle class was exceptional for a Latin country, the inequities between this 33% and the other 67% were vast and still growing. It was this majority, who had no access to education or health care and an average individual income of approximately $85 – about 5% of the middle class- these were the people who stood to gain the most from the Revolution. Yet,

[9] Jose Llanes *Cuban Americans: Masters of Survival (*Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books. 1983) 58
[10] Ibid 60

even individuals that fit the profile of the lower class in the 1950s, the destitute, were not please with changes brought by Castro's Revolution, as indicated by Esteban Rodriguez. He was an illiterate truck driver from Santa Clara that would have economically benefitted from the reforms but he rejected those benefits on ideological reasons:

> "I saw Fidel not so much as an economic liberator, because in the end I wanted only what I earned and did not want what belonged to someone else, but as a liberator from the subjugation of a corrupt political system."[11]

Others, like Martha Losada shared similar opinions as Rodriguez. Losada had come from a lower class family that was able to work themselves into a higher position through a small catering business,

> "I did want the economic change to take place. It was a shameful situation. There was widespread illiteracy and malnutrition, and people in million-dollar beach houses. Eventually the economic change [brought about by the Revolution] began to affect our family. My father's business was taken away under the nationalization law."[12]

Clearly, the Cuban populace was aware of the rampant inequality plaguing their society and they felt the need for change, but it was not delivered in an equitable fashion. In order to provide the promises delivered in his four-hour-long speech, "History Will Absolve Me," Castro nationalized most private property and made it illegal for foreigners to own land in Cuba. In order to franchise and empower the multitude in Cuba, the charismatic leader despotically deprived landowners of their economic and political rights. My imposing land reforms Castro was also encroaching on the civil liberties of the elite and reducing their human potential. Many Cubans did not feel that they could have the same quality of life and opportunities if they were denied access to their private holdings. In the name of the Revolution individual rights were being eliminated.

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[11] Ibid
[12] Ibid

The tides in Cuba were changing and the elite were feeling oppressed more than by economic subjugation. Soon after assuming power Castro also created new mass organizations and subordinated old ones to his political control. The mass organizations grouped forces in civil society on a territorial and functional interest group basis. Four mass organizations targeted the adult population: the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), the National Small Peasants Association (ANAP), the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) and the Cuban Labor Federation (CTC).

Formed initially to defend the Revolution against counterRevolutionaries, the CDR is known for monitoring the activities of Cubans. CDR leaders have the responsibility of reporting the doings of each person on their respective blocks. Ironically, the main purpose of this mass organization is to prevent Cubans from organizing mass rallies or simple meetings. Along with the more manipulative and informative properties the CDR was also responsible for implementing the medical, educational, or other campaigns into national effect. Many in exile do not hold the CDR in great esteem and qualify it as a tool of mass human right violations and remember its repression. In recounting stories of Cuba, "Monica" recalls how joking about emigration could place you in peril. She jocularly said to a school friend that she was planning on becoming a rafter and the next day the police came to her neighborhood looking for her family. The police members went to the block CDR representative to find Monica's family, but luckily the representative was a family friend that distracted the police while Monica's family got rid of incriminating evidence.[13] It was an effective government response to the growing opposition, terrorism and sabotage. This type of political persecution became something Cubans

[13] Susan Eckestein, *The immigrant divide : How cuban americans changed the US and their homeland*. (New York: Routledge. 2009) 117

had to learn to accept and evade in daily living. Constant vigilance became a way of life, and trust grew scarcer. While many would identify this as a push factor for migration, and it certainly is, but it is more than a reason for escape, it is also structural violence. The fear and insecurity undermine a person's ability at a decent life and consequently also lead to a deterioration of life and human potential.

Children and the Revolution: Operation Peter Pan

In struggles the most vulnerable are the ones that usually do not survive or suffer the most; unfortunately children are the victims that most frequently fit this profile. As Castro's regime became more militarized, with his increased control of the armed forces and repressive organisms (like the CDR) many began to fear the worst. While Castro and Che repeatedly denied that the Revolution had communist tendencies, their actions proved otherwise. On February 4, 1960 Anastas Mikoyan, the first Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, arrived in Havana. He and seventy-five soviet colleagues came with the mission of introducing Cubans to Soviet commercial suppliers. This entourage was met with anticommunist demonstrators that eagerly discarded a sickle and hammer wreath the Soviets had placed on a statue of Jose Marti. For expunging the monument of communist symbols the students were labeled counterRevolutionaries and beaten when they attempted to distribute pamphlets. [14] Soon after all US business assets were appropriated and $1 billion in assets had been seized forcing the United States to cancel Cuba's sugar quota. The anti-America propaganda was intensifying; Castro was targeting education in an effort to sustain the Revolutionary zeal. The self proclaimed Prime Minister was famous for using student in all of his efforts, quoted as saying: "We will win more

[14] Yvonne Conde *Operation pedro pan : The untold exodus of 14,048 cuban children*. (New York: Routledge 2009) 60

battles and the Children will help us." [15]The government recruited university students to be part of militias and in his aspiration of educating the peasants. One of his projects involved sending young women to the mountains to teach peasants how to read and write. Despite the undeniable benefits and good intentions of these programs, they were in great defiance of Cuban social norms and distressed many parents. Cuban women led sheltered lives, chaperoned until their wedding days. The thought of young women living alone, unsupervised among strangers was not culturally acceptable.[16]

The Revolutionary ideals were finding their ways into all levels of education. Younger children were taught anti-America propaganda. Yvonne Conde, who authored Operation Pedro Pan, remembers the lyrics to these slogans:

Fidel, Fidel que tiene Fidel,

que los americanos no pueden con el

(What does Fidel have that the Americans can't beat him?)

Revolutionary teachings were to be woven through daily routines. Children were instructed to inform on their parents and neighbors. According to a 1960 report by *New York Times*:

> The Castro regime is bending every effort to capture the minds of the youth. The pattern of training is similar to that used by many totalitarian governments. It included indoctrinations in schools, on radio and television and in the press, military training starting at seven years of age, a hate campaign, this time directed against the United States; the organization of work brigades of boys from fourteen to eighteen, and the meetings and fiestas, all with a political purpose. The government feels that, once the youth of Cuba is indoctrinated with hatred towards the United States, the relations between the two countries will be permanently damaged. [17]

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[15] Ibid 86
[16] Ibid 92
[17] Yvonne Conde *Operation pedro pan : The untold exodus of 14,048 cuban children*. (New York: Routledge 2009) 60

On January 21, 1961, parent fears came to materialize as Castro announced that the first group of 1,000 Cuban students being deployed to the Soviet Union. The fear was reinforced a week later when the Minister of Education, Armando Hart announced that no divergence from the Revolutionary doctrine of education would be tolerated and private schools were confiscated.[18] Three months later, Castro ordered schools closed for eight and a half months so that an "Army of Education" of 100,000 uniformed youngsters could be organized to go into the island and teach illiterate people how to read and write. Zenaida Bustillo was a teacher that was sent to teach first grade in the fields. She remembers how other instructors would tell the children to pray to God for ice cream, none would be delivered. Once the children were advised to ask Castro for ice cream and it would later arrive for them.[19] Still Castro maintained that his Revolution was not communist, simply "Revolutionary".

