

# Cuban Identity Crisis

*Transnational and intergenerational Cuban-Americans in Miami*



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## **Acknowledgements**

Our fieldwork was conducted from the 29<sup>th</sup> of January until the 14<sup>th</sup> of April in the city of Miami, Florida. This research has been a valuable experience for us as it enabled us to apply our anthropological skills acquired at Utrecht University in the field.

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## Introduction

As we step into the trolley to go to the main street of the Cuban neighbourhood of Little Havana, ‘Calle Ocho’, we see that the driver is busy with everything but the passengers. “Hola, cómo estás?”, Tim says, and the driver looks at him with a curious look on his face; he clearly did not expect to be greeted, and certainly not in Spanish. “Muy bien”, he mumbles; he is clearly not in the mood for small talk. The trolley is made out of wood and steel bars, and is painted with green and red stripes. It is very old and badly maintained; it looks a bit rusty and makes a lot of noise. When all the passengers are inside, the driver closes the door and sets off. The interior of the trolley is made out of little wooden chairs, which are close to each other, with a pathway in the middle. The chairs are not very comfortable, but nobody seems to mind. As we walk through the trolley to find an empty seat in the back, we notice a variety of passengers from all ages; they reflect the Hispanic identity of the city of Miami as most of them have an Hispanic or, more precisely, a Cuban appearance. A few senior passengers are sitting in the front, and they are joyously talking to each other in English. The men are wearing traditional Cuban hats and khaki trousers. The women are wearing a variety of clothes, mostly with different vibrant colours. A few younger couples are sitting in the middle, who are very loud and cheery, but we cannot make up if they are speaking Spanish, English, a combination of both or a complete different language. It seems mostly gibberish. They try to make contact with a few other passengers, including the seniors, who are not paying any attention to them. In a certain way these groups interact by filling a social place, but the general feeling is that there is clear separation between the young and the old.

This vignette was based on one of our first experiences during our fieldwork in Miami, and it was striking for the rest of our research. The Cuban and Hispanic influences, as described in the vignette, are omnipresent in Miami. Miami has had a long history of Cuban migrants coming to the city since the Cuban Revolution, which started in 1959. This makes Miami primarily a Cuban city, but the influences from other Hispanic communities coming to the city cannot be ignored. This research has a focus on the Cuban-American community in Miami from a transnational and intergenerational perspective.

The first migration wave of Cubans coming to the United States, since the Cuban Revolution, took place in 1959, and there are still Cubans migrating to the United States nowadays (Grenier, et al. 2007:97). All Cuban-Americans share a similar migration history and ethnic characteristics, which we will elaborate on in our empirical chapters and context. Despite all these similarities, it should be noted that there are clear generational differences within the Cuban-American community, especially due to this long and continuous migration history (Grenier et al. 2007:106). We learned that these underlying differences have not yet been researched; “These differences have many backgrounds [...] further analysis is necessary to flesh out the reasons for the generational differences [...]” (Grenier et al. 2007:106). However, the term ‘generational’ does not let itself define easily in the context of Cuban-Americans in Miami because of the long and complex migration history. Therefore we decided to divide the Cuban-Americans according to age and year of arrival. The ‘older’ generation entails Cuban-Americans who migrated from Cuba to the United States between 1959 and 1970. The ‘younger’ generation encompasses Cuban-Americans between the age of eighteen and 30; within this generation we did not make a distinction between first and second generation. In our context we will elaborate on the choices we made to make this distinction in our target population. In order to guarantee anonymity we will use pseudonyms throughout this thesis.

Our objective and scientific goal of this research is to contribute to the debate about identity politics. Our research will have a focus on intergenerational and transnational Cuban-Americans in Miami, and how their identity is formed and how they politicise their belonging. This research will aim to expose the underlying intergenerational conflicting ideas, problems and cultural differences, that are omnipresent in the Cuban-American community in Miami. The societal relevance is to identify these problems and cultural differences within the community, and to help create awareness about their different identities. We want to answer the following central question:

*In what way do the politics of belonging reflect the shaping of identities for transnational and intergenerational Cuban-Americans in Miami?*

Our approach to this research and thesis is of a complementary nature, due to the fact that by far most Cuban-Americans are living in Miami. The Cuban-American population living in Miami is so large and diverse that we were both able to focus on two particular generations within the Cuban-American community; it would not add value to do this

research in different locations. We aim to contribute to the understanding of generational differences within this community.

Oost and Markenhof (2010:51-53) described six functions of research: descriptive, comparative, defining, evaluative, explanatory and designing. Our research has descriptive, comparative and explanatory functions. It has a descriptive function because it aims to expose generational differences within the Cuban-American community, it has a comparative function since it seeks to explore differences between two generations and it has an explanatory function because it seeks to understand why those generational differences exist.

We conducted our research in the city of Miami between the 29th of January and the 13th of April. The reason for conducting this research in the city of Miami was because, as mentioned earlier, it has a high concentration of Cuban-Americans. Prior to going to Miami we spoke to several key informants within the Cuban-American community in Miami, as well as with researchers of Florida International University (FIU). It is thanks to them that we got in touch with other members of the Cuban-American community. Our main methods for gathering data were participant observations, conducting semi-structured interviews, hanging out and informal conversations. We conducted 21 semi-structured interviews individually, as well as countless useful informal conversations. During our first week in Miami we noticed that our populations, despite having generational issues, were not divided groups, and we both got in touch easily with people from both generations. We decided to research both populations together instead of dividing them between us; we did not want to waste the rapport we established with our informants. However, we did make a division within our target populations for analysing the data and writing this thesis; Sem analysed the older generation, whereas Tim analysed the younger generation. After writing our empirical chapters individually we noticed that the populations are too interacted with each other to be analysed separately. This resulted in the decision to intertwine our findings to make our thesis more interactive as well.

This thesis will start with a theoretical discussion of the concepts of identity, ethnicity, transnationalism, migration and integration, politics of belonging and first and second generation immigrants. We will discuss these concepts individually, but they inherently share overlapping characteristics to provide a framework in which our context and empirical chapters can be put into perspective. Secondly, the context of our research will be discussed to show a general image of where our research took place. Chapter three and four will constitute our empirical framework. Chapter three has a general focus on identity to show the complexities in the Cuban-American community. Chapter four will discuss the politics of

belonging, which is necessary to expose these complexities. These two empirical chapters will have a focus on a generational and transnational Cuban-American perspective. This thesis will end with a conclusion and a discussion, in which will be argued that the Cuban-American community has a lot of underlying intergenerational discrepancies which are not directly visible. However, the politics of belonging show these discrepancies, and are reflected in the contemporary political discourse. Our conclusions will contribute to existing theories or knowledge on intergenerational and transnational differences which can be applied to other contexts and situations.

# Chapter 1: Identity, Ethnicity, Transnational Migrants and the Politics of Belonging



## Chapter 1: Identity, Ethnicity, Transnational Migrants and the Politics of Belonging

### *Identity*

(Tim)

Identity is an important concept since people tend to refer to it a lot nowadays, but a clear definition of identity is not easy to find; it is often taken for granted. People use the concept of identity often to categorise themselves and others, as well as organisations and groups. To further define the concept of identity, it is imperative to make a distinction between two types of identity: personal or individual identity and social identity. Demmers (2012:21) broadly defines identity as the answer to the question “who or what are you?”. This refers to the personal identity, or “the total set of cognitions an individual has concerning who (s)he is” (Demmers 2012:22).

Social identity on the other hand refers to “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from the knowledge of its own membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel 1974:69). Social identity is thus the identity which is based on a group identity or group membership, or, as Demmers (2012:22) puts it: “one kind of answer to the question ‘who am I’ that is based on group membership”. This also means that the social identity concept includes groups and categories, such as age, gender, religion and nationality. An important aspect of social identity is the fact that they are limited, which means that we also identify ourselves by defining what we are not (Demmers 2012:23). This does, however, not mean that people can only identify with one group or category; someone can belong to multiple categories, depending on the context. Demmers (2012:23) explains that someone’s identity can, depending on that particular context, become prominent, whereas another identity is pushed to the background. This also means that social identities are overlapping, where some identities are more enduring than others. This fluidity of identifications has produced a so-called *practice turn* in which scholars see identity not as something we have, but as something we do; a performance (Demmers 2012:23). Crenshaw (1991) introduced a concept called *intersectionality*, which refers to individuals having multiple identities, identities being able to differ within a social group, and identities being able to overlap with other social groups.

Therefore, it is also important to look at the process and definition of identification. Verkuyten (2004:64) argues that identification should be seen primarily as a psychological process: “Individuals identify with a group, and the process of identification depends on personal characteristics, preferences, needs, experiences, and circumstances.” Wentholt (as

cited in Verkuyten 2004:64) distinguishes four relationships between identity and identification: identification corresponding with an existing social distinction; dis-identification, which occurs when someone resists the group he or she belongs to; identification with a group someone does not belong to; and identification which is independent from existing social divisions. Another distinction needs to be made between identification *as* and identification *with*. Identification *as* refers to the cognitive categorisation and identification of an individual as a member of a certain ethnic group, thereby using labels to define that ethnic group and oneself (Verkuyten 2004:66). Identification *with* goes a little deeper and refers to the “degree to which the group is experienced as an integral and inseparable part of the self.” (Verkuyten 2004:66); this includes an emotional aspect.

A problem with the definitions and the different aspects of social identity and identification described above is that they might be a little too simplistic, since they focus only on the self-ascription of identity; they ignore the identity ascription done by others. This dichotomy between self-ascribed and ascribed by others can be also called external and internal ascribed social identities; internal ascribed identities refer to categorisations people can make themselves, whereas external ascribed identities refer to categorisations which are forced upon people (Demmers 2012:23). When the internal and external ascribed social identities oppose each other, an identity conflict arises. This is related to the concept of interpellation as mentioned by Althusser (as cited in Fassin 2013:7); “On the one hand, it proceeds by ‘subjection’ (the individual submits to domination [...]), but, on the other hand, it is a matter of ‘subjectification’ (the individual constructs himself through this identification [...]). The political subject is therefore the product of this dialectical relationship of subjection and subjectification, through which the individual is assigned a place which he can either recognize as his own, or reject.”

It is important to realise that context plays an important role in the categorisation of identity. Each society has its own rules and narratives about what is right or wrong, and they are all formed in “historical contexts of power”: some groups in a society have more power to categorise or identify than others (Demmers 2012:23). Especially the state is a key actor when it comes to categorisation; the state has the power to name, identify and categorise. It is therefore also important to have a good definition of social categories; Fearon and Laitin (in Demmers 2012:24) define social categories as “sets of people given a label (or labels) and distinguished by two main features: 1. rules of membership that decide who is and who is not a member of the category; and 2. content, that is, sets of characteristics [...] thought to be typical of members of the category [...]”.

It is, however, important to realise that the personal identity and social identity are not mutually exclusive, but it is a relation between the two: “It is about the intricacies, paradoxes, dilemmas, contradictions, imperatives, superficialities, and profundities of the way individuals relate to and are related to the world in which they live” (Verkuyten 2004:42).

### ***Ethnicity and nationalism***

(*Tim*)

The concept of ethnicity often falls together with the concept of identity; people also often speak of an ethnic identity. Ethnicity can be defined as a large group of people who share the same characteristics, such as a shared language, shared ideology or a shared nationality; in anthropology, the term ethnicity refers to “aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive.” (Eriksen 2010:5). Therefore, it could be argued that ethnic identity is a form of social identity; both concepts refer to categories or groups with a certain identity and a sense of belonging. The concept of sense of belonging will be discussed later in this theoretical framework. When cultural differences are often emphasised during interactions between different groups, this social relation has an ethnic element (Eriksen 2010:17). This definition is a bit too simplistic, since it uses culture as a boundary, which is too general and too broad. Therefore, the definition of ethnic identity by Hutchinson and Smith (1996) is more useful; an ethnic identity refers to “the individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity, the sense on the part of the individual that she or he belongs to a particular cultural community.” (Hutchinson & Smith 1996:5). Furthermore, they define the term *ethnic* as follows: “A named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members.” (Hutchinson and Smith 1996:6) This definition of the term *ethnic* will be used throughout this paper, since we think that this is the most comprehensive.

Much like the case with social identity, ethnicity comes with ethnic classification: *us* versus *them*. These distinctions are necessary since otherwise there would be no culturally diverse groups (Eriksen 2010:23). Nash (in Hutchinson & Smith 1996:24-28) defined several ethnic boundaries on which the distinctions between ethnic groups are based. Cultural markers of ethnicity consist of kinship, commensality and religious cult, and are mostly characterised as the primary markers of ethnicity. Kinship refers to the biological descent of individuals within the group, commensality refers to eating together which indicates equality, and religious cult refers to a supernatural system with sacred symbols and attachments (Nash in Hutchinson & Smith 1996:25). These essentially cultural boundaries constitute and



symbolise the existence of the group and constitute the group itself by differentiating from other groups. There are also secondary markers of ethnicity, such as dress, language and physical features. Dress refers to the range from whole costumes to items both visible and invisible, language refers to the native language used to communicate, and physical features refers to certain physical aspects deemed important in a particular context, both visible and less visible (Nash in Hutchinson & Smith 1996:26).

