

Difference in the Midst of Cohesion: Modern and Traditional in Cuban Miami

The traditional neighborhoods of Cuban Miami (Little Havana, the Roads, *la Saguasera*, etc.) are small and welcoming in the way America's great urban neighborhoods are welcoming. They create a sense of place and connection to the people and the history of the community. The neighborhoods comprise significant portions of Miami and stand in stark contrast to the largely new and booming downtown. Nestled in the broader expanse of urban dynamism, overreach, and overlook that *is* Miami, these traditional Cuban neighborhoods strike an almost perfect contrast between new and old—between modern and traditional, or big and small, or change and the status quo.

There is a debate going on in Cuban Miami over whether and how to engage Cuba and the socialist government of Fidel Castro and now his brother Raul. The debate is one that has raged for the better part of five decades. Perhaps for the first time the debate is now truly a real debate. For many years, the debate was largely one sided in favor of forces opposing engagement. But today the outcome is less certain, as events and demography have caused significant sections of the community to rethink their approach to Cuba as well as the community's relationship to broader Miami.

There are several important causes of the reversal, the most significant being the startling change in USA–Cuba relations announced by President Obama in 2014. The USA reestablished diplomatic ties with Cuba after 50 years. Events helped pave the way for the historic breakthrough.

During his visit to Cuba in 1998, Pope John Paul II sharply criticized Cuba's stance on religious expression as well as USA sanctions against Cuba. Also, during the Elian Gonzalez affair of 2000, the passionate anti-Castro sentiment of the community that was the focus of so much media attention came under severe criticism. In Cuba, the transfer of presidential duties from Fidel Castro to his brother Raul Castro in 2006 has made the possibility of a different future for the island seem plausible and invites speculation that a change in USA–Cuba relations could yield results different than those of the last 40 years. Finally, generational change and new waves of immigration from Cuba add to the number of people with different ideas about how to relate to Cuba.

The debate over Cuba opens a whole host of questions for Miami Cubans. Many of the questions are about whether members of the community see themselves as citizens or exiles. Issues important to both citizens and exiles began surfacing with clarity during elections season in 2008. That year the community's three veteran Republican congressional representatives (Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen) faced serious challenges from Democratic candidates whose campaigns were based on an appeal to issues important to citizens (like housing and health care, for example) as well as liberalization of travel restrictions and limits on remittances to Cuba that were imposed by the Bush administration in 2004. For the Diaz-Balart brothers, the Democratic challengers (Joe Garcia and Raul Martinez) came from within Cuban Miami itself. Miami's Mayor at the time, a Cuban American and one of the chief architects of the profound makeover of the city that new construction downtown has facilitated, campaigned for change.

Among traditional Cuban exiles support for the Republican candidates was strong. In the end the status quo prevailed. After months of contentious debate, Miami Cubans elected the three longtime congressional representatives most closely associated with the community's traditional anti-Castro stances.

The story since 2008 has largely been the same. A strategic question candidates wrestle with in their efforts to gain the support of Cuban Americans voters is whether to appeal to community members' identities as citizens or exiles, to new ways of doing things or old, to modern ways of life or tradition as salient categories of culture and identity.

In 2012, Joe Garcia, the Democrat, finally won congressional office and with it the opportunity to represent Miami-Dade voters in Florida's 26th Congressional District, but only after support among Cuban American voters for the Republican incumbent, David Rivera, declined. Investigations and scandal plagued the Rivera campaign. Garcia would lose the seat in 2014 to Carlos Curbelo, a Republican. Curbelo boasted of a strong showing among Hispanic voters, including Cuban Americans.

In Miami, current mayor, Tomas Regalado, was elected to a first term in office in 2009. Regalado campaigned in a way popular with older traditional Cuban America voters promising to restore a vision of Miami with neighborhoods at the center, as opposed to the downtown, condos, and development.