El Comandante changed the tune of his story on the same day that schools were ordered closed, prompted by aerial attacks from exiles. By now rumors were circulating around the Island that terrorized parents with Castro's intentions of usurping parental control with the Act of Paternal Authority or Patria Potestad. According to this piece of legislature, parents would have no say in how their children were raised and the consequence of not complying were years in prison. Till this day it is not certain whether this document was actually enacted by the regime. Many Cubans swear to have seen it. Others, like journalist Keith Bolender insist that in fact there was circulation of false documents initiated by Americans and counterRevolutionaries with the sole purpose of discrediting the government. Maria de los Angeles Torres, a Pedro Pan herself claims that the CIA deliberately spread these rumors to enact fear among the populace.

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[18] Patricio Cardoso Ruiz and Luz del Carmen Gives Fernández *Cuba-estados unidos : Análisis histórico de sus relaciones migratorias* (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México. Toluca, México 1997)

[19] Yvonne Conde *Operation pedro pan : The untold exodus of 14,048 cuban children*. (New York: Routledge 2009) 60

Whether the documentation was legitimate or not the fact is that it was the manifestation of a nightmare, and it led to the frantic waves of parents trying by any means necessary to have their children leave the Island. Hundreds of children were starting to arrive in the United States with no settled destination.

The juvenile exodus that became Pedro Pan got its start in Cuba. Parents whose children attended an American school, Ruston Academy, were begging the director to intercede for their offsprings. In a trip to Miami, James Baker was offered the financial support for his scheme but he needed a location for his school. This is when he was introduced to Monsignor Bryan Walsh, who was already looking after a child refugee, Pedro. The basic plot was to get unaccompanied minors out of Cuba. In an unprecedented move, the State Department granted Father Walsh the authority to grant a visa waiver to any child between the ages of six and sixteen who wished to enter the United States under the guardianship of the Catholic Dioceses of Miami.[20] Members of the Catholic Church played a very important role in the children's exodus, albeit not purposely arranged by the church as an institution, but spontaneously. President Kennedy ordered aid for Cuban refugees as a part of a nine-point program that provided $4 million in assistance to relieve agencies for jobs, essential services and aid to help people in need in Miami meet basic financial requirements.[21] Never before had the U.S. government funded foster care of refugee children in the United States.

Arriving unaccompanied, refugee children faced two destinies: either they were claimed by family members or friends, or they went to temporary shelters until foster, more permanent

[20] Joan Didion *Miami* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1987), 122
[21] Ibid

quarters were found for them. Half of the young refugees were placed in foster homes or orphanages. Children became the arena in which a larger battle of capitalism and communism was played out. After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, Kennedy feared that communism would spread in his backyard. The United States made a video that narrated the stories of the Pedro Panes in America, of the unbearable choice their parents had to make to keep their children out of communism's reach. The target audience was other Latin American nations and the intent was to instill fear of the Soviet bloc. Along with the embargo, which aimed at destabilizing the Castro government by depriving it of resources, the U.S. wanted to end all foreign relations for Cuba.

Pedro Pan cannot be interpreted by simple migration theory. While in fact this wave was pushed, it is in many ways an anomaly. The choice to migrate was not a personal one in these scenarios but predetermined by a parental authority. While some children did understand the precarious circumstances that were taking place in their home country, they had no choice in the matter and could never have anticipated what became of their lives. Parents and children alike expected to return to Cuba in a matter of weeks once Castro had been dethroned. Assimilation and integration was never part of their objectives and in many ways the American dream, a migrant's aspiration was forced upon them.

The calamitous decisions these parents undertook in sending their children abroad to an uncertain future is one of many prominent examples of structural violence. In defending their human right to determine their child's upbringing, not only were these parents acting in response to the structural violence that was beginning to unfold with the changes in governmental policy but also inadvertently projecting more violence. Once in American, the young Cuban refugees would face countless acts of discrimination and adjustments to a foreign country and culture

without the support of their family. Unlike other young migrants, the Pedro Pans did not have networks already established in their destination point nor could they dispose of the advantages their privileged upbringing provided to them in Cuba. Most of all these kids were robbed of the beauty of a normal childhood and forced to mature in an alien environment.

As the children arrived in the United States they were placed in temporary camps distributed all over Miami, but as the number of refugees grew and housing became scarce, the young refugees were sent to orphanages all over the United States. Carlos Eire, winner of the National Book Award for his memoir *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, which narrates his tail of exile, was one of the many Pedro Panes that encountered the bitter realities of exile. Eire had been placed with a foster home, in the care of a loving family that looked after his well being for seven months. When the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred and as a consequence flights between the United States and Cuba were cancelled (for a period of three years) leaving his parents stranded in the Island. The foster family did not find themselves in the position to take care of Carlos indefinitely; he and his brother were sent to a home for troubled teens. Eire has no fond memories of his time in the home, recalling it as "an awful place where half of the kids had criminal record." This is where Carlos realized he would not be returning to Cuba. Many suffered similar experiences in orphanages.[22] Lacking a suitable alternative many of the young refugees were sent to correction facilities for juvenile delinquents, who themselves were victims of structural violence. In these facilities the children faced constant discrimination for not knowing English, or considered to originate from a savage country. Raquel Mendieta, who was sent to an orphanage in Dubuque, Iowa remembers her encounters with the locals:

[22] Meredith Viera, *Escape from Havana: An American Story* CNBC 2010

> They thought that people in Cuba lived in trees and didn't wear clothes and didn't have television and had never seen a ballpoint pen. So we were on equal terms, it was very difficult to adjust to the idea that these people had never heard of Cuba. I said to some classmates, "I am from Cuba," and they asked, "Cuba, Illinois?" I would reply negatively and they would ask, "Cuba, where is that?" There was a lot of cultural misunderstanding." [23]

In the house to which Raquel had been sent with her sister, they shared the space with a girl that had stabbed her mother among other troubled adolescents. Raquel remembers how after a few weeks she noticed how the other Cuban exiles and herself were picking up on bad habits, Raquel said: "The other delinquent girls would take our chairs in the dining room where we sat, and we imitated them."[24]

The consequences of the structural violence the children were enduring (the anguish of not having a stable home, enduring discrimination and abuse simply for being foreigners and abuse by orderlies) had different consequences for the children. Some had higher coping mechanisms, while others quickly succumbed to the psychological pressures associated with this type of experience. But the loss of innocence experienced by some of the children was so horrific that they were forced into a world of violence and shame. That was the case of Dulce Maria Sosa, who had been sent to a religious family in Long Beach, California along with her two younger siblings. In this home Dulce was physically fondled by her foster father for three years. After her younger sister had reported the situation, Dulce was accused of being a liar and offered the choice of leaving by herself or staying. Choosing between two evils, she stayed with her siblings and endured the abuse.