It is also important to realise that there are different approaches towards ethnicity, such as the primordialist and constructivist approaches. Everyday primordialism views ethnicity as “a communal bond given by nature, as something that is in your blood and, therefore, unchangeable.” (Demmers 2012:26). Therefore, this primordialist approach sees ethnic groups as essentially different which are static and cannot be changed. The constructivist approach on the other hand sees ethnicity as something which is socially constructed; “social processes of maintaining boundaries that the people themselves recognised as ethnic.” (Baumann in Demmers 2012:28). Therefore, this approach sees ethnicity as something which is a human product and is therefore dynamic and changeable (Demmers 2012:28). We will use this constructivist approach throughout our thesis. An important concept which should be mentioned here is the concept of *reification*, which is described as “the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something other than human products – such as facts of nature” (Berger and Luckman, as cited by Demmers 2012:29) This making of something abstract into something hard is often called *thingification* (Demmers 2012:29).

Nationalism is a concept which incorporates elements from both the primordialist and the constructivist approach towards ethnicity. One of the most influential writers and anthropologists on the concept of nationalism is Benedict Anderson. Anderson (2006) typified nationalism, or having the feeling of belonging to a nation, as belonging to an imagined community. Imagined in the sense that it is by far not possible to have contact with every member of this community, but nevertheless having the feeling of being connected to all the members (Anderson 2006:6). It is a community because even though there are many inequalities within the nation, the idea of their nation and the comradeship that comes with it is deeply rooted inside its members (Anderson 2006:7), which we perceive as being primordialist in nature. However, this idea is not something which is present since birth, but it is constructed through someone’s experiences in life. This idea of the nation is imposed on all members and for this it is a conjoint representation of reality (Anderson 2006:6) which we perceive as being constructed. We use Anderson’s definition as our foundation of nationalism, but we consider it limited. We argue that the idea of nationalism remains dynamic, and is not

fixed after its construction. This form of an imagined community is part of the concept of social identity, which is derived from group membership (Tajfel 1974:69; Demmers 2012:21). The concepts of globalisation, transnationalism, migration and integration influence these group memberships. We believe that the idea of ‘one’ nation and ‘one’ nationalism is not that self-evident anymore in most contemporary societies, as will also be shown in our empirical chapters. Globalisation processes make it easier for people to connect to other nations. Migrants come and go, and this makes the concept of ‘one’ nationalism a lot more complex. For this reason, when discussing the concept of nationalism, we argue that we must look across national borders in the form of transnationalism.

### *Transnationalism, migration and integration*

(Sem)

Eriksen (2010) defines transnationalism as a form of migration: “migration is not a single act with a clear departure and an equally clear arrival. Put briefly, many people travel back and forth.” (Eriksen 2010:190). Thus, transnationalism has overlapping characteristics with the concept of social identity; as Demmers (2012) described, someone’s identity depends on the context. For transnational migrants, who are not bound to one place, this context constantly changes, and for this reason their social identity can take many forms (Demmers 2012:23). Furthermore, Eriksen (2010) states that children from immigrants, who rarely or never have been to the country of origin of their parents, have strong affiliations with that country (Eriksen 2010:190-191). This is in line with the definition of ethnicity we use from Hutchinson and Smith (1996) as stated in the previous part. To summarise, migrants have a shared heritage, so they have a shared ethnic identity to which they can relate; migrants share the same home country, to some extent the same kinship, have a shared language, and often have shared physical features. For second generation migrants this feeling of ethnic identity is less cohesive, but they still have this shared heritage; it is only less applicable since they were born in another country.

Immigrants who have been living in an often Western metropolitan city frequently consider themselves natives to their place of origin. They often have networks there, and especially since the widespread use of the internet, connections are easy to maintain (Eriksen 2010:190-191) For this reason most migrants cannot be seen in the same fashion as before; they have become transmigrants.

Transmigrants are a form of migrants who live within the borders of the country they migrated to. Here they are incorporated in the national economy and are part of the politics, so in many ways they are fully integrated into the host country (1995:48). Nevertheless, they

have close ties to the country of origin. Not so much in the sense that they are related to family living there, but that they are in fact still influential and influenced on a local and national scale (Schiller 1995:49). This can most likely happen because the idea of nation-states is challenged, and inherently changed, due to the processes that are paired with globalisation (Vertovec 2004:978). For this reason, Eriksen (2010) hails that the concept of migration should not just be examined as a one-way process, but as a transnational journey. This process should result in less segregation, assimilation or integration (Eriksen 2010:188). The strong increase in transmigrants also questions, and certainly needs a change in, the functioning of the nation-state (Eriksen 2010: 199).

Being a transmigrant is not conventional, as they do not characterise themselves as a “people”. Just like with the standard model of the nation-state, people tend to be characterised by their presence inside a territory (Vertovec 2004:979). Nevertheless, none of the standard processes surrounding nation-building includes the complexities of the many different identities that surround transmigrant lives (Schiller 1995:59). For example, what will become clear in our empirical chapters, is that the nation of origin can also become ethnic after it is re-essentialised by the people of your host nation.

### ***Politics of belonging***

*(Sem)*

Politics of belonging is one of the major topics in which classical psychology and sociology have their roots (Yuval 2006:198). Many anthropological scholars hail this topic as well and discuss it in several ways (Cummings 2010, Roland 2013, Middleton, 2013). What does belonging mean? When does someone belong to a group or even a nation? These vague and abstract questions about belonging are also important within the concepts of social identity and ethnicity. These questions are classical in social sciences and are constant thoughts that provoke. This section will give an analytical framework to belonging, it will provide the concept of politics of belonging, and it will show that this concept is very relevant in the contemporary identity discourse.

To understand the basics of the politics of belonging, one must first understand the basics of belonging. Belonging is different than being a formal member of a group. Belonging to a group means that one must have a sense of affiliation and affection, be loyal, committed and must follow the common purpose of the group (Crowley 1999:18). Yuval (2006) distinguishes three major analytical ways in which belonging can be constructed: social locations, the identification of an individual with collective groups that could have, but does not necessarily have to have a hegemonic ethnic background, and the ethical and politicised

values and norms to which people relate their own and other belongings. These constructions of belonging can be distinguished from one another but are also clearly interlinked. It is within these dynamic processes that the sense of belonging turns into the politics of belonging (Yuval 2006:204). Politics of belonging is not merely a feeling of belonging somewhere, it is a set of choices that decide if someone, either themselves or someone else, could fit in. It is about both the claiming and recognising of being part of a group; it is a combination of identification *with* and identification *as*, as described by Verkuyten (2004:66). This paper will use the following definition for politics of belonging: “Politics of belonging is about the potentially meeting of other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging, whether they are ‘us’ or ‘them’” (Nencel 2011:470).

According to Crowley (1999) the concept of politics of belonging is mainly used by groups that are xenophobic towards immigrants. Crowley (1999:19) suggests that within the context of politics of belonging a more positive voice must be heard to oppose the negative agenda of xenophobia and racism.

### ***First and second generation immigrants and identity***

***(Sem)***

Contemporary first and second generation migrants are in many ways the same. They are for example transnational by nature, they have the same ethnic background and often have many families and friends in their country of origin (Anthias 2009:7) Anderson's concept of the imagined community is in many transnational lives still applicable. Both community and “its” places are creatively imagined because the experience of migration is itself so complex (Stiffler 2007:16). Furthermore, both generations are having a dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion. In most western countries, debates about immigration, due to undocumented immigrants, are a hot topic. Transnational documented immigrants are drawn into this debate as well. There is a particular focus on immigrants’ roots that neglects their strengths and assets to a host country, because in the common debate most intersectional ideas of identity are ignored (Vertovec 2004:978-979). The issue with most forms of identity politics, like politics of belonging, is not that it fails to transcend difference, but rather the opposite - that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences (Crenshaw 1991:1242). Transnational immigrants have to defend everything they have achieved, and come once again in an identity crisis about where they belong to (Schiller 1995:59).

Nevertheless, there are big differences between first and second generation immigrants. The identities of first generation immigrants have mostly been shaped in their

country of origin, and they can mostly be seen as a unitary group. At least usually this unity can be found in a shared ideology, as Rumbaut (2004) states that first generation groups have a big variation of people. “First waves and later waves of migrants from the same sending country may differ fundamentally in their class origins, ethnic composition, motives for migration, and reception in the United States. I.e., there are different "vintages" in migration flows.” (cf. Kunz, 1973, 1981 in Rumbaut 2004:1200). Second generation immigrants are also constituted of different social classes, but the unity in ideology like the first generation immigrants is more far-fetched. This generation is affected in contradictory ways. Their values are often being shaped by norms of their ancestral culture, but also by that of their host culture. This could be inflicting and makes this generation less unitary than the first generation (Anthias 2009:7).



# Chapter 2: The Cuban Situation in the United States and Miami



## **Chapter 2: The Cuban Situation in the United States and Miami**

### ***The complexity of the Cuban migration waves***

*(Sem)*

When we entered the field we had a clear idea of what our research population would look like. We were planning on dividing the populations into first and second generation. However, on our first day in Miami we spoke to Joe, a leading researcher within the Cuban-American community. He made us realise that this idea was too simplistic. Miami has had a long history regarding Cuban immigrants, and many different migration waves could be distinguished (Grenier, et al. 2007:97). During that first week, more people made us aware that these different migration waves could not be characterised in terms of generations; people who came in the 1960s are called first generation migrants, and people who arrived just recently are also first generation migrants. However, despite the fact that both populations are called first generation Cuban-Americans, they are clearly not similar (Grenier et al. 2007:106). Furthermore, it must be noted that children who were born in the United States can be characterised as second generation, and they are often just as old, or older than first generation migrants who have arrived recently. These complexities made us realise that we needed to change our approach, which resulted in dividing the target population according to age and year of arrival, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. It should also be realised that there is a liminal generation which falls between the first and second generation; Grenier et al. (2007:99) describe generation 1.5: Cuban migrants between the age of 1 and 14 who came to the United States during one of the migration waves.

### ***Characteristics of the Cuban-American migrants in Miami***

*(Sem)*

The total Cuban-American population living in Miami rose to 856.000 in 2010 (Grenier 2015:6); more recent statistics were not available. However, we did find indicators that the influx of Cuban migrants is still present, and, as will become clear in our empirical chapters, these are changing the group dynamics of the Cuban-American community in Miami.

When the first Cubans arrived in Miami a large part was still having the idea that one day they would return to Cuba. They had the idea that they were in exile, and therefore they strongly opposed the Cuban regime and the communist ideology. This is what came to be known as the exile ideology of the Cuban-Americans (Girard 2012:43). The issues with Cuba, and thus their homeland, are discussions that are still in effect on a daily basis (Grenier 2007:101). However, as will be shown throughout this thesis, this exile ideology is not that imminent anymore. Alberts (2005) described that the Cuban community in Miami used to be



one of the most cohesive ethnic communities in a foreign country. In fact, she mentioned that the community was economically very successful since the first Cuban-Americans arrived, and stated that this was due to their ethnic solidarity. One of the main factors why ethnic solidarity was so high was because of the fact that the first wave of Cuban migrants which arrived in Miami helped integrate the later waves. The situation surrounding their solidarity is changing though (Alberts 2005:231). During our fieldwork we noticed that the solidarity of the Cuban-American community is indeed changing. Throughout this thesis, this will become more clear.

Haller and Landelt (2005) explain that the United States have several characteristics that have positive and negative effects on transnational migrants. One is that of opportunity and upward mobility, the other is, mostly because of the segmented educational opportunities, a system of social and economic exclusion. This form of downward assimilation is clearly present with most transnational second generation immigrants, but that is not necessarily the case with the Cuban-Americans (Haller & Landelt 2005:1203). As will be mentioned in our empirical chapters, the Cuban-Americans do still have certain privileges, such as acquiring the American citizenship relatively easy, and thus have more upward mobility than other migrant groups. However, their privileges are less prominent for the younger generation than for the older generation.