The appeal is to tradition for Marco Rubio, the Florida senator, and 2016 Republican presidential contender from Miami who is Cuban American. Rubio supports isolation of the communist government of Fidel Castro and his brother Raul. Rand Paul, the senator from Kentucky, who himself campaigned to be the Republican presidential standard bearer in 2016, called Rubio a candidate of yesterday in the press (Leary 2015). Ted Cruz, the senator from Texas, who was also a presidential contender, and, like Rubio, the son of a Cuban exile, favors isolation of Cuba as the US approach to the island nation. Jeb Bush supports the same approach as well. Bush, too, has deep roots in Miami's Cuban community. He got his start in politics there.

The contrast in Miami between the neighborhoods and the downtown marks the contours of a struggle that is broader and older than the city itself: the timeless struggle over culture and identity between new and old, modern and traditional, big and small, change and the status quo, liberal political theory and republican political theory that is involved in settling the question "who rules—elites or the broad populace?" and, also, the related question "what larger strategic purposes does rule serve—to forge connections with the world outside or build the local community people call home?" Competing traditions of political theory reflect political struggle lurking beneath the surface of community life in Cuban Miami—the primordial conflict of interest, values, belief, and identity between elites and the broad populace, rich and poor.

Important differences of culture and identity that can be found among civic organizations in Miami's Cuban community mirror, roughly, the commitments held by partisans in those two opposing camps, new

and old or modern and traditional. The commitments are imbued with a Latin flare, with service-oriented understandings of politics and citizenship from corporatist political theory. The understandings reflect the cultural history (of Latin America) that many community members share. For many in Miami's Cuban community, civic engagement efforts involve service to others or to a cause larger than oneself. Freedom and independence for Cubans on the island is the larger cause many Cubans in Miami care deeply about. But the broad struggle over culture and identity between new and old—modern and traditional, liberal political theory and republican political theory—is there nevertheless. Looking at the different cultural practices and symbols of civic organizations in Miami's Cuban community, one can glimpse what Miami and Miami's Cuban community might both become. Whether and how new or old (or modern or traditional) will prevail and to what degree.

Service to others as an approach to civic engagement can be contrasted with direct participation in public affairs. Direct participation reflects a commitment to civic or producer-oriented understandings of politics and citizenship from republican political theory. Republican political theory is the tradition of democratic theorizing designed to prepare people for politics in the classical sense, for leadership, or direct participation in public affairs involving practical day-to-day problems. Citizens act directly on their own behalf in defense of shared values and interests in republican political theory; citizens solve the problems of social reproduction (problems of schools, roads, housing, health care, work, wages, public safety, etc.) community members face, problems that go largely unaddressed, too often and in too many places, and involve great pain for too many people, including in Cuban Miami.

Many people in Miami's Cuban community are directly involved in the struggle for freedom and independence for Cuba, but not as citizens, so much, who share a responsibility to lead, addressing public problems, building a democratic culture. Instead, liberal democratic revolution is the model of politics—many community members in Cuban Miami see themselves as protagonists in the founding of a new democratic government for Cuba. In both approaches to civic engagement, service and struggle, direct participation in public affairs involving practical day-to-day problems disappears. The approach from republican political theory falls out of the efforts community members consider possible.

New and old, modern and traditional, big and small, change and the status quo, liberal political theory and republican political theory

romanticized, reflecting a commitment to service-oriented understandings of politics from corporatist political theory (the tradition might also be called corporatist political theory republicanized or popularized), these are not the only ways of describing the differences of culture and identity that can be found among civic organizations in Miami's Cuban community. Nor do I mean to suggest the community's civic organizations are entirely one political culture or another. But how, in general, organizations line up on this broad question of new or old, who rules and, also, what are the larger strategic purposes rule serves, constitutes an important difference nevertheless. The difference is apparent among civic organizations in Cuban Miami. The difference is at work in campaigns for political office in Miami. What is more, the difference is visible in development patterns of Miami itself.

Movement, culturally, in Cuban Miami, as in Miami itself, is toward new ways of doing things ("the new"). But the old ways have not given up nor have they given way. The commitment to tradition—the community as society's principal civic agent and/or community building as the purpose civic engagement—in Cuban Miami's traditional civic organizations (such as the Cuban Municipalities in Exile, the League Against Cancer, and Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, all three of which are included in this book) represents a remarkable tradition of civic engagement that stands as an alternative to the commitment to the new in the community's culturally modernizing civic organizations.