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[23] Yvonne Conde *Operation pedro pan : The untold exodus of 14,048 cuban children*. (New York: Routledge 2009) 60
[24] Ibid

For the Pedro Pans America was not Neverland. Instead of having an eternal childhood these Pedro Panes were forced to grow up, to face the cruel world when they should have been enjoying a mother's embrace and the carelessness that comes with youth. The policy reforms that were taking place in Cuba were actively denying many citizens the freedom to chose their education and to express their beliefs freely. In order to escape the grasp of communism and the structural violence that a Castro dominated Cuba meant for the upper and middle classes, these children preemptively coped with direct violence.

It is important to mention that traditional migration theory largely ignores the role of the state. Therefore, it is crucial to remember the United States' aberrant policies towards the Cuban exodus and the immense influence they had on the parents of over fourteen thousand children that migrated to the United States during this period. In essence these children were merely pawns in the Cold War game; each child that escaped communism and joined capitalism and a democratic society was another point towards the U.S. The overt policies implemented to aid recent Cuban migrants in the 1960s are unlike policies enacted towards any other country. By providing aid, the US government tacitly encouraged the migration and used the increasing number of migrants as a symbolic victory over the "Reds."

The Second Wave

In 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson announced at the Statue of Liberty that he opened the nation's gates to all Cubans so that "those who seek refugee here will find it, the dedication of America to our tradition as an asylum for the oppressed will be upheld" in correspondence with the "open door" policy that welcomed refugees from communism.[25] Due to these changes in policy, the United States in conjunction with the Cuban government administered an orderly air

[25] Silvia Pedraza, *Political disaffection in cuba's revolution and exodus*. (New York: Cambridge University Press.2007)

bridge known as the freedom flights, with twice daily flights from Cuba to Miami.[26] This bridge was responsible for bringing estimated 3000-4000 refugees every month; the migrants were quickly processed by the Cuban Refugee Program and dispersed throughout the United States. It is estimated that 40% of Cubans arrived in the United States through this air bridge (excluding the new comers of 1980).

This new wave of migrants was composed primarily of the working class and petite bourgeoisie: employees, independent craftsmen, small merchants, skilled and semiskilled workers. The different phases of the Cuban migration changed over time with the exiles' principal motivation to leave. Over time the political refugees increasingly became an economic exile as "those who search" sought greater economic opportunities than were provided in a socialist society that instituted a new ethic of sacrificing individual consumption to achieve collective goals.[27]Nelson Amaro and Alejandro Portes have characterized the Cuban migration by an inverse correlation between date of departure and social class of the immigrant.[28]Their decision to leave corresponded not to an attitude of patiently waiting to overthrow Castro, but of wanting to escape a new order they were increasingly convinced was stable, whose end was "neither certain or immediate". [29]This signals a change in attitude of the second wave, instead of leaving to wait out the overthrow and eventual demise of Castro, as many in the first wave expected, these immigrants were escaping with a more permanent goal of relocation, knowing that the possibility of an immediate return was very unlikely. While the first wave was homogenous in character; the second wave was heterogeneous. The exiles were still white in

[26] Time, Cuba: End of Freedom Flights
[27] Nelson Amaro and Alejandro Portes "Notas para una Sociología del Exilio: Situación y Perspectivas de Grupos Cubanos en Estados Unidos." APORTES 23 (January): 7-2
[28] Ibid
[29] Ibid

majority, but 24 percent were Black, Oriental or Mulatto. Educated people continued to predominate, yet these refugees brought no money or jewels with them. They did bring cultural assets in large quantities, among them the aggressive instinct for self determination and their own definition of freedom[30]. Still the immigrants of the first two phases were not so much pulled by the attractiveness of the new society, as "pushed" by the internal political process of the old. Again, we can see that the second wave migrants were also victims of structural violence in the same manner as the previous group. The new Cuban domestic policies were killing the human spirit, limiting free speech and infringing on people's intellectual needs as well as economic progress. Cuba was failing in its attempts to cease being a sugar monoculture, industrialize and diversify, this along with the American embargo and the trade embargo imposed by the Organization of American States were causing serious economic dislocations. Increasingly, the emigration ceases to be a political act and becomes a economic act. Although *de jure* the new immigrants were considered political immigrants, Amaro and Portes affirmed that *de facto* they increasingly resemble "the classic immigrant", whose origins are in the lower social classes of his country, seeking better economic opportunities overseas in a developed country.[31]

The Second Wave brought most of Cuba's active academic and scholarly community to the United States. The Revolution perpetrated an environment hostile to academic pursuits, which quickly waned from tolerance to an absolute condemnation. Political officers were no more prominent in university settings than true philosophers, making institutions of higher learning inhospitable if not outright dangerous to free thinkers. Intellectuals wanted freedom and were not as nostalgic as members of the first wave, their departure would be permanent. A difference in attitude among the waves is that the second generation, realizing the implications of

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[30] Jose Llanes *Cuban Americans: Masters of Survival (*Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books. 1983) 78

[31] Silvia Pedraza, *Cuba's Exiles: Portrait of a Refugee Migration International Migration Review* 19 (1) (Spring): pp. 4-34

the missile crisis, had cut the umbilical cord to Cuba and was ready to start new lives in the U.S. The United States, still in Cold War mindset continued to support the incoming flux of migrants. The Bilingual Education Act was passed to help in the educational development of the exiles. Special tuition assistance was offered to those who wanted to attend American universities as well as small business loans that served to make the adjustment of these people more successful than that of the members of any other episodic migration to the United States.[32] As generous as these programs seem they were not offered out of pure benevolence. Not only were more Cuban refugees a blow to communism but the aid was also a way of offering reparation for the failures of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Overall, these migrants added to the economic benefits their predecessors had started in their new host country.