### *Contemporary political relations between the U.S. and Cuba*

(Tim)

As Lowenthal (2010) mentions, the start of Obama's and Trump's presidential campaigns regarding U.S.-Cuba politics could not have been more different. Obama tried to open up relations with Cuba, while Trump is slowly reversing much of Obama's progress. In 2009 Obama called for renewing the U.S.-Cuba relations. He expressed to have a desire to allow U.S. investments in Cuba, mostly regarding communications; telecommunications, direct mail service to Cuba and he wanted to renew bilateral immigration reforms (Lowenthal 2010:110). At the start of these reformation ideas, there were opposing views. Especially the Castro brothers were not particularly excited (Lowenthal 2010:115). During Obama's first term, Cuba seemed hesitant to listen to Obama, and his ideas clearly missed its target (LeoGrande 2015:484). Nevertheless, Obama succeeded in many ways to reform the U.S.-Cuba relations in his second term. Cuba was experiencing many economic problems and needed to reform its economic system. The Chinese market socialism system was model for the Cubans, and this called for a re-entrance in the global economic market (LeoGrande 2015:485). Obama and Castro started another dialogue for this reason, and this renewed their approaches to one

another. Communications, visits and immigration seemed to be normalising; “They have replaced a Cold War framework of animosity with a twenty-first-century policy of engagement and cooperation.” (LeoGrande 2015:486).

On 9 November 2016 Donald Trump was officially elected as the president of the United States. Since his election, he tried to reverse some of Obama’s implemented policies. New policies enacted by Trump prevent individual visits to Cuba, but they can still go on organisational tours (LeoGrande 2017:227-228). Also, family visits were not restricted, only military contracts with Cuba were prohibited, and diplomatic relations were not broken (LeoGrande 2017:228). In addition, when Trump ordered an inter-agency review of the Cuba policy, the involved agencies all stated that the existing policy was effective. Trump did not agree with this, but the agencies stood strong and were successful; the Cuba policy was not altered (LeoGrande 2017:229). The relationship between the U.S. and Cuba will certainly be tested under Donald Trump’s presidency, but until now his policy changes had little effect (LeoGrande 2012: 228). It is probable that the identification processes of Cuban-Americans are altered by the contradicting and changing policies of Obama and Trump.

### *Voting behaviour of the Cuban-Americans*

*(Tim)*

“Despite a two-to-one preference for the Democratic Party among Hispanics, about two-thirds of Cuban-American voters have identified as Republicans during the last two decades.” (Uhlener and Garcia, 2005:75). This is supported by the 2016 Cuba Poll; approximately 53 percent of the Cuban respondents were registered as Republicans, 22 percent as Democrats and 25 percent as “independent” (Grenier & Gladwin, 2016 FIU Cuba Poll). This 2016 Cuba Poll has the most recent statistics concerning Cuban voting behaviour, but it was conducted before the presidential elections of 2016.

The 2016 Cuba Poll shows that the majority of the “older” Cuban-Americans are Republican; among the pre-1980 migrants approximately 70 percent is Republican, and 56 percent of the migrants who arrived between 1980 and 1994 are Republican. Also, 48 percent of the Cuban-Americans between the age of 18 and 39 register as being independent (Grenier & Gladwin, 2016 FIU Cuba Poll). Consequently, the Democrats outnumber the Republicans in the age categories of 18-39 and 40-59, whereas the Republicans hold the majority in the age category of 76 and older (Grenier & Gladwin, 2016 FIU Cuba Poll).

An analysis of the actual election results shows that there was a big divide within the Cuban-American community: in the Cuban neighbourhoods approximately 48 percent voted

for Clinton, whereas 50 percent voted for Trump.<sup>1</sup> However, these results must also be put into perspective. Hillary Clinton received way more votes in the Miami area than Barack Obama four years earlier. Approximately one-third of the residents in Miami-Dade County is Cuban-American, where Clinton won 64 percent of the votes; an increase of 81,688 votes for the Democratic Party compared to the presidential elections of 2012.<sup>2</sup>

In the Hialeah area, which is predominantly Cuban and traditionally Republican, Clinton and Trump both won 49 percent of the votes; in 2012 the Democrats won 45 percent of the votes, whereas the Republicans won 54 percent of the votes.<sup>3</sup> This shows an increase in Democrat voters in the Hialeah area. The same increase occurred in Westchester, a U.S. community with the highest percentage of residents born in Cuba, though the Republicans still gained the majority of the votes in 2016: the Democrats went from 36 percent to 42 percent, and the Republicans went from 63 percent to 55 percent.<sup>4</sup> The Democrats also had an increase in votes in the West-Miami area, from 40 percent to 45 percent, whereas the Republicans went from 59 to 51 percent.<sup>5</sup> When combined, these three areas with relatively many Cuban-American residents showed the following election results in 2016: 48 percent of the votes for Hillary Clinton, and 50 percent of the votes for Donald Trump.<sup>6</sup> This shows an increased dichotomy within the Cuban-American neighbourhoods.

This voting behaviour of Cuban-Americans is interesting since, especially among the second generation Cuban-Americans, the Democratic Party is on the rise. This shows that a large portion of those younger Cuban-Americans feels free to not identify with the Republican Party; the first generation Cuban-Americans on the other hand are mostly registered as Republicans. During our fieldwork we noticed that much of this data is indeed very applicable to our populations. However, especially since Trump's elections the political affiliations seem to be less evident than before.

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<sup>1</sup> Sopo, Giancarlo. 2016. "Updated Analysis of the 2016 Cuban-American Vote." Giancarlo Sopo's Blog (blog), December 18. Accessed 20 December, 2017. <https://giancarlosopoblog.com/category/polling/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem

<sup>4</sup> Sopo, Giancarlo. 2016. "Updated Analysis of the 2016 Cuban-American Vote." Giancarlo Sopo's Blog (blog), December 18. Accessed 20 December, 2017. <https://giancarlosopoblog.com/category/polling/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem



**Chapter 3: Identification Limbo**



### **Chapter 3: Identification Limbo**

Our theoretical framework addressed the concepts of identity, ethnicity and belonging, but also took into account the concepts of transnationalism and intergenerationality. Especially the process of identification played a very important role since our research focused on the underlying motives for identifying as either Cuban, American or Cuban-American. Personal as well as social identity, as described by Demmers (2012), are part of our analysis, but our main focus is on the social identity. Social identity is related to the concept of ethnicity; shared characteristics, such as culture, language and heritage, are often conditions for people to identify with others and to have a sense of belonging or affiliation. The different generations have the same ethnic characteristics, yet they cannot be seen as a clear homogeneous group due to their different immigration backgrounds. This will also be the main focus of this chapter. We will argue that all forms of identity for the Cuban-Americans inherently have an ethnic basis. First off, we will have an analytical focus on the population as being Cuban-American and how this is a major part of their identity. We also highlighted the aspects of language and religion because they seemed to be very important for both populations, though they have different opinions about it. It must also not be underestimated that they are both Cuban as well as American, and in that sense transnational. Therefore the aspect of transnationalism as a part of their identity will also be discussed. Miami will be mentioned throughout this chapter, but it will also be discussed as a separate factor of the Cuban-American identity as it is a city different from all other American cities; it is American but is defined by its Cuban and Hispanic influences. Throughout this chapter intergenerational aspects plays an important role, as their identity is ethnic but also formed along the generational lines; the different Cuban-American generations share an ethnic background and live alongside each other but are not homogeneous.

#### ***The Cuban-American identity***

Cuban-Americans living in Miami always acknowledge their Cubanity and their Cuban background. The factor of birthplace does in this case not matter; both Cuban-Americans born in the United States and those born in Cuba acknowledge their Cuban background. For the older Cuban-Americans it is very clear that their migration history is very important to them and is in many ways still controlling their everyday activities, such as getting a cup of coffee. Most of them stated that they would go to a Cuban coffee place to hear about what was going on with Cuba at that time. It is not that they directly say that their life is still controlled by

their immigration history, but the re-imagining of Cuba in their memories and the constant elaborating of their lives after their exile suggests this. Conversations are often related to Cuba or their migration history. The older Cuban-Americans feel very American but still have a strong connection to the Cuba of their past. Evita, a first generation 72-year-old Cuban-American, described very clearly how she, similarly to most other older Cuban-Americans, feels:

“I feel that I’m bicultural, I remain close to the Cuban culture and understand it and know it, and also to the American culture.”

The connection with Cuba is similar for the younger generation, despite having a different migration history. When looking at the younger generation, it is important to realise that there is a difference between the younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba, and those born in the United States. The Cuban-Americans born in the United States are very aware of their Cuban roots and do therefore not just identify as American, but as Cuban-American. Andrea, a second generation 24-year-old Cuban-American who was born in Miami, describes her identification process as follows:

“I’m not just a pure Cuban, I’ve never been there. [...] When people ask me how I identify [...] I never say that I’m American. I mean I am [American] because I’m born here but it’s not something that I super identify with, because... I don’t know actually why. Because deep down you know you’re not actually American even if you’re born here. Like culturally you feel like you’re from other places.”

This quote is characteristic for most younger Cuban-Americans. For some, the importance of their Cuban background is even more important. Alejandro, a 30-year-old second generation Cuban-American who was born in Miami, even identifies as Cuban despite being born in Miami:

“I’m very much Cuban, I feel very Cuban, I identify with Cuba.”

He did mention that he grew up in Hialeah, a primarily Cuban neighbourhood in Miami, which could very well have influenced his identification as Cuban. The influence of Miami will be explained later in this chapter. Younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba all identify as

Cuban, and do not feel American. Christian, for example, a 27-year-old first generation Cuban-American who migrated from Cuba to Miami in 2008, identifies as follows:

“I am Cuban. Everywhere I go I’m Cuban, no doubt. I don’t identify as American. Although I’m an American citizen, I’m Cuban. That’s where I was born and raised.”

This shows that all younger Cuban-Americans, both those born in Cuba and those born in the United States, are aware of their Cuban descent and identify themselves accordingly. Thus, their Cuban background is an important factor in the identification process for Cuban-Americans.

Language is also a good indicator of one’s identity. Every Cuban-American we met was bilingual; they all spoke both the Spanish and English language. Therefore it is interesting to look at what language they prefer and in what language they speak to their family and friends. All younger Cuban-Americans speak English, some better than others, which can be attributed respectively to them either being born in Cuba or in the United States. On the other hand, almost all of them speak Spanish to their parents because their parents can communicate better in Spanish than in English, such as Felipe, a 25-year-old first generation Cuban-American who migrated from Cuba to Miami in 2008:

“[...] My parents don’t speak English. They’re learning it. My father, he doesn’t have the need to speak English because in Miami you can get away with speaking just Spanish. It’s one of the largest Spanish speaking communities in the country.”

This is contradicting to the older generation that we spoke to. They are all bilingual and stress the importance of being bilingual. They claim that speaking English is important in a country where English is the norm, but that it is also important to speak Spanish because it is their first language, and thus part of their culture. Some of the parents from the younger generation are able to speak English as well; Andrea states the following about her parents:

“[...] They speak English well. Because they also came when they were young. But I mean we do speak Spanish at home, so when we run into each other we speak Spanish.”

Both Andrea and her parents are able to communicate in English, but choose to communicate in Spanish because they prioritise the Spanish language. This could indicate that their Spanish



language reminds them of their Cuban background, and they also identify as such. When we asked Gabriel, an eighteen-year-old 1.5 generation Cuban-American who migrated from Cuba to Miami in 2008, if Spanish was still important to him, he responded:

“Yes, of course. I mean, I’m Cuban [...]. No matter if I become a citizen, it doesn’t mean that I was born in the United States. I still have Cuban culture, that won’t change. I won’t change because I just committed to this country. Yes I’m gonna live here for the rest of my life, but I’m still Cuban.”

He basically clarifies that the Spanish language is part of the Cuban culture, and it is therefore also part of the Cuban identity. So, being bilingual is perceived as an important aspect of their identity by all generations. When looking at the factor of birthplace, the importance of either the English or Spanish language varies. For example, Felipe was born in Cuba, but prefers to speak the English language:

“I do prefer speaking English [...]. I communicate with all my friends in English.”

Alejandro on the other hand was born in Miami, but also really values the Spanish language because it is part of the Cuban identity:

“I’m not gonna raise a kid that doesn’t speak Spanish, like many of my friends. There are some of them that don’t even speak Spanish, and their parents are Cuban, but they’re raised so Americanised, that their identity has been kind of fuzzy for them.”

This confirms that language is an important factor of one’s identity. One thing which is abundantly clear is that younger Cuban-Americans realise the importance of being bilingual; speaking both English and Spanish. The Spanish language they speak to their parents reminds them of their Cuban heritage, which is important to them, whereas English is often spoken because of practical reasons concerning living in the United States, although it is possible to speak Spanish, or Spanglish, almost anywhere in Miami. The older generation also speaks the Spanish language at home to remain close to their Cuban roots, but also uses the English language to create awareness about the Cuban situation for the general American population. Linda, a 61-year-old 1.5-generation Cuban-American, is a writer. She writes mainly about the Cuban-American exile:

“Right now I am helping translate a book about a man who was a political prisoner in Cuba. Most of those stories do not get translated, but i think it is important to pass on stories for future generations.”

