2016

The Creation of Cuban Minority Status in America

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Part One- Early Assimilation of Cubans into American Culture

An Introduction

At the time that the first wave of Cubans came into the United States, political unrest and hope for security created a successful entry and assimilation process. The conditions in which the first wave came were fundamental for the success of this process for Cuban Americans in the United States. In this paper, the conditions in which the different waves of Cubans came to the United States and how those conditions impacted their entry will be discussed. This part will also look at data on conditions of entry in order to explain the minority creation and its assimilation with the dominant culture. Lastly, this part will synthesize data and explain what implications this has on Cuban Americans from the time of entry in 1959 until the present.

Citizenship

Extensive Cuban migration in the United States did not begin until after the overthrow of the Fulgencio regime orchestrated by those supporting Castro’s revolution in 1959. The population of Cuban immigrants fleeing to the United States rose from 71,000 to 163,000 from 1950 to 1960. Since the 1960s, Cubans who ventured onto U.S soil have been allowed entry through special humanitarian provisions of United States law instead of the immigration pathways that other countries immigrants were required to seek admission (Rusin, Zong, and Batalova 2015). In 1965, the first Cuban “boatlift” occurred when the Cuban government opened the port of Camarioca, allowing refugees to leave the country. After this boatlift, the United States and Cuba made an agreement permitting Cubans to fly to Miami on United States government chartered flights called
“Freedom Flights.” From 1965 to 1973 almost 300,000 Cuban immigrants arrived to the United States this way (Rusin et al. 2015).

Congress passed the Cuban Adjustment Act (CAA) in 1966, allowing permanent residence for Cubans who have been residing in the United States for at least one year. The third wave of Cuban migration began in 1980 with the Mariel boatlift, resulting in over 125,000 Cubans arriving in South Florida (Rusin et al. 2015). A surge of Cubans in 1994 prompted two migration agreements between Cuba and the United States. The CCA, combined with the 1994 and 1995 migration pacts, produced the “wet foot, dry foot” policy. This policy stated that Cubans intercepted at sea by authorities would be returned to Cuba, however those who reach the United States would generally be permitted to stay and could gain permanent residence status after one year in the United States. The population of Cubans in the United States has been steadily growing, from 737,000 in 1990 to 1,144,000 in 2013 (Rusin et al. 2015).

In December of 2014 a historic decision was made between President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro to revive relations between the United States and Cuba. This decision may call for revisions to the immigration policy and create changes that impact future Cuban immigrants trying to be admitted to the United States (Rusin et al. 2015).

**Private Property Rights**

Private property rights are fundamental rights in any capitalist economy (Alchian 2008). Private property rights are the rights of owners of land to determine how they want their land to be used (DeWeese 2012). In America, the right to private property is the way that our economy survives. Everything we do is out of self-interest. Without
private property rights, there would be no economic progress because no one would be incentivized to do anything if they could not personally reap the benefits. Private property rights are crucial for the development of a capitalist country.

When Castro took over Cuba in 1959, he immediately nationalized the people’s businesses and land. Losing all of their private property rights, many Cubans had to start over in America. Because Cubans lost everything they owned to the communist dictator Castro, the migrants embraced America’s capitalist ways once again. In response to seeing how much the Cuban migrants hated communism, American lawmakers decided to extend citizenship to the Cuban migrants with the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966. With this act, the Cubans were granted permanent residence after living in America for one year (Gioioso 2015). While in the beginning, “Sugar mill owners became gas station attendants; professional women took jobs as maids” (PBS 2004), the Cubans realized that their situation was now becoming permanent and they had to make changes. The wealthy Cubans created businesses, helped one another thrive, and established their own communities in Miami. Permanent residence created the incentive for the Cuban migrants to create their own businesses so they could make a living for themselves in the years to come.