The Revolution's cultural impact was enormous; it made individuality and eccentricity as punishable as murder or theft, reaching deeply into the Cuban character. Many that challenged the oppression of the Revolution had difficulties reconciling with its more dignified ideals- universal education, health services and a livable minimum wage- essential programs that did not exist before 1959 due to the corruption and greed of previous tyrants. At this point in post-Revolution Cuba, the losses of personal liberties were the main testifiers to a society rampant with structural violence. Fidel even abolished Christmas in a country that had celebrated it for nearly 500 years. Castro even had the audacity to tell his constituents that a year's harvest was 18 months long, with the intent of having them work longer and be able to account for more lucrative yields. Jose Llanes makes a comparison to the way past slaveholders had been able to justify why there should be a Sunday only once every ten days and still retain the love of their

[32] Jose Llanes *Cuban Americans: Masters of Survival (*Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books. 1983) 115

slaves; Fidel explained his economic chaos as an ideological quest and succeeded. [33] Many Cubans felt the words of Bertrand Russell, "If a more just economic system is only attainable by closing men's minds against free thought… the price is too high."[34]

Antonio Chacon, who made a living as cartoon artists, narrates his story of structural violence. When the Revolution started his comic strips would be censored, he was forced to illustrate not his creations but the lies that regime wanted him to say. In 1962 he applied to leave the country, unfortunately this was right before the missile crisis and the doors to freedom were closed in front him. In order to apply for the exit permit Chacon had to give up his job at the newspaper, even though he had planned for unemployment he had not foreseen the disastrous effects of the confrontation between the U.S. and the Reds. Antonio was finally able to leave in 1966 but for four years he had to endure the upmost poverty, of doing "volunteer" work for food allowances of bartering all belongings for food. Chacon lost eighty pounds in the while he waited for leave and had to witness the death of his wife due to pneumonia just a year before he was able to escape. Antonio himself fell victim to malnutrition, diabetes and high blood pressure, the typical ailments most refugees suffered from. [35] Food was strictly rationed – eight ounces of meat, ten ounces of rice and a pound of beans per person per month. In order to get food, people had to stand in line for hours – in the morning for bread and at night for whatever there was.[36]

The changes in economic policy clearly denote a more pronounced existence of structural violence in Cuban society. Dissidents and anyone labeled as a counterRevolutionary were frequently dismissed from their employments and forced to exist on charities and kindness of friends and relatives who were risking their own livelihoods. The structure which deprived

[33] Ibid
[34] Ibid
[35] Ibid 117
[36] Ibid

dissidents from the ability to access basic needs is one of structural violence. These citizens had the choice of pretending to uphold the principles of the Revolution or formally denouncing it, which in turn led to their personal misfortune. Those that were caught inside the Island after the October Missiles Crisis had to survive slave labor conditions with little resources and greatly reduced social benefits.

Becoming Cuban-American

The story of Cubans in the United States has actually been told as one of unmarred success. Theirs has been described as a "golden" exile; Cubans are frequently mentioned as having "made it" and articles about Cuban prosperity have often appeared in the US press. [37]Indeed, because of the special characteristics of Cubans as an immigrant group (occupational and educational background, skills and so foes of communism) and because of the extensive refugee assistance program, success has been a significant part of the Cuban diaspora.

According to Kenneth Wilson and Alejandro Portes there are two traditional ways new immigrants are incorporated into the United States labor market. The first is called the assimilationist view and it makes the assumption that immigrants start in the lower paying jobs and make their way up the corporate ladder progressively till the point where it is not possible to distinguish them, in terms of employment characteristics, to the host populace. The rivaling theory, or the internal colonialist view, proposes that some ethnic groups are unalterable which makes their exploitation in the labor market easier because they will continue to hold the lowest paying jobs and have limited opportunities for advancement.[38] Studies show that even if Cubans

[37] Lourdes Casal , "Cubans in the United States: Their Impact on US Cuban Relations" in *Revolutionary cuba in the world arena*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues. 111

[38] Kenneth L. Wilson and Alejandro Portes, "Immigrant Cubans in Miami" *American Journal of Sociology*

has less social networks attheir disposal; they would still closely align with the assimilationist model. Yet the experience of Cuban exile in Miami does not support either of these theories. Cubans in Miami have established their own economic enclave that caters particularly (but not only) to a Cuban-American and a Latin market. In this enclave it is possible to transact all business negotiations in Spanish and to use Cuban business customs, thus making it easier for newly arrived immigrants to become incorporated quickly into the economic mainstream. The initial capital and entrepreneurial skills that were used to establish the enclave were provided by the earlier waves of immigrants that left Cuba in the early 1960s. The later flows of exiles sustained this growth and allowed it to reach a sufficient size for economies of scale to be produced. [39]

What is said above does not mean that the Cuban economic enclave exist independently of the rest of the American economy, they are very much integrated. The Cuban component has had a major impact on expanding South Florida's trade with Latin America. In 1978 the U.S. Customs District, in which Miami is included amounted to approximately $6 billion, of which 80% went to Latin America.[40] This trade is accompanied by an impressive growth in Cuban-American owned firms. As a result of Cuban influence, the Miami Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) had more Hispanic owned businesses than any other metropolitan area in the United States, except for the Los Angeles-Long Beach SMSA.[41] Without a doubt the Cuban American population has had a major impact on Miami's economy. As a result of this influence, Miami has developed into one of the United States' most important international trade centers dealing with Latin America.

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[39] Thomas Boswell and James R. Curtis *The cuban-american experience : Culture, images, and perspectives* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld: 1984) 55
[40] Ibid 63
[41] Ibid

This so called economic success does not come without a price. With the creation of the Cuban enclave in Miami, many "cubanos" have been able to hold on to their roots and cultural ties but this is not the path that all exiled Cubans have chosen or had the option to chose. Many, whether in Miami or not, have had assimilationist tendencies. As mentioned earlier, the First Wave of migrants have similar values and attitudes to the host population and acquire new ones which made their acculturation an easier transition. The Cuban American upper and middle-classes seem willing to ignore the apparent prejudices they find in American society, less willing to fight for equality than to recognize the inherent inequality thrust upon the immigrant classes as natural and accept it.[42] These are the ones with the most apparent "Yankee element" an aspiration to Americanization. All Cuban migrants to some extent or another have done some cultural devaluing in the process of acculturation to the United States. Learning a new culture and making it your own means devaluing the old. Of all Cuban-Americans they have had the least devaluing to do. [43]

One of the reasons Cuban businesses and in general the Miami economy boomed with the constant influx of migrants have been cheap labor. Like with all immigrant host nations, the willingness of the newcomer to work at lower wages leads to a strengthening of the economy. The movement of foreign workers in search of menial and generally low paying jobs has represented the bulk of migration both legal and undocumented, in recent years. [44] Hence, the actual wage many US employers pay their foreign workers exceeds the legal minimum and is significantly higher than that available for skilled and even white-collar work in their sending