Both the English and the Spanish language are indicators of their identity. As stated before, they are often in limbo about feeling either Cuban or American, and the different languages constantly help reconstructing this feeling.

The construct of this feeling of being in a state of limbo can also be derived from their perspective on religion. This perspective is shaped both by their ethnic heritage as well as their migration history. Most of the Cuban-Americans are religious and are part of the Catholic Church. The people from the older generation are generally devoted Catholics. They visit the Church, and a few people have also worked for the Church in the past. Felicia, a first generation 74-year-old Cuban-American, came here with the Pedro Pan operations, which were, according to her, initiated by the Catholic Church to save as many children as possible from the Cuban regime. Approximately 14.000 children came to the United States through these operations, and have a similar background story. Felicia came to Miami all by herself, whereas her parents stayed in Cuba:

“I grew up very Catholic. At seven years old I was getting prepared for first communion, and I’ve been going to church ever since. This was what kept me going when I was here all alone.”

What is also important about religion for the older generation is that it gives them certain values in life. These values are mainly about living a fairly traditional life; believe in God, study and work hard, fall in love, get married and start a family. They perceive these values as similar to the traditional American values.

Most younger Cuban-Americans, the Cuban-Americans born in the United States, but also those born in Cuba, were raised religious. Christian, who is also a theologian, states the following:

“It [religion] is a pretty big deal for me, and also for a lot of Cubans.”

Alejandro also explains that religion has always been very important for the people in Cuba:

“Faith is very important for the Cuban people because they have been stripped away of so many things, that the only thing they can’t be stripped away of is hope.”

Paradoxically to what Christian spoke about before, he also stated that religion is, or was, strongly opposed by the Cuban government because it was perceived as a threat, and that therefore religious people were looked down upon. He admits that religion is not as strongly opposed right now as back in the 1960s, mainly because several Popes visited Cuba in the last twenty years. Eduardo, a 25-year-old first generation Cuban-American who migrated from Cuba to Miami when he was seventeen years old, clarifies that the Communist Revolution was partly against Catholicism:

“[It was] against Catholicism and that kind of ‘white’ religions. [...] You need to consider also that a lot of them came here and immigrated.”

It must be stated that religion is not that important for the younger generation as for the older generation. While most younger Cuban-Americans, both those born in Cuba and those in the United States, were raised Catholic, this does not mean they follow Catholicism blindly. Most of our informants were raised Catholic, but they are also open minded towards other perspectives and religions, such as Esteban, a second generation 29-year-old Cuban-American who was born in Miami:

“Well I was [religious], I believe in god, I grew up Catholic. [...] [But] like everything else, I grew out of it. I grew up and I had disagreements with a lot of religious beliefs, and while I can see the importance of religion, I can see the importance of many different religions.”

### ***Transnationalism***

Most informants have never been back to Cuba. They do, however, still have a feeling of their Cubanity and have a certain pride in their Cuban background, despite not feeling connected to the contemporary Cuba or Cubans who come to the United States nowadays. In our theoretical framework we highlighted the importance of transnationalism; because most Cubans never or rarely go back to Cuba they are not transnational in the way as Eriksen (2010) defined it. We would like to argue that, despite the fact that the older Cuban-Americans do not go back, they are still transnational. They do not have the opportunity to go

back to the Cuba they know, but they constantly return to their country of birth in their memories, conversations and actions like eating, singing and dancing. The form of transnationalism as Eriksen (2010) defines it is more applicable to the younger Cuban-Americans, especially the ones who were born in Cuba, because they tend to go back regularly to visit family and friends.

When asking if Cuba is still important, the older Cuban-Americans struggled to give a clear answer. To understand the difficulties with these answers, it is important to realise that none of the older Cuban-Americans have the Cuban citizenship anymore. They had to give this up when they left Cuba, and with it their identity inherently changed. Despite the fact that they were born in Cuba, they have lived in the United States for the largest part of their lives. Manuela, a first generation 74-year-old Cuban-American, states the following:

“No I don’t (have a Cuban passport) [...]. I don’t feel, ehm, I don’t feel American. I’m not American and I’m not Cuban”

Because the older Cuban-Americans do not have this citizenship anymore it is hard for people to define Cuba. There is a Cuba that lives on in their memories, and there is an actual contemporary Cuba that most of them do not know very well, because they have not been back to Cuba, or because they have not been back in a long time. A common denominator within the community is that they like to talk about the Cuba from their past and that they relish the memories of their past. Because of these memories, and because they do not have the power to wipe out their heritage, they feel that Cuba remains important. However, some people also state that Cuba is not really important for them anymore, mainly because they have not gone back for such a long time, and because they fear that the Cuba that they grew up in does not exist anymore. They try to stay away from topics about the contemporary situation in Cuba, and state that they do not want to go back because they feel so American, and because they feel that they will get hurt mentally if they ever go back. Coco, for example, is someone from the older generation who has never gone back to Cuba, and she is also not intending to go back:

“I always said that I would not go back to Cuba because we would go back to what I left there.”

Most of the older generation also do not have any family members or friends left in Cuba, so they do not have the necessity to go back. Rosita, a first generation 73- year-old Cuban-American, actually did go back a few times to see her family, but now that most of her family is not alive anymore she does not have plans to go back, because the trips to Cuba hurt her mentally. She will only go back if Cuba is ‘liberated’:

“Now I wish that they will be free someday, but I don’t want to live there anymore. I probably will go back to visit whenever they are free again, because I already went, not because I wanted to see the government there, but I just wanted to see my place of birth. Right now, I just wish that they could be free again. That they could have elections you know, and that everything would go to normal.”

Catalina, a first generation 72-year-old, lived in Cuba until she was 21 years old, and thus remembers Cuba very well. Cuba is still very important to her:

“Cuba is here, it’s in my heart, it will never leave.”

It is clear that the thoughts and memories about Cuba, as it was before Catalina left, are still vivid and important. Once again, this is the case for many of the older generation. They are transnational in their own way.

Unlike the older generation, a lot of younger Cuban-Americans still have family or friends in Cuba; most of them have family and friends living there, despite also having family and friends who have migrated to the United States. Again, the factor of birthplace does not matter; both younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba or the United States have friends and relatives in Cuba. This is the case because their family or friends either do not want to migrate to another country, or because they were never able to leave Cuba because of financial or political reasons. Gabriel states the following:

“[...] My whole family from my dad and my mom’s side, apart from the uncle, lives in Cuba. As I said, it’s a sacrifice [...].”

That is why younger Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba sometimes return to Cuba; to see their family and friends. This makes them per definition transnational. We would like to argue that the younger Cuban-Americans who were born in the United States are in that sense

not transnational, because they often have never been in Cuba and because they do not have their own memories of Cuba like the older generation.

Similarly to the older generation, the younger Cuban-Americans had to give up their Cuban citizenship. The difference is that their connection with the contemporary Cuba, their homeland, is still very much alive. Christian explained that his migration process was a very long and emotionally draining process:

“[...] Once the government knows that you are leaving and not intend to come back, they make the process long on purpose. [...]. They make the process very painful, emotionally, because they strip you away, legally speaking, of your homeland. When we were at the airport, about to take the plane to the U.S., they took our identity cards and they ripped them apart, meaning that you are no longer a Cuban, you’re leaving this place.”

All our informants, also Christian, try to stay in touch with their family and friends living in Cuba, but that is difficult because of Cuba’s isolation:

“The approach that has been in place in Cuba, for many years since the Revolution in 1959, has been a very closed approach, oppressive [...]. It has led to isolation, families being broken apart, economic decline.”

However, Christian also claims that the internet is becoming more and more accessible for Cubans in Cuba, which makes it easier to connect with Cubans on the island, thereby making it transnational.

When asking the younger Cuban-Americans if they would ever want to go back to Cuba, the responses were divided. Those who were born in the United States often have never been in Cuba yet, but do want to go there to see where their roots come from; to find out about their Cuban heritage. The younger Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba visit Cuba regularly for a short period of time, mainly to see their family and friends. Most of them do want to go back more often, though only to visit; they do not want to live there because, in their eyes, possibilities and opportunities are less available in Cuba. They are sad about how things are in Cuba; the isolation of Cuba has led Felipe, and others, to believe that Cuba is stuck in its own bubble and is not able to progress:

“Cuba is in a little time capsule, nothing changes.”

### *Miami as a Cuban and Hispanic city?*

The United States and Miami are at this point, for all Cuban-Americans, more important than Cuba. The United States is important because they feel that this is their home country now. Most of the older Cuban-Americans came here when they were kids or teenagers and have lived in the United States for a long time. They enjoyed their high schools here, went to college, worked and lived here for most of their lives and generally feel that they have had a pleasant life after they left Cuba; they feel that they have to thank the United States for how their lives turned out to be. Miami is even more important to them. Most of the older Cuban-Americans have lived in more places than Miami after they arrived in the United States, but they all came back to Miami because of their heritage; their Cubanity connects them to Miami. Most of the older generation saw Miami growing from a small city to the biggest city in Florida. They feel that they, the Cuban community, have contributed to this. It grew and became a city for more and more Cuban migrants. This is why a lot of older Cuban-Americans consider Miami more as their home than the United States. As will explained later in this chapter, this is also the case for younger Cuban-Americans. Manuela explains why she and many other Cubans are so connected to Miami:

“It is because I have been to other places in America as well. It is very different, it is a country within a country. Like most of my friends and family are here, so I may be more a Miamian than an American.”

The younger Cuban-Americans living in Miami were either born in the United States or migrated to the United States recently. Some of them migrated as children, who therefore had no say in them migrating to the United States, and some of them migrated as young adults, who made this decision themselves. The ones who migrated to Miami with their parents were sad at first because they had their friends and family there, but in hindsight they were happy that their parents made this decision. Gabriel describes it as follows:

“I’m really thankful to them, because of the sacrifice they’ve gone through. Leaving the whole family, leaving them behind... just for me, to strive to succeed in a new country. That’s incredible.”

This is also the case for younger Cuban-Americans who were born in the United States; they are happy to be living in the United States instead of in Cuba. The ones who were old enough

to make this decision themselves mainly migrated to the United States for better opportunities, such as Eduardo:

“I just came to have a better opportunity in life outside Cuba, [...] there are more opportunities here, also there is a higher level of life than in Cuba.”

Thus, all younger Cuban-Americans are happy to be living in the United States. This is related to the city of Miami. Since Miami has a large concentration of citizens with a Cuban descent, it makes sense for the more recent Cuban migrants to migrate to Miami, because they are able to relate and connect with other Cubans, Cuba and Cuban traditions. Most younger Cuban-Americans, both those born in the United States and those born in Cuba, admit that they feel comfortable in Miami because of this; they mostly associate Cubans with friendliness and solidarity. For the younger Cuban-Americans born in Miami, Miami is also important because it was their place of birth, which mostly comes with an extra emotional connection. The younger people we spoke to see Miami as a special city, since it is perceived as an atypical American city because of its cultural diversity. They perceive that the older generation integrated well, which made Miami a mix of Hispanic traditions in an American way. Miami is a blend of mostly Hispanic communities, and not just the Cuban community; all these communities speak the Spanish language which makes Miami primarily a Spanish-speaking city. This was also a reason for the parents of the younger Cuban-Americans to come here, since they sometimes do not speak English.

It is possible for the older Cuban-Americans to have a connection with Miami because they feel that certain areas in Miami are closest to what Cuba would have been if there never was a Revolution. Catalina argued that Miami is very similar to ‘her’ Cuba:

“Here in Miami you find more Cubanity, more things that are real Cuban than in the Island.”

Catalina is one of the few people from her generation who actually went back. She did not recognise the Cuba from her past and stated that Miami is the closest that comes to that Cuba.

The older Cuban-Americans have different life stories, but they have clear similarities in their migration history. Most of them came to Miami during or right before the Revolution, either as a kid or as a young adult. Right after migrating the majority moved to a different



place for a short period of time, but came back to Miami a few years later to stay there. Because of the many Cubans coming to Miami the city inherited the Cuban culture as well.

It became clear from day to day activities that Cuba, and everything related to Cuba, is still important for all Cuban-Americans in Miami. This is displayed in aspects like food and music. Cuban influences are present in every area of Miami, and people with a Cuban descent are scattered over the entire city. Especially in the Cuban districts of Little Havana and Hialeah the influences are ever-present. Live traditional Cuban music is played in a lot of Cuban bars and restaurants, and you can buy Cuban sandwiches on every corner. At the public community centers, where the elderly usually come together to socialise and do exercises, mainly Cubans are present; Cubanity is clearly there.