The Cuban migrants were given full property rights like other American citizens. This is evident because in 2007, Hispanics living in Miami- Dade owned almost 50% of all businesses in the county (Miami-Dade 2007). Since Cubans of today control so many businesses in Miami, early Cuban migrants must have been given full property rights like every other American citizen.
Education and Freedom of Expression

Each wave of Cuban migration has been characterized by a difference in educational background entering the United States. These differences were a result of the changing phases in the Cuban Revolution. The first wave of immigrants in 1959 had an above average educational background and business skills, helping Cubans to set up a culture centered economic base that would ease future immigrants adjustment to the United States (Pedraza 1998). These Cubans were primarily the elites of Cuba: executives and owners of firms, wealthy merchants, sugar mill owners, cattlemen, foreign company representatives, and professionals. Today in the United States, Cuban Americans make education a top priority and make sure that their children are well-educated. The majority of Cuban Americans born in the United States have completed high school and 83% have some form of higher education than that. Over 25% have attended post-secondary school. Also of all Hispanic subgroups, Cubans have been the most willing to pay for their children to attend private schools (Buffington 2006). All of these statistics and trends represent the fact that education is very important to Cuban Americans. Also this shows that Cuban Americans are better able and have the resources to pay for further schooling and private education, more so than any other Hispanic migrant group (Buffington 2006).

One of the pull factors that prompted Cubans to want to migrate to the United States is its many freedoms. During the time of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro was known for his political persecutions that were rampant throughout his government. The idea of freedom of democracy, such as freedom of speech and the press, enticed Cuban immigrants (Anon 2011). When the third wave of immigrants, known as the
Marielitos, entered the United States, problems of freedom of expression were prevalent in Cuba. Artists, intellectuals, and especially homosexuals received backlash, and were sometimes dealt with by prison sentence (Pedraza 1998).

Freedom of Geographical Mobility vs. Spatial Segregation

The first wave of Cubans who arrived in the United States consisted of well educated, upper-class, wealthy, light skinned Cubans. They were greeted with government assistance in America due to their labels as political refugees fleeing from the communist Cuban government. They assimilated quickly and established strong communities throughout the U.S, especially in Florida where now, 5.8% of the population is Cuban. The smooth transition of the first wave of Cubans paved the way for the future generations’ easy assimilation in the United States. Cubans had complete freedom of geographical mobility once they arrived to the United States. By 2004, 1.5 million Cubans resided throughout 48 states in the United States Spatial segregation arose in Florida due to its geographic proximity to the island of Cuba. Out of all the Cubans in the United States, 70% of them live in Florida and 70% of the Cuban American population in Florida lives in Little Havana (Pew 2006). Little Havana is a 3-mile semi-circle in Miami where Cuban migrants have conglomerated to preserve their culture. The high concentration of Cubans in Miami and their strong economic and political presence has encouraged other Cuban migrants to settle in Miami, thus strengthening the ethnic enclave in South Florida (Miami-Dade 2007).
Employment

Employment opportunities for Cubans in America were virtually limitless thanks to the first wave of Cubans who arrived in the United States in 1959. They were upper-class, wealthy, light skinned, well-educated individuals who easily assimilated to American life. They set up businesses and secured their political influence in their respective communities, concentrated in South Florida. The following waves were able to join these prominent Cuban communities and obtain work from these people. The lighter skinned Cubans received positions over their Black Cuban counterparts and other minorities like Jews and African-Americans. Today, in Miami-Dade, Cubans own 48.2% of businesses and generate 54.8% of the sales (Miami-Dade 2007). In 1980, a 16 year old Cuban woman named Mirta Ojito migrated with her family to the United States. She described her transition as follows, “We arrived Monday. By Thursday, my parents were working. And the following Monday, I started summer school.” Her firsthand account of the quick assimilation into actively participating in American life shows how easily accessible employment in America was for Cubans (Smith 2015).

Miscegenation

Anti-Miscegenation laws were created in the South during the reconstruction phase of American history following the Civil War. One of the most notable was Alabama’s law passed in 1866 stating,

“If any white person and any negro, or the descendant of any negro, to the third generation inclusive, though one ancestor of each generation was a white person, intermarry, or live in adultery or fornication with each other, each of them
must, on conviction, be imprisoned in the penitentiary, or sentenced to hard labor for the county, for not less than two, nor more than seven years." (Richter 2015)

While laws like this were passed all throughout the south, the first and second waves of Cubans were relatively unaffected. While yes, most southerners did not approve of interracial marriage, they saw the first waves of Cubans as White. The first wave of Cubans were the wealthy business owners (PBS 2004) and due to Cuba’s social hierarchy, the business owners tended to be the light skin Cubans, not dark skinned.