[42] Jose Llanes *Cuban Americans: Masters of Survival (*Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books. 1983) 98
[43] Ibid

[44] Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America : A portrait*. (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1996) 56

countries. To migrants, the trek to the United States and the economic opportunities associated with it often represents the difference between stagnation or impoverishment and attainment of their life goals. [45]

Even though classified as 'refugees', many Cuban migrants are in fact labor migrants. Most Cubans of the First and Second Wave did in fact have educational qualifications and quantifiable skills that were not employed upon their arrival. Such is the case with most skilled foreigners whether refugees or not who become labor migrants, the unavoidable loss of human capital. Many Cubans with doctorate degrees or with special skills training could not find employment that utilized those skills in the United States do to language barriers or general lack of trust towards newcomers. In a study of the perceptions of discrimination among Cuban and Mexican immigrants from 1973 – 1979 (post First and Second Wave), among Cubans there was a particularly sharp increase in the perception of discrimination. Almost none had reported discrimination at the time of arrival but their views turned decidedly more negative later on. [46] Also, this survey took into account more recent migrants, with different values and attitudes than the previous exiles. Researchers of this study concluded that the change in perceptions was based on the fact that the more educated and informed immigrants become, the more they come to understand American society as it actually is, with shortcomings such as discrimination. Much of this discrimination, which is usually based on cultural differences such as language, leads to less availability of opportunities to immigrants in the fields where they were prosperous in their home nation. While many Cubans were finally able to ascend in America they first had to endure the discrimination of being a foreigner and the loss of human capital. Since they need to survive is the primordial instinct and main concern for immigrants, they will work in whatever is available

[45] Ibid 60
[46] Ibid 62

sacrificing their potential. The discrimination and loss of human capital that immigrants undergo are both examples of structural violence. The new system and structures that immigrants must adhere to are usually not willing or capable to adjust to the new influx and the needs and potentials get lost in the shuffle. These incidences of structural violence are not exclusive to Cuban migrants but nonetheless they are forms of violence that they would not have faced in their homeland.

Some Cubans, as mentioned earlier, have become entrepreneurs or successfully rise up the ranks in the American corporate world, not all are so fortunate. Many recent (post First and Second wave) Cuban immigrants enter the labor market largely through businesses owned or operated by earlier Cuban arrivals. Frequently working conditions are informal, that is in violation of labor laws and much like those endured by the most exploited undocumented aliens in other parts of the United States.[47] Conditions for the latter waves of migrations were different. The US was beginning to phase out many of the programs that had benefited the earlier migrants. Yet, the enclave, whether torturous and exploitive to some did offer various advantages: ethnic bonds provide informal networks of support that facilitate learning new skills, gaining access to resources and the overall process of economic adjustment. [48] These economic advantages not only advanced networks but created social capital. Portes defines social capital as the "ability to command scarce resources by virtue of membership in a network or broader capital structures."[49] The experience of exile further enhanced and solidified these networks as well the economic

[47] Guillermo Grenier and Lisandro Pérez *The legacy of exile : Cubans in the united states*. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon: 2003) 34
[48] Ibid 36
[49] Alejandro Portes "Children of Immigrants: Segmented Assimilation and its Determinants". (ed), The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship (New York , Russell Sage Foundation: 1985)

benefits. The memory of exile deepens the sense of a common history and for some a common purpose. This social capital gives a positive value to being Cuban in Miami. [50]

There are two important implications that arise from the acclimatization and formation of the Cuban-American. One is the economic impact that the Cuban enclave has produced in Miami. The rise of the socio-economic status of the Cuban migrant and his employability is evidenced by the first two waves of migrants who were able to forge their own economic independence in the United States. Cubans have become entrepreneurs and therefore have the capacity to hire other refugees in their businesses, thus fortifying the Cuban network. Middle-class Cuban-Americans of Miami did not need to depend on their host culture for their economic and social survival. They had their own resources and were sustainable. Second, this prosperity did not reside within the borders of the United States for long. The economic prowess soon was utilized to help those who were left behind in the island and are enduring the detrimental effects of the Revolution, but this economic aid does not become substantial until the 1990s.

The Third Wave: The Interlude and El Mariel

In 1971 Fidel announced that the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Cuba which regulated the immigrants' departure was terminated. The Cuban leader stated that the purpose of the air bridge, which was to reunite families, was completed. Applications for exit visas were no longer accepted and Cubans now had to enter the United States through a third country, Mexico and Spain were the primary stepping stones. From July 1, 1973 to September 30, 1979, a total of just under 38,000 Cubans arrived in the United States. Studies indicate that although the new immigrants were better off in terms of their occupational

[50] Guillermo Grenier and Lisandro Pérez *The legacy of exile : Cubans in the united states*. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon: 2003) 40

and income status than the majority left behind in Cuba, this most recent wave was coming closer to being representative of the Cuban population.[51]

In a study conducted by Alejandro Portes and Juan M. Clark of Cuban migrants leaving Cuba via Spain during this period, only adult males were sampled. In terms of demographics this study concluded that this sample more closely approximates the average education of the present Cuban population. An overwhelming proportion of the sample is white, close to 95% which does not differ greatly in number to those that emigrated before. Their decision to leave is understood to be related to the redirection and deepening of the Revolution. Small entrepreneurial sectors were socialized and many of the urban middle service occupations, from which present respondents were mostly drawn, had been adversely affected. It was this disruption of all vestiges of a lower-middle class of employees, artisans and small merchants that can be credited with this last push towards emigration. [52]As a condition to leave the country, visa applicants had to perform compulsory agricultural labor. Of the sample group 44% claimed to have nineteen to twenty-four months performing this labor. The desire to leave the island is demonstrated by the willingness of these applicants to perform these difficult activities. Of this sample, 99% had friends or relatives in the United States. Overall there was a general belief that these migrants would be able to utilize resources offered by primary group networks, to varying degrees.[53] This is a trend that will increase with subsequent migrant groups.