The tradition of civic engagement in Miami's Cuban community is broad and includes organizations, like Cuban Consensus, for example (which is the fourth organization this book examines), that appeal, in general, to new ways of doing things rather than old; to liberal political theory rather than republican political theory romanticized; to individuals with the civic virtue they possess rather than the community with its traditional social life and identity; to the larger world outside, primarily, rather than the Miami's Cuban community participants call home. But they do so with less if growing effect. Why is that the case? What makes some civic organizations more successful than others in advancing their members' interests? In Cuban Miami, how is the old way, the political culture associated with Miami's traditional Cuban exiles, a group that is frequently written off as being obstinate and out of touch, able to prevail against the new, the groups with time and money on their side?

Miami's traditional Cuban exiles are often criticized in the local media in Miami and beyond, and in academia, for the passion they display, and,

also, very frequently, for the tactics they use in the struggle against communism in Cuba. But perhaps the commitment to tradition that is apparent in many of the community's civic organizations is what critics are reacting to. A good example is the local media's reaction to the Cuban American National Foundation's (CANF) movement away from the long-held position among traditional Cuban exiles in favor of isolating Cuba and the communist government of Fidel and Raul Castro. CANF's split started in 2001. The Miami Herald described the change, variously, as a natural outcome of the process of freedom seeking (Rosenberg 2001) and as an opportunity for the emergence of an entirely new domestic Cuban American image. "The enduring posture of an obstinately isolated and self-focused Cuban community is crumbling at last" is how columnist Robert L. Steinback (2001), a Miami Herald editorial writer, put it.

The Cuban Municipalities in Exile, the League Against Cancer, and Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, these organizations to a substantial degree represent the traditional way of doing things in Miami's Cuban community. The organizations are committed to the community with its traditional social life and identity as society's principal civic agent and to building the community participants call home as the purpose of civic engagement. By contrast, Cuban Consensus, which represents the new way of doing things among Miami's Cuban exiles, is committed to individuals with the civic virtue they possess as society's principal civic agent and to forging connections with the larger world outside of the community as the purpose of civic engagement. All four organizations take an approach to civic engagement that is service-oriented. The difference is what participants believe about who the actors and what the fundamental purposes of civic engagement are.

The service-oriented approach to civic engagement among civic organizations in Miami's Cuban community reflects a commitment to a distinct political culture many community members share. The political culture reflects the broad tradition of thought many community members embrace. The tradition of thought represents a mixture of liberal and corporatist political theory, and it shapes cultural values and identity that make people who they are for many members of Miami's Cuban community.

How organizations implement the commitment, tradition, or approach brings differences of culture and identity that can be found among the organizations to the fore. The choice is a source of the cultural differences

to be found among the organizations. The cultural differences are apparent in the practices of civic engagement the organizations have developed. The practices reflect different combinations of liberal political theory and corporatist political theory, elite and popular authority, modern and traditional, or new and old.

Differences emerge from practices of civic engagement in two important areas: (a) the vision of civic agency civic organizations embrace—whether civic organizations believe elites (individuals with the civic virtue they possess) or the broad populace (the community with its traditional social life and identity) should lead. Differences emerge as well from (b) the larger strategic purpose of civic engagement civic organizations undertake—whether civic organizations seek to forge connections with the larger world outside of the community or build the local community participants call home.

In some of the community's civic organizations, the principal civic agents are individuals who embody a specific civic virtue. In liberal political theory, the individual distinguished by the civic virtue he or she possesses (either technical knowledge and expertise or care and compassion) is the principal civic agent. In other organizations, the agent is the community with its traditional social life and identity (from republican political theory). Connecting participants to the larger world outside of the community is the purpose for some organizations, reflecting a commitment to liberal political theory. And in other organizations, building the Miami's Cuban community participants call home is the purpose, reflecting a commitment to republican political theory.