By the time that the dark skinned Cubans migrated to the United States in 1980 (third wave of migrants), Loving v. Virginia had already been decided on by the Supreme Court in 1967. Loving v. Virginia established that Virginia’s anti-miscegenation laws violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1967). Even if the Cuban was Black, by law he could marry anyone he wanted to.

When the first wave of Cuban immigrants occurred, the American public was already accepting of interracial marriage, as demonstrated by the popular television show I Love Lucy that aired from 1951-1957. In this show, a White woman is married to the foreign Cuban man Ricky Ricardo. This show was revolutionary for American and Cuban social relations. As one of the first shows that featured an interracial couple, it broke many racial barriers. I Love Lucy even featured the interracial couple having their own child in one episode. This episode received more views from American households than President Eisenhower’s inauguration the day before (Fernandez 2011). I Love Lucy helped the assimilation of Cuban migrants from 1959 to 1960, because they were seen as “worthy” to marry white people.
Anti-Miscegenation laws were not a problem for the Cuban migrants. By the time the first wave of Cubans arrived, the American public was already accustomed to them from popular media. The anti-miscegenation laws passed in the South did not impact the first wave Cubans also because the Cubans in this wave had very white skin. By the time that the Black Cubans arrived to Florida, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of interracial marriage in Loving v. Virginia.

**Spoken Language and Newspapers**

When Cubans came to the United States in 1959, they came speaking many dialects of Spanish. The official language of Cuba is Spanish, and thus it is the language the majority of Cubans speak. The presence of the Spanish language among Cuban Americans has remained, although the language is in danger of being traded for English. While Cuban-Americans can still speak Spanish, they use it less on average than English. In the years 1989 and 1990, 96% of Cuban Americans born in the United States reported to have stronger Spanish speaking abilities, but have a proficiency in English. However, 74.3% of Cuban Americans born abroad have a Spanish proficiency, although they can speak English as well (Buffington 2006).

In the United States, Cuban-Americans use English in their everyday lives at work and school, but speak Spanish at home or in their communities. This practicing of Spanish helps preserve the language in the United States among the Cuban American community.

By speaking both Spanish and English on a regular basis, the two languages have meshed together to create a new dialect. This dialect, often referred to as Spanglish, uses English words in conjunction with Spanish grammatical structures.
Although Spanish has successfully endured in communities such as Little Havana thus far, many second generation immigrants prefer to use English to Spanish in casual conversation. This is because many Hispanics link the use of colloquial English to social opportunity and equality, and therefore perceive it to outweigh the benefit of preserving Spanish (PBS 2005).

**Conclusion**

The first wave of Cubans migrated to America after Fidel Castro took control of Cuba and turned it into a Communist state. Early Cuban migrants had an easier time assimilating into American culture than later Cuban migrants. Before Castro took over, Cuba was a popular tourist destination. Havana was described as, “a mistress of pleasure, the lush and opulent goddess of delights” (Geiling 2007). The beautiful beaches and gambling brought thousands of American tourists. This explains why the upper class Cubans were already very familiar with American culture when Castro seized power. Once the migrants had to leave their home country, the United States welcomed them with open arms. Knowing that the migrants were enemies of communism, the United States did as much as possible to win over these new allies. The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 sped up the process of citizenship for the early Cubans. The Cubans in the first and second wave had an especially easy time assimilating. Being white, wealth, and educated, Americans welcomed them as their own. While later waves of Cubans were not as wanted by America, they still did not face much discrimination and settled in their new home of “Little Havana” with ease. Due to a previous history with America, and a terrible political scene at home, Cubans were welcomed into America, and had an easy time assimilating into American culture.
Part Two- The Future of Cuban Americans

Introduction

Cubans have been migrating and settling in America since 1959. While it has been established that Cuban migrants have had an easy early assimilation process into America, what will the future hold for Cuban Americans? This part will answer this question by looking at current immigration policies, spatial segregation, governmental representation, and social issues of Cubans. Based on current facts of the Cuban American population, predictions about their future in America can be made.