In order to determine the effects the Castro regime has had on the Cuban populace, it is important to measure the changes in aspirations, values and attitudes of the migrant waves. In Portes' sample the greatest aspiration of this wave is that of increasing their socio-economic

[51] Ibid 68

[52] Alejandro Portes , Juan M. Clark, and Robert D. Manning *After mariel : A survey of the re-settlement experiences of 1980 cuban refugees in miami*. 1985

[53] Ibid

status. The new exiles aspire to occupations which most clearly resemble to ones held in Cuba; these occupations cluster in the categories of skilled urban worker, intermediate service worker and white-collar workers and minor professionals. There is a clear tendency to aspire to those occupational categories which were most characteristic of the sample as a whole in Cuba. [54] It is also important to pair these aspirations with the migrants' perceptions of opportunities in the United States. An overwhelming number of exiles, 93.2% believed that opportunities would be available to accomplish their aspirations. The sample can be characterized by an achievement oriented personality-type as substantiated by their responses to questions dealing with the general view of a high-achievement group. A typical question that represents this personality is the following, "should work come first, even if it means sacrificing time for recreation" 94 percent agreed. The group answers to these questions were all aligned with a general high achievement and modernity mentality with the exception of one question that deals with primary group relations. When asked if hiring an assistant for your work, if it is better to hire a stranger or a relative, the sample sided with hiring relatives and showing solidarity to group relationships. When questioned for modernity, the respondents also show a high tendency towards this personality trait. Religion was the one outlier in this trend, since 49 percent said that a man could not be truly good without having any true religion.[55]

Overall, what we can say about this wave is that they continue the trend started by the Second wave of skilled workers as opposed to the elite and bourgeoisies. Their many reasons, like the Second wavers were a mix of political and economic. A difference from the previous groups is their education levels, while this wave has considerably less education credentials than Cubans in 1953, their education does correspond with the current levels of education in Cuba.

[54] Ibid
[55] Ibid

Unlike previous waves these migrants could rely, or expect to, on primary group networks. These results will be contrasted with the values and attitudes of subsequent migrant to denote changes in the Cuban populace over the duration of the Castro regime.

In April of 1980 the pattern of Cuban migration to the United States took a drastic change. The incident started when a group who went to the Peruvian embassy seeking political asylum, Castro later announced that he would leave the embassy unguarded allowing anyone who wished to leave to do so. From Miami, hundreds of boats manned by exiles landed in the port of Mariel to take their relative to freedom, the one catch was that undesirable elements of Cuban society also had to depart the island. These undesirables were those who had been in prison (these included political prisoners, mental patients and homosexuals, also known as *la escoria*, or scum. This wave represented from the beginning, those who left and those who were sent. [56] The Mariel exodus lasted for almost five months and is responsible for bringing approximately 125,000 Cubans to the United States. Unlike other waves of refugees that were portrayed as victims of communisms and exalters of democratic ideal, the US was not ready to receive these newcomers and was hesitant about their arrival.

The historical background for the Mariel exodus is based on Castro's decision in 1978 to allow Cuban-Americans to return to Cuba for one week family visits. Approximately 100,000 exiles took advantage of this opportunity and took part of these pilgrimages. While Castro's motives were to improve his international image as a violator of human rights as well as to bring foreign income to the island, his unprecedented move had unwarranted consequences. The "demonstrator effect" took full force as twenty years of anti-American and anti-exile propaganda

[56] Silvia Pedraza, *Cuba's Exiles: Portrait of a Refugee Migration International Migration Review* 19 (1) (Spring): pp. 4-34

was losing eminence.[57] Visitors provided tangible evidence and vivid accounts of a much better lifestyle in the United States that contrasted sharply with the austere living conditions which existed under the direction of the totalitarian government of Cuba. [58]Nonetheless, the damage was done and more Cubans felt the desire to leave the island.

In addition to ridding itself of the undesirables, Castro was clearly trying to taint the reputation of Cuban-Americans. This exodus, since it was mostly manipulated by Cuban forces, does not neatly sustain my theory of the changes in attitudes and value of Cubans due to the Castro regime, yet it is important to note that the negative attitude toward the *Marielitos* expanded to many of the Cuban-Americans who arrived prior to 1980. The Mariel diaspora differed from previous waves because it was almost 70 percent male and about 20 percent black. These are significant factors since the Cuban Refugee Resettlement Center had experienced the most difficulty in finding help for the settlement of single, black, adult Cuban males. Occupationally, the Mariel wave did continue the trend started by previous immigrant; they were mostly working class.

This Third Wave, while clearly manipulated by Castro's forces does show signs of changes in values of the migrants. In an interview with Gonzalo Ponce, a *marielito* who was rescued by his brother at the onset of the exodus narrates his experience with his new found liberty in the United States:

> It was all because people have no rights in Cuba. Maybe they never did. Fidel has been in power for so long; even for someone as old as me that sometimes I don't remember what it was like before…After we got settled in a house in Miami which my brother bought and gave us rent free, I began to look for a job. That was very hard. In Cuba if you wanted a job-and were not an undesirable- all you had to do was go to the government

[57] Thomas Boswell and James R. Curtis *The cuban-american experience : Culture, images, and perspectives* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld: 1984) 55
[58] Ibid

> office and they would put you to work. The work here is very hard. Prices are very high. My life here is better than in Cuba, but not much better. If I get a different job and if my wife gets a job, it will be better. In Cuba there was very little incentive to work hard. Here if you don't work hard, you can barely make it. [59]

Gonzalo cannot even remember a time before Fidel, as far as he is concerned Cubans have never had rights. All his experiences have been under the regime, he is a child of communism and therefore his values and orientations differ from the previous waves. Migrants in the First and Second waves recognize the difficulties of migration, of uprooting yourself from your home and loved ones and for them that was the greatest burden, not so much recreating a new life. Instead for Gonzalo, the need to find employment is a burden in itself. Since this had never before been a laborious task, the nature of it is unnatural. Gonzalo admits life in America is difficult and slightly better than in Cuba and that hard work would improve his condition.

Llanes notes the clashes between first two waves of Cubans and the Third, "The First and Second Wave have retained their middle-class values from Cuba, as evidenced by their living style – poor but virtuous… and have retained the attitudes and political philosophies that caused them to escape from Cuba in the first place". [60] The Third Wave has experienced an environment and cultural indoctrination in Cuba different from that of the other two waves. Llanes believes they bring a cultural element that he labels "Marxist" because it was described in *Capital* by Marx as "the process of changing a man's nature", this element is not the philosophical believe in Marxism, but the behavioral outcome of having lived under Marxist rules. [61] With the Third wave we begin to notice the changes that the Cuban regime is having on its populace. For

[59] Jose Llanes *Cuban Americans: Masters of Survival (*Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books. 1983)
[60] Ibid
[61] Ibid

migrants that decide to stay in the United States, this Marxist indoctrination implies that they will have a harder time assimilating to American norms and values.

The Fourth Wave: The Special Period

The Fourth Wave of Cuban migrants was initiated in the late 1980s and gained strength in the 1990s. This coincided with what Fidel later termed "el period especial" or the special period which was in fact a euphemism for a siege economy, involving sacrifices and reforms to "save the Revolution." These reforms were a result of the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. For Castro, not only was this disintegration an injury to his values but it also represented the end of economic aid and subsidies from the Soviets and the end to the islands dependence on their communist brothers.