The cultural differences among the organizations result in something more than differences in performance as such. The organizations are all relatively successful. They result in different politics, the respective systems of civic engagement the organizations represent.

Civic organizations are a powerful lens into the politics and culture of communities and society. Through them observers can see clearly the values, beliefs, and identity community members embrace. A focus on political theory creates opportunities for many new insights. New and old, or rich and poor, or liberal and corporatist political theory—commitments like these, which mean a great deal to members of Miami's Cuban community, are apparent in the community's civic organizations.

At the same time, civic organizations are something more. They are political organizations with the power to shape the way community members and others see the world. Civic organizations help shape the

political culture of communities and societies, the informal rules of the game of politics that establish the range of political processes and outcomes communities and society consider possible and/or desirable. The political theory in civic organizations, understandings of politics, and citizenship people embrace, these are a major focus of this book. The contributions they make help shape political outcomes in Cuban Miami.

2.1 STUDYING CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

This book examines the political culture of civic organizations to explain their effectiveness. The political culture of civic organizations is defined as the cultural strategies, messages, or communications civic organizations' leaders and organizers use to engage all the facets of organizational life, ranging from recruiting new participants to developing the social purpose as well as the forms of participation of their organizations. The shared assumptions, perceptions of the world, symbols, and concepts at the heart of the appeals civic organizations' leaders and organizers make are what make their strategies cultural. The assumptions of or in the cultural strategies influence the way civic organizations' leaders and organizers, and participants in civic organizations think and, also, see the world. They draw upon rich traditions of political theory developed over the ages.

The difference in performance that the choice of cultural strategy makes is the central question the book addresses. Four different organizations are examined in the study. The organizations represent a broad cross section of civic engagement traditions in Miami's Cuban community. The organizations are not necessarily a representative sample of the community's civic organizations; a reflection of the cultural cohesion of the community is what they are instead. The organizations have different goals and objectives, as well as structures and ways of operating the organizations embrace. But the same basic political culture is there nevertheless, guiding the operations of the organizations. The book also examines the political culture of the broader Cuban community in Miami to see whether and how the political culture of the organizations and the community interact.

The book examines the role of public initiative in grassroots organizations in an important civic and political community in the USA. The effectiveness of civic organizations is examined by looking at the political culture of civic organizations and that of the broader community to see whether and how the two interact. The analysis treats civic

organizations' leaders and organizers as cultural entrepreneurs who have the power to transform larger cultural environments beyond or outside of their organizations—the political culture of the community or the society. The book highlights the way social agents and informal social structures and institutions interact to shape the political impact of civic organizations.

Civic organizations are more than vehicles for representing their members' interests. Cultural formations with the power to shape the way people think and, also, see the world (including the values, belief, and identity people embrace) are what they are instead. Civic organizations provide broad definitions and ways of thinking about politics and society that form the basis of consensus among participants in civic organizations. The ways of thinking reflect traditions of thought that offer ideas about such profound topics as the nature of the self and the good life, and definitions of freedom and citizenship for people to use. In short, they reflect the political or social theory or philosophy civic organizations' participants embrace. In those theories are visions of what the political community might or should become. The visions help to shape the political culture of communities and society.

There is clear incentive for civic organizations' leaders and organizers to engage visions of political community. Civic organizations perform better when the visions their leaders and organizers embrace align with those of the broader community. Consensus political culture shapes the policy preferences of different groups, organizations, and interests in public life, making reconciliation of competing interests easier than would otherwise be the case. Consensus political culture lessens the competitive pressures of politics in democratic institutions and the burden on community organizations for civic education programs that develop participants' political leadership skills and abilities.

Participants in Cuban civic organizations in Miami are making perhaps the most difficult and controversial choice in politics there is to make, i.e., the choice of moral consensus to live by. The emotionally charged and intense way community members take part in civic organizations reflects the outcomes that are at stake. The remarkably active and broad tradition of civic participation is another.

The book takes a constructivist approach to politics focusing on the culture of civic organizations and that of the larger community, leadership of civic organizations, and change. Culture includes racial/ethnic identity and, also, political theory.