Immigration

Immigration has always been a heavily debated topic in American history. For Cubans coming into America, the immigration system they have used is much different than any other Hispanic country. To understand the future of Cuban immigration, past policies must be discussed.

One of the biggest changes to America's immigration policy was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Before this Act, the way that America let in migrants was based on a quota system (History 2010). With help from the civil rights movement, people saw the quota system as discriminatory (History 2010). President John F. Kennedy supported a change in immigration, and after his assassination, that Act was passed.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 changed everything about immigration into America. This Act changed the quota system into a system of preferences (History 2010). According to History, “the act provided for preferences to be made according to categories, such as relatives of U.S. citizens or permanent
residents, those with skills deemed useful to the United States or refugees of violence or unrest” (2010). While there was no longer a quota system being used, the Act limited immigration from the Western Hemisphere by putting a cap of 20,000 visas a year (Cohn 2015). This severely limited immigration from Latin-American countries because they regularly surpassed 20,000 migrants a year.

Even with this sharp limitation on immigration from Latin-American countries, Cuban migrants were unaffected. When Fidel Castro took control of Cuba in 1959, heavy Cuban migration to America began. Under the control of Fidel Castro, the Cubans who came to America were labeled as “political refugees”. With this status, they gained preference when the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 was passed. Then in 1966, the Cuban Adjustment Act was passed. Under the Act, a Cuban Migrant can achieve permanent residence after living in the United States for a year (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2011). Also under this Act, Cubans were now exempt for the cap placed on other Latin-American countries (Breisblatt 2016).

In 1986, Ronald Reagan signed the Simpson-Mazzoli Act into law. This Act was another huge immigration reform in the United States history. This law granted all illegal immigrants who have been in the United States since 1982 amnesty. Along with this, it also set up provisions for more border security, with new technology and a bigger staff. This Act, while revolutionary, had many flaws. The first one being that it did not address illegal immigrants that have been in the United States after 1982. According to Doris Meissner of the Migration Policy Institute, “Everyone assumed they would just leave, that the new employer restrictions would push them out” (Plumer 2013). Speaking of these employer restrictions, the employer could not knowingly hire illegal immigrants.
But the word “knowingly” was a huge loophole. As long as the worker had paper work that looked authentic to the employer, they could not be penalized (Plumer 2013). Because of the relaxed policies on employers, they increasingly hired more illegal immigrants to do harvesting. The lack of funding to the proposed increase of border security made this Act ineffective as well. The funding needed would not come in until 1990 (Plumer 2013). Since the passage of this Act, illegal immigration has increased from a few million in 1986 to 11 million today (Plumer 2013), as shown by Table 1.

### Table 1.
Period of Entry of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population:
January 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of entry</th>
<th>Estimated population January 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All years</td>
<td>11,430,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2011</td>
<td>1,540,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–2004</td>
<td>3,250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995–1999</td>
<td>2,920,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990–1994</td>
<td>1,720,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985–1989</td>
<td>1,110,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980–1984</td>
<td>890,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(All numbers are in thousands.)  
Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.  

Table 1. Estimated entry of illegal immigration into the United States from 1980-2011 (Baker and Rytina 2013).

**Immigration Today**

In 2014, Cuba and America’s relations began to shift. President Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro made a historic decision to begin to normalize the country’s relations (Martinez-Don 2015). While this decision seems beneficial for both
countries, to Cubans, normalizing relations could end their status of refugees. According to the Immigration and Nationality Act, refugee means

“Any person who is outside any country of such person’s nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”

(Martinez-Don 2015)