It is 09:40 AM and it is a turning out to be a busy day in the community center. The class had to start at around 9:30 AM, but people are still coming in, and others are vividly talking to each other. There are approximately 30 people present, but at least ten more have to arrive. We realise that it can take a while before everyone is inside, found a seat, and is done talking, so we make a decision to walk around and greet different people. There are mainly women present, only two men showed up so far. “They don’t realise how much fun this is, they sit at home all day and are boring”, one of the ladies jokes. Apart from the instructor, everybody is at least 70 years old. Most people are from a Cuban descent and have come to the U.S. at a young age. There are also a few people who are from other Hispanic countries. It is striking that Spanish is the main language spoken here, but that the Cuban-Americans also speak English very well. The curious thing is that some of the ladies who did not come from Cuba, have much more problems with the English language. As we are having a pleasant conversation with one of the ladies about how her day is going, our minds wander off to something that is happening on the other side of the room. We hear a distinctive but beautiful sound behind us. A beautiful melodious tune; Spanish sentences sung like a bird very close to us. As we turn around we see two ladies of at least 75 years old, passionately singing without anyone else paying attention to it. Even though we have never heard this song before, and though we do not speak Spanish, we feel a connection to this song; we feel that we know what this song is. The song ends, and we start applauding. Sem asks what they were singing, and she replies: “Well, this is the Cuban anthem my dear.”

As stated before, the city of Miami is a mix of Latin-American traditions in an American way. The cultural diversity in Miami, consisting mostly of Latin-American communities, has one overarching element: the Spanish language. Therefore the Spanish language is omnipresent in Miami. This characteristic of Miami was often the reason for the parents of the younger Cuban-Americans to migrate to the city, since they often did not speak English. The various Latin-American communities interact with each other, become friends and empathise. Andrea has a lot of Latin-American friends:

“Yeah, I mean, my friends are from all over, I mean I have friends that are Colombian, [...] actually a lot of people from Venezuela are coming here now. So we do have a lot of Venezuelan friends, because where I live is like a neighbourhood where a lot of Venezuelan friends are migrating to. I have a lot of Puerto Rican friends too. Because of the hurricane a lot of people from Puerto Rico are migrating to here as well. So yeah I have friends from all different... all over the Caribbean.”

It should be noted that the Spanish language is omnipresent in Miami. Due to the fact that not all new arrivals speak English very well there is a mix of English and Spanish present in Miami. The Miamian population has a word for this mix; Spanglish.

The younger generation stresses that not all the older Cuban-Americans can speak English, but this is contradicting with our findings. For the older generation in this research it is clear that, because they left Cuba at an early age, they had to adapt to the English language. In the 1960s, the population of Miami was still mainly English oriented, and the migrants coming in at that time had to learn the language in order to integrate properly. All of them are bilingual, which is a great contrast to the newly arrived Cubans. Those people do not feel the necessity to speak the English language, because Spanish is at this point so integrated into Miami.

# Chapter 4: A Reflection of Identity in the form of Politics of Belonging



## **Chapter 4: A Reflection of Identity in the form of Politics of Belonging**

This section will address the politics of belonging for Cuban-Americans in Miami by looking at five topics: the importance of their citizenship, intergenerational influences, influence of news and media, political belonging, activity in politics and Cuban-Americans in the contemporary political situation in the United States. In our theoretical framework the concept of politics of belonging, as described by Nencel (2011), was discussed, which entails the imaginary boundary line of rightfully belonging to a community. This concept is closely related to and goes a step further than belonging which was already mentioned in the previous chapter of this empirical framework. This chapter of the empirical framework will look at these imaginary boundary lines from a generational and transnational Cuban-American perspective and how this transcends to contemporary national politics.

### ***Citizenship***

It is important to realise that the older Cuban-Americans do not have the Cuban citizenship anymore. Their citizenship was taken away from them the moment they set foot on American soil. At this point, no one from the older population seems to care that they lost their Cuban citizenship, mainly because they feel very American. Their American citizenship is, on the contrary to their feelings about the Cuban citizenship, very important to them. They often stress that they feel very American and that they feel more connected to the United States than to Cuba. The importance of their American citizenship is also expressed by making comparisons to Cuba. Their feelings of belonging to the United States and their stressing of the importance of their citizenship makes this very political. The main reason why they stress that they do not really belong to Cuba but to the United States, is the difference in terms of freedom. Isabel, a 1.5 generation 67-year-old Cuban-American, is an active member of the Democratic party who fled for the Castro government when she was just a child. She states this about freedom in Cuba:

“There’s no freedom of press [...] and morale. They say that you can go to university, to get a degree. But if you’re not part of them then you cannot get it. You cannot get anywhere.”

As could be read in the previous chapter, there is a dichotomy within the importance of Cuba for the older Cuban-Americans. On the one side it is not important for them because the

Cuba of their past does not exist anymore, but on the other hand it is very important for them because they still have the images of their past. This is also important in the context of their citizenship, as Isabel also makes clear that the Cuban culture she knew is no longer there:

“Talking about culture, they have deteriorated the culture too. The culture we knew when we left, does no longer exist, that’s just something they have come up with, and through the years it has continued to evolve, caged. It’s different.”

They do not feel connected to the contemporary Cuba, so they also do not mind that they do not have the Cuban citizenship anymore. They, as could also be read in the previous chapter, feel more American than Cuban. They are happy that they feel safe in the United States and because they have free access to information. Furthermore, they brought many cultural aspects of ‘their’ Cuba to the United States, especially to Miami.

When looking at the citizenship for the younger Cuban-Americans, the younger Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba really value their Cuban citizenship. This is probably due to the fact that those who migrated to Miami recently still identify as fully Cuban. Legally speaking the situation is tricky, since you cannot have both the American and the Cuban citizenship; you automatically have to become an American citizen when you are living in the United States. However, since 2013 new arrivals get to keep their Cuban citizenship if they return to Cuba at least once every two years, which means they are allowed to have a dual citizenship; not everyone is aware of this. The younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba realise that they will be spending the rest of their lives in the United States, and therefore did not mind getting the American citizenship. However, the importance of their Cuban citizenship should not be underestimated; Gabriel, who is planning on getting the American citizenship soon, still prioritises his Cuban citizenship over the American citizenship:

“I wouldn’t trade my Cuban passport or citizenship for an American one. Obviously when I become a US citizen I eventually cannot be a Cuban citizen. But either way, I’m still gonna have my passport, so I’m Cuban. I would never... in the aspects of would you rather be born in the United States than in Cuba? No. I’m proud, I’m proud on what my family has done, and I reflect on that from time to time.”

Most Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba and made the decision to migrate to the United States, such as Eduardo, felt similar; they feel that their future is in the United States and they are not planning on returning to Cuba anytime soon:

“It [the Cuban citizenship] is not something that I’m interested in because I don’t see myself going back to Cuba, because my career is here.”

The fact that their Cuban citizenship was taken away from them as soon as they became an American citizen did not influence their decision to migrate. In other words, they prioritised moving to the United States above their Cuban citizenship. This does, however, not mean that Cuba is not important to them anymore. To Eduardo it is still very important:

“It is very important because I feel a very strong connection to my home country. It’s the country that like raised me.”

Also the younger Cuban-Americans who were born in the United States are aware of their Cuban descent, which means a lot to them. The fact that they often still have family and friends living in Cuba contributes to this; they regularly go back to Cuba to visit them.

The younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States have had the American citizenship since the day they were born. They consider this citizenship as something which is concerned with the legal aspect rather than the emotional aspect; it is perceived as something you just have. They do not need the American citizenship to feel American, but they need it to be in the United States legally. The legal aspect is very important to all younger Cuban-Americans, both those born in the United States and those born in Cuba; they feel that migration, and consequently acquiring the citizenship, should take place according to the law.

### ***Intergenerational differences and influences***

When looking at the intergenerational differences and influences it is important to realise that, despite having ethnic similarities, the different generations of Cuban-Americans have many differences. These differences were, and are, shaped mainly due to the perceptions of the different generations about each other.

Most of the older immigrants feel that a lot of Cuban-Americans are coming to the United States to save money and send it back to Cuba to invest. By doing this, they are inherently still helping the Cuban government, because a lot of that money ends up in the

hands of the authorities, thereby instating the power of the government. Therefore the older Cuban-Americans feel that the new immigrants do not have the same mentality they had, and they perceive the new arrivals as being less connected to the United States. Manuela states the following about the new immigrants:

“In the way they act, it doesn't have to be their beliefs. I don't know [...] most of them... like the work ethic from the first generation. they have this mentality that they, they call it in Cuban resolver, it's like resolute in English. They hustle... They are not really working, they like to hustle more than work. They have a lot of time on their hands, they don't like to work it doesn't really matter you know. I feel that about the new Cubans.”

This is the main thought from the older Cuban-Americans about the new Cubans in the United States. Some, however, think that the new Cuban-Americans have a lot more to offer and have every right to be here. When they compare them to their own generation they notice that the people coming in now actually want to be in the United States, while some of their generation are still feeling that they are in exile and that they will return to Cuba someday. Diego, an 80-year-old first generation Cuban-American, was a former politician and is one of the few who is actually positive about the new Cuban-Americans:

“It is very interesting, because they are very good people, hard workers. And they come here, they don't have an interest in going back to Cuba to live there. Not like some of the older generation that are still wanting to go back to live even after 50 – 60 years.”

Another important factor which helps understand the difficult relationship between the older and younger Cuban-Americans has to do with religion. Some older Cuban-Americans, not all, do not feel very connected to the newer Cuban immigrants coming in because they feel that they lack a certain moral compass. They blame this to the lack of religion. Manuela, who is very religious herself, states the following:

“I cannot identify with 99 percent of the people that's going now, they are very different...maybe it's resurrecting a little bit [in Cuba] but most of them don't have any religion because there was no religion like Catholicism or Judaism in Cuba, the way they speak, and their behaviour is different, they are not the same as we are.”

What is curious about this answer is the distance Manuela is trying to sketch between the new and old arrivals with the word 'we'. The Cuban-American community can clearly not be seen as a homogenous group, even though they all have a migration background.

So, the older generation argues that the younger Cuban-Americans have different values due to their lack of religion. The old arrivals also claim that there is another main reason for the differences between the groups. They stress that they came to the United States for a different ideological reason than the newer immigrants. For the older generation there is a general feeling that, when they came in the 50s and 60s, they came because of political reasons. They were scared of the Revolution, Castro and what was going to happen to Cuba, whereas they feel that the new arrivals are coming here just for economic reasons. Evita, who is an outspoken Democrat with pro-immigration ideas, stated this about the new Cuban-Americans:

“Right now, people of Cuba are not leaving the country for any political reasons. You’re not in exile when you can go back to your country a year and a day after and invest.”

Younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba admit that they did not come to the United States for political reasons, but for better opportunities and career prospects. However, they feel that they deserve a chance, just as the older Cuban-Americans had when they migrated to the United States.

Apart from the generational differences, the generations influence each other as well; on a cultural level as well as on a political level.

‘Owning a gun keeps you and your family safe’. The discussion about owning guns is a hot topic in the family, and the tensions are running high. Two of the family members clearly have opposing standpoints. “It does not keep you safe, it is the main reason for all the deaths and that people feel unsafe.” One of the male family members owns a gun, and argues that it is his right, and everyone’s right, to have one, thereby constantly referring to the second amendment. “Even if you are admitted to have a gun it makes no sense to have a full-automatic weapon, it’s not that you are carrying that with you anyway”, the other brother responds. It is clear that the perspectives of the two brothers are not going to change. Some family members start listening to the discussion, though they are not engaging.



However, they are approving some arguments by nodding, thereby choosing a side.

The fact that most family members did not actively engage in the discussion, but did listen to the discussion about guns, sometimes agreeing with either side, indicates that these family members do influence each other. Family also has a lot of influence because family is perceived as important. We have spoken to several Cuban-Americans who told us that their younger family members lived close by, sometimes even in the same street, or that they even lived together in the same house, which is not uncommon for Cuban families. Christian states the following:

“One thing you would know about Cubans [is that] we’re family oriented, we’re very attached to family.”

Some older Cuban-Americans stress that their Cubanity is not that important anymore, and they also state that their children do not feel Cuban either; they consider themselves almost completely American. This is contradictory to some younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States we spoke to; they sometimes feel very Cuban, and state that their parents feel Cuban as well. This indicates that the different generations have an influence on each other.

The older generation claims that many of their family members influence their political preferences, just like their friends. Coco surrounds herself with friends who have the same political ideas:

“The problem is that the people in my environment... my environment is with people that think the way I think.”

Many friends of the older Cuban-Americans also have a Cuban background, and they speak a lot about Cuba and what is happening in Cuba, so they influence each other as well.