Carmelo Mesa-Lago describes Cuba's economic policy as a pendulum that swings from ideology to pragmatism keeping each other in check. The cycle before the special period was an idealistic one. The new cycle was called the Rectification of Errors and Negative Tendencies, during which the government returned to the anti-market orientation of the Guevarist period and private farms were eliminated, free peasant markets and self-employment were abolished, voluntary labor was re-introduced among other measures.[62] This cycle lasted for four years until the onset of the "special period."

In addition to an end of subsidies from the Soviets and end of nickel and citrus sales to Russia, the United States was also putting more pressure on Castro with the Torricelli Act of 992 which tightened the trade embargo. In the first three years of this cycle, when the crisis reached

[62] Silvia Pedraza *Political disaffection in cuba's revolution and exodus*. (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2007) 18

full depth, the Cuban economy declined by about 35 percent of its GDP – a precipitous decline.[63] Cuba could only rely on itself and the results were disastrous. The impact of the embargo was most heavily felt with the end of the subsidies. Cubans were suffering of hunger, malnutrition, disease, poverty.

Politically, the government responded to the crisis with reform and repression. Cuban Communism became increasingly a formal shell under which an increasingly nationalist inclusionary political system took form.[64] These initiatives failed in containing discontent; instead Cubans from all sectors of society were defying the government's authority- in nonpolitical ways- but in ways that had political consequences. The government was losing its ability to maintain political order.

The special period of hunger and depravation led to the *balseros* crisis of the 1990s and illegal immigration became the main form of exodus. In 1994 the crisis reached its peak; the U.S. Coast Guard accounts for 1,010 *balseros* rescued in July; 21,300 in August; and 11,085 in September – a total of 33,395. While the émigrés of the first two waves were those who became politically disaffected in the process of the transition from a [would be] democratic, capitalistic society to a communist society, the *marielitos* as well as the recent émigrés is those who became politically disaffected from the only society they ever knew: Cuba in communism. [65] The later exodus, as children of communism, is very different politically then the prior generations.

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[63] Ibid
[64] Susan Eckstein *Back from the future : Cuba under castro*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: 1994) 74
[65] Silvia Pedraza *Political disaffection in cuba's revolution and exodus*. (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2007) 25

Remittances and the New Order

Remittances are cross-border, people-to people income transfers. Money sent home by immigrants constitutes the second largest financial inflow to many developing countries, exceeding international aid. During the 1990s remittances to Cuba increased at five times the rate of a regional average, although they began from a lower base.[66] Remittances are a by-product of immigration and Susan Eckstein argues that remittance sending is intricately linked to the build-up of institutionally and culturally embedded transnational family social capital.[67] As we have already noted, Cubans have formed a very prosperous and triumphant social network in Miami but only in the 1990s did cross-border bonding on any scale take hold and become an asset even though 751,000 island-born Cubans had moved to the US before 1990. Remittance sending gained strength during the special period and continued well after.

Non-immigrants' lives can be altered by those who take the leap and migrate. Unfortunately, in the case of Cuba state and individual/family interests do not converge. Intra-family cross-border economic transfers, can stimulate economic growth, generate fiscal revenue and improve living standards, which foster regime support. This is the exact reason why many conservative Cubans, mostly of the First and Second Wave, were not inclined to send money to the island, while they knew their relatives could benefit, Castro would benefit more. This attitude started to wane with the collapse of the Soviet Union; many began to see the embargo and similar legislations as Cold War tactics that were no longer relevant to current situation.

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[66] Susan Eckstein *Back from the future : Cuba under castro*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: 1994) 76
[67] Ibid

Curiously, ties to the *gusanos* were frowned upon and kept hidden in earlier years of the Revolution. Castro prohibited visits from émigrés, except for the pre-Mariel trips under the Dialogue with Carter, and would penalize those who maintained Diasporic ties by denying them access to the Communist party. Membership was a prerequisite for employment and prestigious high level jobs. Cubans rejected gifts from abroad since imported goods were frowned upon in the non-materialistic society. Informal social pressures, in turn, led Cubans not won over by the Revolution to conceal gifts they received. [68]

Consequently, the cut-off in Soviet aid and in trade with the superpower's demise caused the Cuban economy to contract, as already noted. Rationing came to meet no more than one-third to one-half of family monthly needs. [69]Desperation drove Cubans in the island to seek help from their relatives abroad. Soon remittances became ordinary Cubans' main source of dollars, as well as the governments. Connections with families overseas were no longer a liability. The government at first was forced to tolerate the situation due to the crisis; it later came to encourage it.

The situation for those that had family abroad improved with fuel of remittances, yet this relief was only felt by those that had Diasporic connections, which was not everyone. As we've noted all waves of migration with the exception of the Mariel exodus were primarily white. The bourgeoisie and middle class that became the first émigrés were mostly white. The subsequent immigration policies between the US and Cuba in the seventies would allow for the migration of Cubans that already had family in the United States, which further promoted the migration of white Cubans. This meant that the blacks in Cuba did not receive the same amount of aid during

[68] Ibid 80
[69] Ibid 81

the crisis. Ironically, Castro's policies were inadvertently hurting the sectors of society he had promised would benefit the most from the Revolution. Some Cubans advertised their marriage-ability on the web, or more frequently turn to prostitution to earn hard currency. Clearly, the disaster caused by the economic policies prior to the special period were inflicting more structural violence among the Cuban populace, forcing many of them into deplorable moral situations for survival. The Cuban government contributed to the positive revaluation of the diaspora, by decriminalizing dollar possession and by removing a previous cap on émigré visits. Its changed stance was rooted in its own desperate need for hard currency to finance imports, foreign debt repayments and investments.[70]

Studies of Cuban émigrés in Miami indicate the willingness of certain waves to send remittances. As noted earlier, the political refugees of the earlier waves are more committed to their conservative stance and will in no way support the communist regime. The following groups of migrants, who left for more economic reasons and with the moral commitment to help the family they left behind are the forerunners of the new remittance movement. The difference in attitudes is also indicative of the degree of structural violence endured in the island. The upper and middle class refugees that left for political and ideological reasons were victims of forced migration but unlike the subsequent waves of migrants they did not have to experience as drastic economic hardships. As Eckstein notes, "the build-up of transnational social-capital and its normative base, is mainly a new immigrant phenomenon. It is also within the new immigrant that the wounds of repression, hunger and hardship are more latent and the memories more vivid.