Senator Marco Rubio pointed out that in 2014, 400,000 Cubans with legal residency in the U.S. repeatedly went back to Cuba for many different reasons (Martinez-Don 2015). Since the law states that refugees must be unable to return to the country, technically those Cubans are no longer under that status. Since Cubans can travel to Cuba due to more normal relations, this creates the question of if they are still refugees. Under the status of refugee, Cubans entering the United States enjoy a fast track to citizenship with the Cuban Adjustment Act. Cubans in America fear that if the relations are normalized, then they will no longer have access to a faster citizenship. The talks over normalizing relations led to a spike in Cuban migration (Allen 2016), as shown in Figure 2. This is because Cubans fear that if they do not get into America now, before relations and policies are changed, they could miss out on becoming an American citizen. The United States government has currently denied that they would end the Cuban Adjustment Act, or "Wet-Foot, Dry-Foot" policy (Allen 2016).
Along with a change in the amount of Cubans coming into the United States, there is also a change in how they come to the US, and a change in the demographic of Cuban migrants. Instead of the traditional route by water, more Cubans are coming to America through Central America (Allen 2016). According to Greg Allen of NPR, “Many Cubans have chosen this route because Ecuador did not require Cuban visitors to obtain a visa” (2016). While migrants take this new path, there still has been many problems. The biggest one being resentment from other Latin-American countries. In November of 2015, 8,000 Cuban migrants were stranded in Costa Rica because Nicaragua closed their borders to them (The Guardian 2016) (Allen 2016). While that situation is slowly being resolved, another problem has arisen in Ecuador. Shortly after
thousands of migrants came to Ecuador to go to America, Ecuador began requiring visas for Cuban citizens to “discourage the flow of people seeking to reach the United States,” said Xavier Lasso, Ecuador’s foreign minister (Hamre 2015). While there are few minor setbacks to Cuban migration, they still enjoy asylum once they reach the United States border, a luxury no other Latin-American group has. With a new way to get into America, there is also a new wave of migrants. “It’s a new generation, it’s a younger generation. Basically what we’re getting is in the 20s, 30s,” said Francisco Figueroa to Greg Allen (2016). Many of these younger Cubans coming into America do not have any family ties in the United States, so younger migrants are poor, and rely off of other Cuban charities to live.

**Settlements and Spatial Mobility**

Typically when Cubans have immigrated to the U.S., they settle in Miami, Florida. This is because the earliest waves first moved and settled there, making it easier for new coming Cubans to adjust to living in another country. Additionally, its close proximity to Cuba makes it a little more realistic to travel to.

This began to change in 2015 when U.S. President Barack Obama made an announcement that Costa Rica and Guatemala would be two of the nations cooperating on a lift that will allow as many as 8,000 Cubans to continue north toward the U.S. This is causing an unintended influx in immigrants because Cubans believe that immigrating will continue to become more difficult as the ties between Cuba and the U.S. begin to normalize. The majority of new immigrants typically end up in Miami, which is already heavy in Cuban population.
An organization called Church World Service helps relocate the immigrants in Miami, usually in their 20’s and 30’s, to new locations around the states. Since these immigrants are so young, many of them have no jobs and no familial ties, so they are free to move past Miami to relocate in different parts of the U.S., such as Texas and Pennsylvania. CWS helps the relocated immigrants apply for benefits and find cheap housing, as well as provide other forms of relief. Church World Organization is just one of many groups who are providing these services. As a result, we are seeing a growth in Cuban population in other cities past Miami (Allen 2015).

Cubans make up the approximately 4% of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. This means that there are around 1.5 million Cubans residing in the U.S. (Pew Hispanic Center 2006). Not surprisingly, 68%, or around 990,000 of these Cubans live in Florida. New Jersey is next with 81,000, followed up by the 78,000 in New York, 74,000 in California, and 34,000 in Texas. Figure 3 is an excellent visual of the spreading of Cuban population across the U.S.

Figure 3. Cuban population in the US according to the 2010 census
Distribution of Cuban population living in different parts in the U.S. (U.S. Census 2010)

According to the 2010 census, the top 5 metropolitan areas with the largest Cuban demographics are Miami, New York, Tampa, Los Angeles, and Orlando (U.S. Census 2010.) Additionally, Cubans have a homeownership rate of 53%, which is the greatest rate of homeownership amongst Hispanics (Brown 2013). Within these metropolitan areas, Cubans typically live among each other in highly concentrated areas (Brown 2013). While Cubans occupy these metropolitan areas in large amounts and high concentration, there is still a lack of the Cuban demographic living in the Midwest and Northwest states.