Despite the fact that family and friends are so important, and contrary to the beliefs of the older generation, younger Cuban-Americans tend to have their own opinions and perspectives on certain matters, such as political issues and policies. For example, it was mentioned earlier that Gabriel was planning on getting the American citizenship, but this decision is opposed by his parents, who also do not have the American citizenship yet:

“My parents have a strong... they have strong opinions on Cuba. [...] They have their parents over there. They have different family members and friends that they left over there. They see the citizenship as a way to get even further away from them. And I tried to explain it to them, but what can I do, you know, they’re my parents. I accept it, I’m like, if you don’t want to accept it, that’s fine, but I will.”

Felipe states that politics has torn apart his family; several relatives of his stayed in Cuba because they sympathised for the communist regime, whereas the rest of his family left Cuba because of the communist regime. He told us that his relatives were not talking to each other anymore. The same division is also present within his nuclear family; Felipe himself hates Trump, whereas his parents voted for Trump:

“Politics brought fights and separation into our family. Feuds. People not talking to each other. It’s been over four decades, but they’re still not talking because of politics. [...] I’ve had fights with my father because he voted for Trump. I’ve come to realise it doesn’t change much, the only thing it creates is uneasiness, it makes you uncomfortable.”

This shows that the younger Cuban-Americans have their own opinions and perspectives, and do not always agree with the opinions and perspectives of their family and friends.

### ***Political influence of news and media***

The informants are not only influenced by family and friends, but also by other factors, such as different news sources. Most older Cuban-Americans listen to and watch different media sources. Some of the them watch and listen to certain sources because they have similar political views. In this way they try to identify with and through all the news that they see. Especially the older people who follow more right-wing sources tend to have strong and fixed political opinions. While they do not state it directly, we would like to argue that this helps them in justifying their own belonging. They are often harsh on the new arrivals and state that they, ‘the older generation’, did more to deserve their belonging.

Others, however, try to have a more balanced and holistic view when it comes to news sources. People claim that they do this due to the ‘fake news’ of the last elections and because all media sources have very biased views. Rosita states that she gets most of her information from:

“CNN, and the Miami Herald. Well also a little bit of fox news, to know what they are thinking and to see both sides. But mainly CNN.”

The news is mostly in English, even though their daily conversations are often in Spanish. This is mainly because older Cuban-Americans are interested mostly in what is happening in and with the United States, and the American news sources are covering that in the most elaborate way. However, sometimes do they get news in Spanish as well, especially to get some more information about Cuba. Coco, for example, is also curious about what is happening in Cuba:

“No, I listen to American and I listen to Cuban. Especially I listen to a radio channel; it’s called La Bolarosa and the owner is very, very truthful. And he is one of the main newspaper men and is very, very knowledgeable, and he will not tell you something because he wants to say it, no. He would say things that are fact [slaps on table] related. “

Younger Cuban-Americans try to go both ways; they often try to get news from both English and Spanish sources to get the most complete information. Their parents play an important role in this bilingual situation. This is because their parents often decide what they watch on the television. Therefore, since most of their parents know the Spanish language better than the English language, the programs they watch on the television are in Spanish. This shows that there is also an indirect connection with the influence by family on the identity of younger Cuban-Americans. Then, when younger Cuban-Americans are able to decide for themselves what they want to watch, they watch English sources to grasp another perspective. The sources they use are mainly social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, and not so much television programs. When going online, they realise that there are far more English news sources than Spanish news sources, which makes it easier for them to watch those in English. As will become clear later in this section, younger Cuban-Americans generally are not really politically active. They do not specifically search for topics related to politics; they tend to stay away from those. Therefore they do not really politicise their belonging through the use of media.

### *Political belonging*

Political belonging entails if Cuban-Americans as a group feel that they deserve more on a political level than other migrants, especially other Hispanic groups in Miami. Among the older Cuban-Americans the general feeling is that this is not the case. They know that they have had more rights than other migration groups for a very long time. The immigration policies when they came to the United States were a lot less strict than for other immigrants; they had certain privileges. The applications for an American passport were different and it was easier for them to obtain a passport. The older generation also feels that when they came to the United States they tried to follow the same principles as Americans. Right now they are American citizens and feel that they deserve just as much as any other American because of their perception that they have had a positive contribution to the American society. They do not feel that they deserve more rights because of their Cuban background. They often feel more connected to the United States than to Cuba or to the general Hispanic population. When looking at the transnational aspect, we would like to argue that not going back to Cuba is also a form of politics of belonging. Most of the older Cuban-Americans have never gone back to Cuba after they left, which confirms that they feel that they are Americanised and feel more connected to the United States than to Cuba; thus reinforcing their belonging to the United States. Also, by going back to Cuba, they perceive that they support the Cuban regime in terms of money, which they want to prevent at all costs.

The situation is different for the younger Cuban-Americans; they are more open towards reconciliation. The younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States have often never been to Cuba because the communist regime is still in power, but they want to go there at some point to see where their roots come from, whereas the younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba want to return at least a few times each year to see their family and friends who still live there. This shows that they cannot politicise their belonging in the same way as the older Cuban-Americans, but they do believe that they belong in the United States for different reasons.

Younger Cuban-Americans perceive that they belong to the Cuban population, hence they identified as such, as well as to the Hispanic population sometimes. The following is stated by Andrea:

“I mean we’re not Mexican you know, but still, you know, it’s not something that affects like one Hispanic nationality, but it affects them all. Because you know, they built the

wall, or whatever, to keep the Mexicans out. But it affects all deportation policies, like the wet-foot dry-foot policy that affects a lot of Cubans, I think they're afraid.”

So younger Cuban-Americans sometimes perceive themselves as similar to other Hispanics because they have gone through similar experiences, such as migrating to the United States for those who were born in Cuba, and because they are treated as Hispanics by others, including the older Cuban-Americans; having a Cuban background does not make a difference anymore. The concept of interpellation is applicable to this situation; they construct their own identity as Hispanics due to the fact that the older Cuban-Americans categorise the recently migrated younger Cuban-Americans within one homogeneous Hispanic immigrant group instead of just a Cuban immigrant group. Younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States feel that they belong in the United States because most of them have lived there since the day they were born. The younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba perceive that they also belong in the United States, and especially in Miami since it has a large concentration of people with a Cuban descent, and because it offers them opportunities they feel they are entitled to, mainly because the older Cuban-Americans were also given those opportunities. These opportunities are not available in Cuba. Therefore some of them blame the older Cuban-Americans for categorising them as regular immigrants and not giving them a chance to prove themselves.

When asking if Cubans have a different position from other Hispanic migrants, most of the younger Cuban-Americans stated that this is indeed the case, but they also referred to the fact that this was more so in the past, and not anymore. The situation for Cubans changed over the last decades; at first it was very easy to go to the United States, but because of the strict regulations and the reversal of the wet-foot dry-foot policy it has become much harder for Cubans to migrate to the United States. However, Hector and Eduardo argue that Cubans still have certain privileges which other migrants do not have, such as automated visas and citizenship, which are easier to get for Cubans than other Hispanics. While they both agree that other Hispanics have a legitimate claim there, they also both think it was fair since Cuba had a really difficult past. Felipe is very understanding:

“We have a lot of freebies, perks, and other cultures resent us for that, and rightfully so, I don't blame them.”

The older Cuban-Americans are satisfied by the fact that a lot of policies towards Cuban immigrants have gotten stricter over the years. Not so much because they think that the new Cubans coming in are different, but they generally feel that the new immigrants should all be treated the same way. Every immigrant should work hard and do their best to adapt to the United States, such as learning the English language. They are harsh on every immigrant who comes to the United States if they do not follow these certain principles, and they also feel that the recent Cuban-American arrivals are not following these principles. Pablo, a 1.5 generation 59-year-old Cuban-American, is someone who came to Miami after the Revolution when he was a child. He is the owner of a successful Cuban clothing chain and is a big fan of Trump. He politicised the idea about these principles in his store:

“I must say, I like to hire Cubans to work for me, they know about the product that I’m selling. But I fire someone just as easy, I want the right person on the right spot.”

It is clear that the older generation usually does not care about people being Cuban, Mexican or from any other country as long as you follow their principles and values. They categorise all new immigrants as one group, this includes the new Cuban-Americans. This once again shows that they politicise their own belonging by making a comparison with other immigrants. Catalina verbalises this clearly:

“They are not doing what we used to do, come here, work, try to comply with all the laws, and try to comply as much as possible the country needed us to be. Because we were guests in the country.”

Younger Cuban-Americans, including Christian, acknowledge the fact that most of the Cubans who migrate to the United States nowadays do so because of economic reasons:

“They come because they wanna have money and live better, and they’re not so concerned about the political aspect.”

This was not the case a few decades ago; the Cubans who migrated then mainly did so because of bad living conditions and political oppression. Christian states that this made earlier generations of Cuban migrants different from other Hispanic migrants since the earlier Hispanic migrants did not experience the same political oppression in their home countries as

Cubans did. This is, however, not the case, since most Latin-American states have experienced, or are still experiencing, political oppression. This is why most younger Cuban-Americans are able to relate to other Hispanics and felt connected. Andrea explains it as follows:

“Miami is a huge melting pot of different identities and cultures, and I think that, you know it helps you it gives you a broad perspective, and it makes you more sympathetic to other people, because you can relate you know what I mean.”

However, Cubans and other Hispanics do not necessarily get along well at all times. Some younger Cuban-Americans realise that some Hispanics hold a grudge against the Cubans because of their privileges. Hector describes it as follows:

“Well yeah, we’re Latinos, I’m not sure how to explain this, but the Cubans are a group and the rest of the Latin American people are. And why? Well because of historical reasons we have some prerogatives, some privilege in terms of immigration. [...] They feel that it’s unfair. And well that creates huge differences between Cubans and the rest of the Latin American people.”

This grudge held against Cubans is only one part of the division. The other part of the division is caused by the Cuban-American community, especially the older ones according to the younger Cuban-Americans, resulting from their perception that they founded Miami. Hector argues that Cubans tend to exclude others because of this:

“We Cubans have related with the fact that we’re the true Miami founders, or that Miami belongs to us, and that is part of the problem you know. Sometimes we are not as inclusive as we think that we are.”

### ***Political affiliation and activity***

The importance of being active in politics was perceived differently. Some older Cuban-Americans were or are very involved in politics, whereas others claim that they are not very involved in politics, or that they have not been active for a long time. However, even when people claim that they are not involved in politics, they still are in a way. Most of the older Cuban-Americans have strong political opinions and speak about this with other people.

Coco, for example, claims that she is not involved in politics, but she has very strong conservative ideas and does not shun away for speaking out about political ideas:

“Well if I have a chance to talk to someone, like, I went to a sewing class for a very long time... And if someone comes in that has recently arrived in the U.S. and tells me something. If I can make them aware of what they are saying is wrong I would tell them because as I told you before, many come in because of economic reasons.”

Some older Cuban-Americans have actually been very politically active in their lives. Diego, for example, has had a long political history. He has even run for mayor of Miami and was involved in several different political campaigns. What was striking was that he was not part of one of the two major parties per se. He has his own ideas about politics and his own moral values that he follows closely. He votes, or better said helps, the one that he sees more fit in politics at that given time, but he clearly hails the importance of politics and being active and up-to-date with politics. Within this generation it is, however, rare to find someone who is not feeling affiliated with a certain party. Evita is, for example, an outspoken Democrat and is also one of the people who has been very active during her life. She has helped with all kind of different campaigns including the last Obama campaign. Furthermore, she has been to all kinds of different rallies in her life. During our time in Miami she took us to an anti-gun rally. The anti-gun rally was called the March for our Lives and it was sparked because of a school shooting close to Miami a few weeks before. The rally was held simultaneously at a lot of places, including cities outside of the United States. What is also noticeable is that the rally was sparked by the surviving young students.

It is a nice and sunny day as we arrive on the outstretched field. The protest is not starting for at least an hour, but the field is already getting more crowded. A lot of people are wearing the same outfit; a blue t-shirt with a white font that showed the line ‘March for our Lives’. “You can sign the petition over here” a lady yells, sitting behind a desk. The petition is to have stricter regulations on the buying of guns in the United States. At another stand someone is handing out posters with different supportive lines on it. “Please take a poster, we’re going to show everybody that we are serious about this cause. We are going to make a difference.” An exciting tension is building as more and more people are arriving. At the beginning of the field there is a big stage on which a few people are doing



the last checks. We are standing on the field with two of our informants and a few of their family members. This is not the first time that they went to a protest march. Evita has been very politically involved in her life and her friend Felicia has been influenced by her. “Evita asked me to help her with going from door-to-door to ask people to vote for Obama in 2012. Ever since we’ve been involved in all kind of political causes.” As the first person gets on stage we are amazed by the noise all the people are producing. At least a thousand people have come together. What is interesting is that the people who have come together are from all age classes. The main topic is clearly the changing of gun laws and regulation, and people with all kinds of backgrounds have come to show their support. Of course, someone like Evita, who is outspoken about guns, has a clear opinion: “I think that in this country freedom has gotten out of hand. I’m not saying that you should take the freedom away from people, but that your freedom cannot interfere with my freedom, guns interfere with my freedom...There is not a reason why people should have assault weapons. We’re not trying to take the second amendment away, they always revolve it around that, that we would try to take the second amendment from them. That’s not it.” What is curious is that one of the family members who is with them owns guns, but thinks that the laws must change as well. “I have guns and I think that the good people in the U.S. should have the freedom to buy guns but it’s too easy to get them right now, we need to change our policies and protect our kids.”