The approach makes several contributions to the study of civic politics. It expands the range of political actors and events to include in analyses of the outcomes of politics in democratic institutions. In traditional approaches, actors and events operating at levels larger than the local sphere of life set the cultural context of politics. Actors and events operating at the national or the international level dominate. In the research presented here, however, civil society groups and organizations, and even individuals, as such, who help shape the way we live, may be included in the analysis. The approach also broadens the range of activities that may be considered political, to include cultural practices, symbols, and approaches to civic engagement civic organizations deploy in the processes of nonpartisan political organizing.

The local cultural context of politics is worthy of far greater attention in the social sciences. Culture is a challenging variable, no doubt, but it has nevertheless garnered considerable attention at the level of national civic culture. At the local level, however, culture is far less often the focus. Yet cultural variables, including at the local level, are crucial in helping communities and societies determine what they want to become.

There is another problem related to neglect of local cultural environments. A structuralism that compromises the study of political cultural abounds in the literature. The model of cultural change and formation traditional structuralist approaches to politics draw upon virtually eliminate the role that social agents play. Individuals, whether consciously or not, are always cultural actors. They exercise independent agency even if never completely. An approach that emphasizes constructivist as well as structuralist themes opens cultural environments to further research. Both approaches are needed in the study of civic organizations.

This book is structured in just this way, emphasizing both constructivist and structuralist themes. The book highlights the power of ideas in politics and the impact of civic organizations using an analytical framework highlighting leadership and the role of culture in politics. The book highlights the two-way interaction between the political culture of civic organizations and that of the broader community.

Alexis de Tocqueville's classic book, *Democracy in America*, provides fertile ground for an appreciation of the role of social agency in civic life. Tocqueville claimed to have discovered in America a participatory political culture and authentic democratic society (Wolin 2001, 193). For Tocqueville, American society was, in effect, a local educational program or learning laboratory for participating in politics that Americans

as a people who were genuinely interested in politics created. Not necessarily by design, as in the metaphor of an engineer, but rather quite by accident, as a reflection of the values, beliefs, history, and experiences Americans hold dear. Tocqueville's theory of democracy starts with the society American's created. Societies for Tocqueville reflect peoples' history and culture and at the same time their civic or social agency. Societies are a product of history, culture, and experience. They are also something people actively create. In Cuban Miami, the broad tradition of active political participation and many civic organizations to be found the community are as much an expression of shared cultural history and experiences as community members' social energy and civic creativity.

2.2 ETHNICITY AS ORGANIZING STRATEGY

Wood (2002) in his award-winning study of civic organizations in Oakland, California, found that ethnic identity as a basis of the political culture of civic organizations is *less* effective at enabling participants to project social power, to gain access communities ties and social capital, than other types of identity. In the research presented here, however, when the cultural categories associated with ethnic identity were examined (putting aside cultural differences among the organizations), differences in performance among the organizations were not great. The organizations did remarkably well at accessing community ties and social capital. They did better, in fact, the research suggests they should.

Cuban Miami's ethnically based civic organizations perform well, generally, because they and the broader Cuban community share similar commitments to a distinct political culture or tradition of thought that sees politics as being state- and/or elite-centered activity. The culture is a mixture of liberal and corporatist political theory. Political theory *as* political culture helps to explain why some civic organizations are more effective than others.

The civic organizations examined here each have their own way of engaging all the facets of organizational life. They were identified from the research by the descriptions of the organizations leaders and organizers gave during interviews. Respondents described the significance of their organizations within the community, including the functions, goals, and objectives the organizations undertake that made leaders and organizers want to participate. The ways of engaging organizational life represent the cultural strategies the organizations embrace.

The Cuban Municipalities in Exile is committed to open and free expression of communal values and traditions. The League Against Cancer provides a way of giving back to the community through service. Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church promotes participation in the spiritual life of the community. Cuban Consensus is committed to the struggle for a free and independent Cuba. These are the organizations' respective cultural strategies. The cultural strategies are unique to each organization; however, they blend the political culture paradigm ethnic Cubans generally embrace. They blend the general framework of liberal and corporatist political theory community members, as ethnic Cubans, are committed to living by. Politics defined as state- and/or elite-centered activity is at the heart of the general framework of political culture ethnic Cubans embrace. The paradigm results in a general politics of civic engagement among the organizations.