**Political Participation**

Cuban Americans voter turnout rates are known to be some of the highest in the United States. While in the past Cubans were known to be Republican voters, that trend has begun to shift and more Cubans are registering as Democrats. As of 2013, less than half of the Cubans in America are registered Republicans and more than half of the Cubans between ages 18 and 49 identify with the Democratic Party (Krogstad 2014). Cubans have recently been shown to have the highest voter turnout rate when compared to the entire Latino Party. In 2012, only 48% of Latinos voted overall, however 67% of all Cuban Americans voted (Krogstad 2014). Something that is very important as we continue to attempt to establish the United States relationship with Cuba is how many Cubans are in favor of having political ties with their home country (Krogstad 2014). Following the Cuban Revolution and the waves of immigration, most Cuban immigrants were in favor of the Embargo of 1960 due to their hatred of Castro and what he was doing to their nation and their people. However, that number of Cubans holding a grudge against Castro has drastically decreased through the years. In 2014, nearly 70% of Cuban-Americans that were surveyed were in favor of restoring diplomatic ties with Cuba. (Deruy, 2015). It could be thought that as time continues this percentage of support will only continue to increase. One of the possible reasons for this is as the creation of the new generation of Cuban-Americans happens, these people do not understand the kind of political stance Castro took, and therefore do not have the same feelings toward him due to the fact that they did not experience the time.
Legislative Representation

Cubans are the second most over-represented group in the United States Federal Government, the one before them being Jewish-Americans. Current Cuban-Americans holding United States Federal Government positions includes one Congresswoman, three Senators and five United States Representatives. In all of America’s history there have only been 12 Cuban American congressmen. Two of the Cuban U.S. congressmen today, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, from Miami Florida and Texas, respectively, are running for the 2016 presidential nomination. Cubans have the strongest political power compared to every other Hispanic minority group in America. Florida has the largest amount of Cuban American representatives at the state level with 14 out of the 22 Cuban American politicians that span five states (MyFlorida 2016). Cubans holding positions in the state government include fourteen in Florida, five in New Jersey, one in New York, one in Connecticut and one in Nevada (Gamboa 2014).

Judicial Representation

On August 8, 2009 Sonia Sotomayor became the first Hispanic Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Her Puerto Rican heritage is paving the way for other Hispanic minorities to progress through the United States judicial system (Supreme 2016). Florida has the largest number of Cuban American judicial representatives compared to every other state. The first Hispanic Florida Supreme Court justice was Raoul Cantero, who was born to Cuban parents (MyFlorida 2016). The current Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, Jorge Labarga, was born in Cuba in 1952 and immigrated to Florida at the age of 11 (Florida 2016).
Incarceration

When it comes to incarceration Cuban Americans make up a large amount of detainees. There are more Cuban Americans in jail than white Americans, but there are far more Black Americans imprisoned than both white and Cuban Americans. The rate of incarceration for Hispanics in the U.S. is 742 per 100,000. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 57% of the Hispanic population in federal prisons are incarcerated for drug offenses (Carson 2015). There are disparities within states but overall more Cuban Americans are imprisoned than white Americans (Mauer 2000).

“The likelihood of incarceration following conviction in the federal courts… is 73 percent for white-Hispanic non drug cases and 96 percent for white-Hispanic drug cases, 75 percent for black-Hispanic non drug cases and 97 percent for black-Hispanic drug cases.” (Steffensmeier 2000)

Currently, in the state of Florida, there are 1,352 Hispanics in prison for drug crimes (Jones 2016). White Americans receive the shortest sentences compared to Hispanic and Black Americans. This is due in part to their demographics; Hispanic and Black criminals are usually “younger and less educated than white defendants” and their crimes are usually more severe (Steffensmeier 2000).
Figure 4. Inmate Citizenship in U.S. Federal Prisons (Jones 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native Country</th>
<th># of Inmates</th>
<th>% of Inmates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1,738</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1,696</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>29,542</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>9,453</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>151,431</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Socioeconomic Status**

The socioeconomic status of Cuban-Americans tends to be higher than that of other Hispanic subgroups, but not equal to the status of non-Hispanic white United States citizens. Twenty nine percent of all Hispanics, and 15% of the general United States population does not have health insurance, however one quarter of the Cuban American population does not have health insurance (Lopez 2013). About 10% of Cubans younger than the age of 18 are uninsured. (Lopez 2013). One thing to keep in mind with these statistics is that they reflect insurance rates before the Affordable Care Act was implemented.