Other older Cuban-Americans were involved in politics in other ways. Manuela was for example very involved in a progressive Cuban-American arts movement. They organised galleries for Cuban painters after the revolution to show their Cuban arts in the United States and Manuela also helped in funding a Cuban-American museum. During the time that Manuela did all this, these progressive ideas were not accepted by a lot of the Cuban-Americans. Manuela was called a supporter of communism, and the galleries endured several attacks from radical anti-Castro Cuban-Americans.

The younger Cuban-Americans do not really care about politics, and so they are not really politically active; this is why a lot of them did not vote during the presidential elections of 2016. This will be described more into detail in the next section of this empirical framework. However, most of the younger Cuban-Americans do have strong opinions on the United States politics, its policies towards Cuba and on Cuba and its government. They are

especially concerned with the situation for the Cuban people. As became clear before, younger Cuban-Americans want the best situation for the Cuban people because they still feel very connected to them. According to them, the communist regime is to blame for the situation in Cuba, which is in their eyes hopeless; younger Cuban-Americans feel that the Cuban government has isolated Cuba from the rest of the world and deliberately hinders Cuba from progressing. This feeling of hopelessness contributed to a lot of younger Cuban-Americans not being active in politics, since they feel that they would not be able to make a difference. This feeling is probably more present among the younger Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba. Eduardo and Hector, two younger Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba, agree with each other by saying that their generation in Cuba was raised as apolitical:

“We have been raised as apolitical beings. We have been raised in the indifference towards politics. Why? Because in the end, during our earlier years, we understood, or at least we believed that we couldn’t make the difference, we... we were born, and the Revolution was something that was already there, and it was something that theoretically was to be there forever. So for us, as for many of the people in our generation, we just decide to leave the country and we’ll let them be. Let them be, so we don’t have a real political conscious.”

Both of them did not vote during the last presidential elections. However, they mention that in future elections they want to be more politically engaged, as they feel that they could engage in a more constructive dialogue with the older generations through politics. Younger Cuban-Americans were really divided in terms of voting behaviour during the last elections. This will be described more into detail in the next section of our thesis.

A reason why the older immigrants have stronger opinions about politics than the younger Cuban-Americans is because of their migration history. All the older Cubans left Cuba because they were afraid of communism and the Castros. They all have different stories, but all have seen terrible things that happened in those days. The general idea from this population is that communism, and everything close to communism, is bad. Diego has even fought in Cuba against the Castros in the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion. He briefly told us his version of the invasion:

“A military group was created by the United States government and started receiving military training in Guatemala. And a year later It came to be known as the bay of pigs

invasion of Cuba. ... And the rest of the invasion became history. The invasion failed and 1300 of us became prisoners in Cuba when we lost and some of us escaped during the invasion and came back to Miami.”

One could imagine that their voting behaviour would be completely opposite from communism and is very far to the right, and in the American case, Republican. Most older Cuban-Americans hold John F. Kennedy responsible for the failed mission, and for many Cuban-Americans who vote for the Republicans this is also the main reason for their political preference. Most of the older Cuban-Americans still fit this description, but a division is also getting more clear. As is the case with Diego; after the failed invasion he went back to Miami to make a political career. One could expect that his political preference would be similar to most older Cuban-Americans; Republican. Nevertheless, when Diego returned to the United States he could dissociate his opinions from the failed mission:

“I’m a registered member for the Democratic party.”

In terms of preferences for a certain system, all younger Cuban-Americans tend to be very negative towards communism. This is the case for both younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States and those born in Cuba; younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba have experienced the situation in Cuba and can compare it to the situation they are in now in the United States, whereas younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States compare the situation they grew up in with everything they hear about Cuba from their family members and the news. Younger Cuban-Americans often blame the communist regime in Cuba for the situation the state is in, and they hope that communism will disappear from Cuba as soon as possible, also because this system took away capitalism. Gabriel states the following:

“My opinion on the communist system over there... I would say that it would definitely have to change. It’s not going to be easy, since the country has been in that state for quite some years now. Respectively I would say that it has to change, because there is no future for the people living there [...]. Communism is not a stable economy, it’s really not. And it definitely has to change, but it won’t change easily, it’s a long process.”

This one-party communist system in Cuba influenced the way younger Cuban-Americans were involved in politics. As was stated before, a lot of younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba were raised as apolitical since they were only allowed to vote for one party, and thus did

not have any influence on the political situation. But also younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States were influenced by this, for example through storytelling about the migration history by family members. Andrea argues that, despite being born in the United States, she became less democratic and had less faith in politics because of the stories she heard about the one-party system in Cuba. Gabriel is more positive about the capitalist system in the United States:

“And hopefully Cuba gets better, if not similar to the United States, as to like the system how it works, capitalism, or whatever it is, it’s just that it works.”

Christian is also not positive about the communist system in Cuba, but he is not too fond of the capitalist system in the United States either:

“It’s a very individualist approach to life, which has become in recent years sort of a challenge for the American society. Everything is about me, me, me, me, me, by myself, I can do everything by myself.”

Especially the individualistic traits of the American society is something which the younger Cuban-Americans notice. Three of the younger people we spoke to mentioned the example of sugar:

“[...] If you’re missing some sugar, what do you do here? You go to the supermarket and get some sugar. Over there [in Cuba] you just go to your neighbour, and ask ‘Hey do you have some sugar?’, and, yeah, that’s it. You don’t have to be like super friends with your neighbours, but there is that sense of family. [...] Solidarity. You don’t have that here.

These perspectives were shaped by their migration history; a lot of younger Cuban-Americans who migrated from Cuba to the United States at a young age because their parents wanted to migrate, and not because they made this decision themselves, admit that they began to see Cuba differently as soon as they were living in the United States, mainly in the form of opportunities and future prospects. Gabriel describes it as follows:

“I would say that I see Cuba differently in the form of how I used to see it when I lived there. When I lived in Cuba, I had no idea what the United States was like. I had no idea that the future was in my hands, or that I can be whatever I want to be as long as I go for it. That perspective, I didn’t have that in Cuba. An eight-year-old boy thinking that this is my country, this is where I live, this is the best thing ever. But when you have the experience of travelling from Cuba to the United States, it changed my whole life. It changed that perspective of knowing that there’s much out there.”

### *Cubans in Trumpland*

If we look at the last elections and why they voted for a particular party, we could conclude that most older Cuban-Americans are indeed still very conservative, and even the thought of the political climate in the United States moving slightly to the left makes them cringe. Coco states the following about the former government:

“I don’t like Obama at all, at all, at all! He was a leftist and he would favour the leftists against the conservatives.”

However, we would like to argue that Trump is not seen by most of the older population as a regular Republican. Some people who highly value the Republican values do not like Trump as a person, but nevertheless, they did vote for him. The main reason for them voting for Trump was because they liked his ideas about his policies towards new immigrants. We would like to argue that this is part of their politics of belonging as well. They once again compare themselves with new immigrants; the older Cuban-Americans perceive they belong in the United States, whereas the new arrivals deserve this less. Some also voted for Trump because he was part of the Republican party. It is, however, important to realise that a lot of people are doubting if they made the right decision. It is also important to realise that Hillary Clinton is not liked either. They feel that Hillary Clinton should not have stayed with Bill Clinton after everything he did; they feel that she stayed with him for her political career. However, as stated before, some are Democrats and have voted for Hillary as well. They also did not feel that Hillary was the right candidate, but they particularly did not like Trump:

“It was a shock to see that we had elected somebody like Trump in this country. I think I blame people mostly who were not involved in politics, because people didn’t go vote. The ones who would have voted against Trump did not vote. People were not interested

in voting for Hillary, I think she wasn't the right candidate, so it didn't appeal to the younger generation.”

A few of the older generation have also voted for an independent candidate. They felt that both candidates were bad. The following quote was stated by many:

“We had the choice between two evils.”

As stated earlier, some younger Cuban-Americans did not vote during the presidential elections of 2016. Both the Republican and Democrat candidates, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, were not popular among younger Cuban-Americans. Therefore it was a hard decision, and that was why quite a few younger Cuban-Americans did not vote or voted independent. In addition, as stated before, younger Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba were often raised as apolitical; they have little faith in politics. Andrea voted for Donald Trump because she hoped that he would improve the state's economic situation, but she regrets this decision:

“I actually voted for Trump. And now when I look back at it, I'm like, I don't know... if that was the best decision but it was just like... I couldn't stand voting for Hillary, but I don't know. You know that's what I'm saying it's the lesser of the evils. It's just, I don't know.”

In terms of voting, the younger Cuban-Americans we spoke to were very divided; a portion voted for Donald Trump, some voted for Hillary Clinton, some voted independent, and some did not vote. The overall consent was that they all thought that both candidates were not capable of being president of the United States, they just expressed this differently in terms of voting behaviour. They disliked Donald Trump because they did not approve Trump's way of talking and they did not like his renewed Cuba policies, which were aimed at more restrictions. Most younger Cuban-Americans favoured Obama's approach towards Cuba and were not happy when Trump got elected. In their opinions opening up relations between the United States and Cuba would improve the situation for the Cuban people, whereas imposing more restrictions would only come at the expense of the people in Cuba. Some younger Cuban-Americans acknowledge the fact that Obama's approach was beneficial for

the Cuban government, but still they would rather see that the people from Cuba profit, even when the corrupt Cuban government benefits more from it.

The younger Cuban-Americans we spoke to and did vote for Trump were all born in the United States. The fact that it was known that Trump would impose new restrictions on Cuba, and that they still voted for him, implies that the Cuban-Americans born in the United States do not prioritise the people in Cuba, despite them admitting that Cuba is still really important to them. Right now it is harder for Cuban migrants to come to the United States than it was before. Gabriel states the following:

“So before, you used to go by boat and you would just land in the United States, wherever it I, and you’re officially in the United States, they wouldn’t send you back. They obviously changed that.”

Even though the people were either very happy or very disappointed with the results, the election results have not changed much for the everyday lives of Cuban-Americans in Miami; this is the case for all the generations. This is due to the differences between Miami and the United States. As answered in chapter one, many informants argue that Miami is a little country within a country. Even though people have clear thoughts about politics, the actual national politics have little to no influence in Miami. Manuela confirms this as well:

“As I told you this is a different country. It really hasn’t changed, and everything is more or less the same. There aren’t many people whom are fighting with each other because of Trump.”

Of course, we could not see this for our own eyes, because we have not been in Miami before the elections. Nevertheless, the last elections did not seem to be a very important topic in daily conversations either. Hector told us that racial issues are, in comparison to the rest of the United States, not that visible in Miami and that Cuban-Americans only start experiencing racism when they leave the City. Miami is like a cluster of immigrants and speaking Spanish is considered just as normal as English without anyone being offended. So everyday life is not being affected that much by national politics. Nevertheless, the election of Trump has made a division between the generations more present and visible. Especially the younger Cuban-Americans blame the older generation Cuban-Americans for not being open for a discussion; they perceive that the older generation is in a certain way egocentric, they feel that they have

to listen to them and play by their rules. The younger Cuban-Americans feel that this perspective cannot be changed, and that they are not able to engage in a constructive discourse about it. This shows that the Cuban-American community is really divided in terms of politics, which sometimes causes tension as well.

The division also occurs within families, but the consequences of this division differ; some families get along perfectly despite having different perspectives on politics, whereas other families were torn apart because of their political preferences, such as Felipe's family:

“Politics brought fights and separation into our family. Feuds. People not talking to each other. It's been over 4 decades, but they're still not talking because of politics. [...] I've had fights with my father because he voted for Trump. I've come to realise it doesn't change much, the only thing it creates is uneasiness, it makes you uncomfortable.”