There is an associational life in Miami's Cuban community beyond the struggle against communism for which the community is known. The civic organizations examined here are part of that civic life. Appeals to ethnic identity as a way of recruiting people to participate are discernible in each of the organizations. The appeals are made in different ways in keeping with the different goals and objectives as well as structures and ways of operating the organizations embrace. But the same basic structure, method, or way of appealing to people to recruit them to participate is there nevertheless.

Ethnic identity has resonance in Miami's Cuban community. Ethnicity is a major part of the appeal in the Cuban Municipalities in Exile (or Municipalities), for example. The Municipalities promotes open expression of Cuba's communal values and traditions, those from the prerevolutionary period in Cuba, specifically.

Community members coming together based on the hometowns they and their families are or were from in Cuba is routine fare in Cuban Miami. The Municipalities was formed for precisely this reason, to promote such gatherings.

Community members during early years of exile in Miami could never be sure where others members of the community stood with respect to the question of the Cuban Revolution and Fidel Castro, and discussion of the matter could quickly become dangerous. Events commemorating Cuba's hometowns were organized in part for this reason as a way of avoiding that possibility. Without addressing the matter directly, by participating in such events, people could signal to other community

members where they stood with respect to the transformation of Cuban society underway of the island. The events also had larger political implications as well beyond the interactions with one another that community members were having at such gatherings. The events became a way for the community's anti-Castro forces to claim legitimate political authority within the community mobilizing opposition to totalitarian manipulation and control underway on the island using Cuba's traditional national political culture as a resource. Today any significant support among Cubans in Miami for Cuba's socialist experiment has long since dissipated. But events organized by the Municipalities commemorating the values and traditions of Cuba's hometowns continue unabated. They remain a common staple of civic life in Cuban Miami.

Cuban Consensus provides a different example of the appeal to ethnic identity. Ethnicity is a major part of the appeal of Cuban Consensus (Consensus). Miami's Cuban community has a long and storied history of opposition to the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro. Consensus involves a next step in that process. Consensus represents one of the first significant and ongoing attempts by Miami Cuban exiles to engage members of Cuban society (on the island and abroad) in working to further a democratic transition in Cuba, including those who advocate engaging the socialist government of Fidel and Raul Castro. Consensus' approach is designed to aid members of Cuba's internal opposition, and with it, Consensus' participants feel they have broken new ground. The approach takes some of the focus of the discussion of a democratic transition in Cuba of the relationship between Washington DC and Havana for one and places it squarely on Cubans on the island where Consensus feels it belongs. Participants feel they gain more leverage in the process of Cuba's democratic transition through the approach they are pioneering. More than before they feel like an actor with an important role to play in the process.

Many of Consensus' participants described the sense of obligation they feel as ethnic Cubans as they discussed how or why they became involved in the organization. The sense of obligation is the impulse that made them want to participate. Participants described feeling a sense of attachment to the island nation. But participants also spoke of something more immediate as well, something larger than democracy for Cuba. For participants, the willingness to work with members of the opposition in Cuba who advocate engaging the socialist government of Fidel and Raul Castro is more than just strategy. The openness is a break with the past

and an indication that the Cuban exile community and Cubans generally are maturing. Participants see Consensus as a cultural innovation in Cuba's political culture writ large, one they themselves as ethnic Cubans are engaged in and undergoing. The innovation is a cultural accomplishment, a milestone in the national political culture of Cuba generally, as participants see it.

What makes the cultural practices and symbols of one organization more effective than another? This is the central question this book poses. Set in Miami's Cuban community, the book examines the cultural strategies of four civic organizations, exploring how the organizations work, why ethnic identity so appealing, and what can be learned about successful civic organization from the community's civic organizing experience.

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