The increase in remittances has had a profound effect on the Cuban populace. Cubans began to openly embrace, the materialistic lifestyle that American represented and that the

[70] Ibid 83

Revolution had so ardently shunned. Cubans came to yearn for dollars for far more than basic subsistence – for electric fans, televisions, VCRs, iPods, prestige-label clothing and shoes, and the like. Cubans were becoming materialistic. When interviewed, a man noted that with the remittances he received from two sisters that lived abroad he lived in a fenced house and furnished it with a TV, VCR, CD player, stereo, computer, wireless phone and beautiful artwork.[71] All consumer goods he did not have to work to have. Status on the island has come to rest increasingly less on political loyalty, and work, human-capital based, than dollar access and goods in-kind obtained through who you know aboard. [72]

Migration does not occur in a vacuum, the effects that social networks have on increasing wave of migrations and consequently also on those left behind through remittances Unfortunately, remittances also have the effect of undermining work commitment and motivation to work in the receiving country when they permit greater purchasing power without work effort than obtainable with domestic earnings. Remittance-based transnationalized stature may, in turn, undermine the home country system of reward rooted in education, merit and hard work. [73] Cuba offers an interesting case study because it inherently lacks a system of rewards based education, merit and hard work. The main requirement for social advancement in Cuba is loyalty to regime and the communist party. How will remittances disrupt the natural flow of a society, such as Cuba that is not based on a traditional meritocracy?

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[71] Ibid 85
[72] Alex Stepick *This land is our land : Immigrants and power in miami*. (Berkeley: University of California Press: 2003) 59
[73] Susan Eckstein *Back from the future : Cuba under castro*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: 1994) 89

Cuba Today and the Last Wave of Migrants

In analyzing the last wave or the most recent Cuban migrants to Miami our attempt is to see what set of values and attitudes they have developed that define their daily behavior in order to align their own wants and needs to the restrictions imposed by the state. In other words how has Castro's communism altered the perceptions of Cubans? A study conducted by the University of Miami, captures the values and attitudes of recently arrived migrants and therefore provides the closest possible approximation of Cubans in the island.[74] One of the most revealing statistics was a question dealing with ambition, when asked "What would you like to do with your free time?" only 53 percent of the respondents answered "try to get as far in life as I can" the ambition-telling response. The second highest response was "getting to know myself better (spiritual- self reflective) with 25 percent of the answers and a close third was "enjoying time with family and friends with 22 percent of the responses. Although 53% is still a high percentage, it is a considerable drop from the achievement orientation statistics of migrants in 1973-74 of which over ninety percent indicated to have an achievement oriented personality. While achievement is always a high aspiration for a new immigrant, the fact that only 53% of the sample indicated ambition is a statistically significant variation. Another major difference from earlier migrants is a high indication of mistrust. When asked about trust 70 percent of the interlude period émigrés indicated that "you can only trust people that you know well" while the more recent migrates indicated a complete lack of trust among all people equally, with twenty-eight percent indicating that the nature of man is evil. This attitude can be explained by lack of trust Cubans have towards their authoritarian regime.

[74] Ibid

The study gives us a slight glimpse of changes among the different wave of migrants, but it is not an adequate picture. The fact that these Cubans are leaving the island implies their disaffection and therefore does not make them a satisfactory sample of the Cuban populace. The study also indicated that only ten percent of those surveyed had access to foreign currency (dollars) through remittances, which is a significant reason to want to leave the island.

Carlos Montaner provides the international community a glance of the Cuba today and the disaffection of the youth. In his documentary *Grandchildren of the Cuban Revolution* Montaner interviews the Cuban youth and gives them the freedom to express their thoughts on their homeland. The film starts with a portrayal of a highly anarchistic and apathetic youth, the only way they can demonstrate their discontent is through their clothing When asked about education in Cuba a young lady responds "It's not worth it to work or study or do anything in this country because you are not paid enough… Here you do not have to pay for school or anything but it's not worth it" her friend later adds " I studied a trade and what they paid you as a professional is maybe enough to buy a shirt but not the pants".[75] The average salary the government pays to its workers is 300 to 400 pesos a month, equivalent to $.50 a day. Gabriel, a mechanic in Cuba explains the cost of living; in his profession he can make 400 pesos a month, which barely covers rent.[76] To be able to buy leisure products such as rum, a Cuban product, he would have to work for two weeks. Instead Cubans produce their own makeshift rum from industrial alcohol for stoves, not meant for human consumption. The concoction is something the Cuban stomach has learned to digest. He also explains how the food rationing barely provides enough sustenance for two weeks, for the rest of the month he needs to resort to charity from friends. Many others that cannot make ends meet resort to the streets. Prostitution or *jineterismo*

[75] Carlos Montaner Dir. *Grandchildren of the Cuban Revolution*. 2010
[76] Ibid

as it is referred to on the island runs rampant in Cuban society. The exploitation of the female body in order to afford the basic necessities the state does not provide or luxuries they wish to poses, is another form of structural violence.

Montaner also interviews Laritza Diversent, a lawyer and a journalist who narrated her life of broken dreams within the walls of the illegal house she is trying to build. Laritza represents the few idealists that remain in the island, who despite the realities of living in Cuba is still trying to fulfill her dreams. She comments on the difficulties she endured to receiver her law degree and her resignation to never be able to exercise it properly. The cruelest reality to fathom is that everyone in Cuba can only survive on illegality, with the black market, constructing unauthorized homes, leading double lives.

In Cuba, you either conform or migrate. Those that remain in the island have contrasting realities. The defeatist mentality prevails among many, which is evident among the anarchist youth that curse their government but do not openly rebel. They portray their discontent on their bodies with rebellious slogans tattooed on their heads but never move a step further. When asked what they do to change the system, they reply "nothing" it is simply out of their control Cubans do not believe they are in control of their own destiny and that any attempts at change are only self-destructive and futile. On the other end, you have the determined spirit that despite all the tribulations and blows to the spirit, keeps with the struggle. There are the unabashed Revolutionaries that openly criticize the government, despite the beatings and harassment. You have civil society leaders, like Yoani Sanchez who blogs about her discontent even though she has attacked by the secret police. The oppression in Cuba has killed the human moral and spirit of many of its citizens but it has also energized and intensified the need for freedom and created hundred of dissidents.

The Future of Cuba

Since 1959, the Castro Regime has been the perpetrator to the demise of the Cuban spirit. Either by forcing hundreds of thousands of citizens to flee their homeland, lose their childhood or live in oppression, Cubans have endured some sort of structural violence in the name of a Revolution that was fueled to preserve their rights. After fifty years of tyranny, how much longer will the Revolution live? With so many octogenarian rulers, Cuba may soon find itself with no Revolutionary direction, free for the taking. Who will come to power then and will Cuba find freedom?

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