When looking at the changing political relationship between Cuba and the United States, the older generation finds this topic pretty sensitive and difficult to answer. Some even withhold themselves from speaking about it. The United States have had a financial embargo imposed on Cuba since 1962. It is a common thought that most Cuban exiles who live in the United States are very much in favour of this embargo. During the Obama office the embargo got less strict and the relations between Cuba and the United States seemed to loosen up. Nevertheless, Trump has reversed many of the new arrangements and has been outspoken to be more aggressive against Cuba. Within the older generation there is a division in their opinions about the changing policies. Some are very happy that the policies from Obama were reversed and think that Trump should remain strict on Cuba, whereas others were happy that Obama tried to normalise the relations between the countries, but stated that the changes were not very useful due to the fact that the government took most of the money for themselves.

All younger Cuban-Americans really appreciated Obama's efforts since this improved overall life quality in Cuba, which is still their main concern; the fact that the corrupt Cuban government profited more than the people did bother them, but they thought that even a little improvement for the people was better than nothing. This was why most younger Cuban-Americans were not happy with the fact that Trump reversed trade agreements and adopted a stricter migration policy.



## Conclusion and Discussion

In this part we will firstly give an analytical answer to our main question. Afterwards we will support this by an analytical discussion of our most important results by relating this to the concepts which we mentioned in our theoretical framework. The following main question was introduced at the beginning of our thesis:

*In what way do the politics of belonging reflect the shaping of identities for transnational and intergenerational Cuban-Americans in Miami?*

Underlying problems have always been present within the Cuban-American community. We argue that the foundations of these problems reside in the longitude of their migration history. Cubans who have arrived around the Revolution have a different mentality and identify in different ways than the Cubans who have recently arrived. Especially, a large amount of members from the older Cuban-Americans are xenophobic towards new immigrants; thus also new Cuban arrivals. Their politics of belonging are a direct reflection of these xenophobic thoughts. Younger migrants feel that they belong in the United States and want to prove themselves towards the older Cuban-Americans. However, they feel that they cannot express their opinions because they feel that the older Cuban-Americans are not willing to have a constructive dialogue with them. Furthermore, they were raised apolitically, so the idea of using actual politics to express their belonging are not imminent. We argue that, for the young Cuban-Americans to be heard, they need to call upon another group to oppose these xenophobic thoughts with a positive voice. We argue that this could be the young Cuban-Americans who are born in the United-States. They are in direct contact with both generations and they are able to engage in a dialogue with the older generation, because of the importance of family.

Throughout our research we used a constructivist approach as mentioned by Demmers (2012). In our empirical chapters it became clear this constructivist approach was very applicable to not only ethnicity, but also identity. Their social identity is interlinked with, but not always the same as, their ethnic identity, which are according to Verkuyten (2004) not mutually exclusive. Our entire population has similar ethnic characteristics, but also have underlying differences. In our thesis we wanted to show that the concept of identity is socially constructed, and that the politics of belonging reflect these constructions. This construction of identities can be found in the contemporary political situation in the United States.

If we look at the concept of intersectionality, as described by Crenshaw (1991), we see that individuals can have multiple identities, as is also the case with the identities of all Cuban-Americans. They are, for example, part Cuban, part American, transnational, part of a generation, and sometimes have different identities ascribed by others than they ascribe to themselves. These multiple identities of the Cuban-Americans are also reflected in the city of Miami. It is an American city, but it is very much Cubanised with Cuban restaurants, Cuban street names and the Spanish language. For this reason, Miami is often described as a Cuban city instead of an American city. The older Cuban-Americans feel that, when they arrived, they built this city, and in this way contributed to the American society. They often express their pride on this matter, which makes it very political; this is in line with what Schiller (1995:59) mentioned about migrants having to defend themselves about everything they have achieved.

This Cubanity in Miami makes it relatively easy for younger Cuban-Americans to feel comfortable. However, at this moment Miami is subject to many more Hispanic identities due to the immigration of many South- and Central-Americans. Therefore Miami is gradually becoming an Hispanic city as well, and while all Cuban-Americans state that they feel Cuban, this cultural change in Miami is also affecting the Cuban-American community. Especially the younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States, and specifically Miami, have been exposed to these Cuban and Hispanic influences. Therefore they have shaped their own independent values, which makes them less unitary as a group (Anthias 2009:7).

Most older Cuban-Americans put a lot of emphasis on the fact that when they arrived they integrated very well and became very Americanised. They also perceive that the new arrivals from Cuba do not make an effort to integrate into the American society, and claim that they are very different from those recently arrived younger Cuban-Americans. These younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba are categorised by the older Cuban-Americans as Hispanics rather than Cubans. The use of this generalised us versus them classification, as mentioned by Eriksen (2010), is curious in this context, as Eriksen is mainly deriving the classification from ethnicity. The two generational groups share a lot of similar ethnic characteristics, such as a shared heritage and a similar migration history, but the differences are highlighted more often than their similarities. This is also mentioned by Vertovec (2004); there is a particular focus on immigrants' roots that neglects their strengths and assets to a host country (Vertovec 2004:978-979). The older Cuban-Americans have a similar perspective on newly arrived migrants from Cuba. The image of the new Cuban-Americans as being 'regular' immigrants, and being part of the Hispanic community instead of just the

Cuban community, is projected on them. This perception is based on the economic motives for recently arrived Cubans to migrate to the United States, which differs from their political motives to migrate in the 1960s. These differences in migration motives are in line with what Rumbaut (2004) claimed; that first migration waves and later migration waves are fundamentally different.

The newly arrived Cuban-Americans often blame the older Cuban-Americans for categorising them and not giving them a chance to prove themselves. However, some younger Cuban-Americans also construct their identity according to this projection by the older generation; this is an example of the concept of interpellation as mentioned by Althusser (as cited in Fassin 2013). It is as Alberts (2005) described; the Cuban community used to be one of the most cohesive ethnic communities in a foreign country, but this has changed, especially along the generational lines. The young Cuban-Americans born in Cuba feel that they belong to the United-States just as much as the older Cuban-Americans. However, they have the feeling that the older generation do not feel the same about this and even though they want a constructive dialogue about, they generally feel that the older Cuban-Americans do not want to listen to them or value their opinions.

Transnationalism is also an important factor for the Cuban-American identity. Because the younger Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba often go back and forth to Cuba they are, as Eriksen (2010) describes it, transnational by nature. This is different for the older Cuban-Americans; most of them have never been back to Cuba after they left. The only Cuba that they return to is the Cuba from their past, which is constructed in their memories. They do not feel that they have a 'home' to return to. The older Cuban-Americans emphasise the differences with the younger Cuban-Americans by highlighting that they do not need Cuba anymore, and thus that they belong in the United States. It is also important to realise that some of the older Cuban-Americans have lived in the United States for more than 50 years, and that they have had the American citizenship for almost just as long. Therefore it is needless to say that they feel that they belong in the United States. The younger Cuban-Americans, however, state that the only reason for going back to Cuba is to visit their family and friends, but not to move back permanently. However, some of them do not have the American citizenship yet. But as mentioned before, they see their future in the United States and do want to get the American citizenship. They feel that they deserve a future in which they have better opportunities and career prospects.

The differences in identity are very much reflected in their political affiliations. There is a relatively large percentage of older Cuban-Americans who feel affiliated with the

Republican party. And the older Cuban-Americans who have voted for the Republican party are in general harsh towards new immigrants and thus also new Cubans; they seem to be xenophobic. They use their votes to express their politics of belonging, Crowley (1999:19) makes a connection between xenophobia and politics of belonging as well. For the younger generation who are born in Cuba, expressing their politics of belonging through voting is not that self-evident; they stated themselves that they grew up in an apolitical society and consider themselves apolitical as well. However, they consequently hope to engage in a constructive dialogue with the older Cuban-Americans about their belonging. Crowley (1999:19) mentions that, to oppose this xenophobia, a positive voice in politics of belonging needs to be heard. Because the younger population born in Cuba does not have the chance to express their positive voice, since they were raised apolitical and because they feel that the older generation does not listen to them, we argue that this positive voice could come from a different side. This could be in the form of the younger Cuban-Americans born in the United States. They could be mediators between the new and old arrivals. These second generation Cuban-Americans have Cuban roots and interact with younger and older Cuban-Americans on a daily level. They generally seem to be positive towards new immigrants, albeit some of them feel affiliated with the Republican party. However, this is because of economic reasons. Another positive voice for the new immigrants could be from themselves but in the near future. Some young Cuban-Americans who were born in Cuba, stated that in the next elections they would definitely vote. It seems that the longer the younger Cuban-Americans have been away from the Cuban regime, the more interested they get in politics.

### ***Recommendations and concluding remarks***

A recommendation needs to be made regarding the elections of 2016. While the voting behaviour within the Cuban-American community did not deviate much from previous elections, a lot of Trump-voters mentioned that they had the feeling that they made the wrong decision. We would like to argue that the underlying problems have always been there, and that the group dynamics have not really changed, but that since Trump has been instated these problems have become more visible. We would like to recommend to do a similar research in a few years to see how much effect the contemporary politics have had.

Furthermore we need to address a few issues regarding our own research. Firstly, we would like to make a note that the concept of identity has more aspects to it than we have researched. For example, the concepts of gender and race have not been of mentioned in our research. We noticed ourselves, within this particular context, that these concepts are

underexposed and could be standalone research topics. We also feel the need to point out that the longitude of our research was three months. For a more complete research we would recommend doing this research in Miami for at least one year, to see how the population functions in all seasons. Furthermore, the Cuban-American community is more complex than we have pointed out. There are way more age generations and waves of Cuban-Americans in Miami, possibly with deviating perspectives. Our results are very interesting at a micro level, but it is tricky to make general conclusions about the entire Cuban-American population.

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# Appendix

## **Abstract**

Our objective and scientific goal of this research is to contribute to the debate about identity politics. Our research will have a focus on intergenerational and transnational Cuban-Americans in Miami, and how their identity is formed and how they politicise their belonging. This research will aim to expose the underlying intergenerational conflicting ideas, problems and cultural differences, which are omnipresent in the Cuban-American community in Miami. We will use the following central question that we want to be answered:

*In what way do the politics of belonging reflect the shaping of identities for transnational and intergenerational Cuban-Americans in Miami?*

Our conclusions will contribute to existing theories or knowledge on intergenerational and transnational differences which can be applied to other contexts and situations.

The societal relevance is to identify these problems and cultural differences within the community, and to help create awareness about their identities. Our approach to this research and thesis is of a complementary nature, due to the fact that by far most Cuban-Americans live in Miami.

We conducted our research in the city of Miami between the 29th of January and the 13th of April. The reason for conducting this research in the city of Miami was because it has a high concentration of Cuban-Americans. Our main methods for gathering data were participant observations, conducting semi-structured interviews, hanging out and informal conversations. We conducted 21 semi-structured interviews individually, as well as countless useful informal conversations. During our first week in Miami we noticed that the populations, while having their issues, were not divided groups and we both got in touch easily with people from both generations.

This thesis will start with a theoretical discussion of the concepts of identity, ethnicity, transnationalism, migration and integration, politics of belonging and first and second generation immigrants. We will discuss these concepts individually but they inherently share overlapping characteristics to provide a framework in which our concepts and empirical chapters can be put into perspective. Secondly, the context of our research will be discussed, to show a general image of where our research took place. Chapter three and four will constitute our empirical framework, in which the concepts of the theoretical framework are expressed. Chapter three has a general focus on identity to show the complexities in the

Cuban-American community. It will be argued that the complexities are deeply rooted in the community and find its foundations in the generational differences. Younger Cuban-Americans who are born in Cuba are in a limbo considering their identity. On the one hand they are still very much affiliated with Cuba and on the other hand they are willing to integrate into the United States for better opportunities in life. They identify with many groups, which either has a social or an ethnical foundation. The Older-Cuban Americans in our research population have been in the united states for almost 60 years and they state that they feel completely American. Their opinions usually differ a lot from the opinions of the new Cuban arrivals. So while both groups have a clear similarities in the likes of migration history and heritage, they identify in a different way and this gives tensions. In Chapter four we argue that these tensions are reflected into the politics of belonging and we try to give an analytical view which is necessary to expose these complexities. In this same chapter we will also, briefly, show the contemporary political situation and that this situation is adding a new dimension into our debate. We argue that the political situation has shifted, the Cuban-Americans notice this, have opinions about it but do not feel that it has already affected the community.

In our conclusion and discussion we will frame the situation of the Cuban-American community very briefly. We will link our findings to the existing theories mentioned in our theoretical framework to answer our main question. We will argue that the politics of belonging from the older Cuban-Americans are a direct reflection of the xenophobic thought towards newer immigrants, and that the younger Cuban-Americans born in Cuba do not have the capacity to oppose these thoughts. At this point, the young Cuban-Americans born in Cuba could be the mediators between the two populations to reflect a more positive voice. Furthermore we noticed that Cuban-Americans who were raised apolitically, are becoming more interested in politics after they have been in the United States for a longer period of time.