When it comes to education Cuban Americans are known to have higher levels of education than that of the entire United States Hispanic population and slightly lower levels compared to the United States overall population. A quarter of Cubans ages 25 and older obtain at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to the 14% of all U.S. Hispanics
and 30% of the U.S. population that have a bachelor’s degree or higher (Rusin Zong Batalova 2015). Among Cubans that are 25 or older, of those born in the U.S., 36% have earned a bachelor’s degree, while 21% not born in the U.S have earned a bachelor’s degree (Lopez 2013). The number of Hispanics that are enrolled in law schools in the 2013-2014 academic year is a total of 11,215. Hispanics make up almost the entire number of minority students that enroll in law school, the total number of minorities being 11,951 (Klein 2015). Cubans could statistically be on the same level as white Americans, however because of their association with Hispanics as a whole they will never be able to achieve that status.

Cuban Americans of the age of 16 and older had a median annual personal earnings of $25,000 the year before the survey. This number is more than the median earnings for all Hispanics in the U.S population, however, it is lower than the median earnings for the U.S. population as a whole, averaging at $30,000 per year (Lopez 2013). Twenty percent of Cubans live in poverty in the United States, which is higher than the general population (16%), and lower than the Hispanic population (25%) (Lopez 2013).

Similar to the other averages and rates you notice with Cubans in the United States, when it comes to homeownership the trend isn’t much different. The rate of Cuban homeowners is 55%, this percentage is higher than the number of all Hispanics that are homeowners (45%) but is lower than the 64% rate of the entire U.S. population (Lopez 2013).
Media Representation

The popular portrayal of Hispanics in the media has been negative. According to a study (Entman and Rojecki 2000), it was found that 76% of media coverage was focused on whites, while only 6.3% of media coverage was focused on non-white people. That means that all groups of Hispanics and Blacks were only represented in 6.3% of the news, and most of that focus was negative. In the 1960’s, the media coverage of Cubans in the U.S. was mostly comprised of war criminals and showcased the group as betrayed citizens to their homeland. These identities were strengthened in the media after the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. In the 1980’s after Ford and Carter were presidents, the portrayal of Cubans became more relaxed and constructive. However, this did not last for long, as Cuban military became present in Ethiopia and Angola. When this happened, the news became filled with stories of “Satellite of USSR” and presented Cubans negatively once again (Gonzales n.d.). Now, Cubans only make the news if there is crisis. The view of Cubans today is still tainted by previous stereotypes.

Because Cubans are not correctly or often represented in the U.S. media, Cubans in Miami have created their own media. An example of a Cuban newspaper is the Havana Times. When it was established in October 2008, only one article a week was posted and it was in English. However as the audience expanded, Havana Times began posting daily and in both Spanish and English (Robinson 2016). In addition, TV channels have been created to show English shows in Spanish as well as original Spanish shows. For example, ESPN Deportes hosts sports shows in Spanish. Another popular channel is Venevision Plus.
Contributions

Cuban-Americans have contributed much too American culture. In Florida, the area of Little Havana is where most Cuban-Americans settled. With the infrastructure the Cuban immigrants set up, businesses owned by Cuban-Americans added 51 billion dollars to the economy of Florida (Nichols 2015). Since Little Havana has such heavy Hispanic influence, Miami where the first public schools to introduce bilingual education programs, which spread to the rest of the United States (Nichols 2015). Cuban Americans are known to have some of the highest voter turnout rates in the United States. Because of such high voting rates, Cuban-Americans have contributed much too American politics. They were the ones who pressured congress into enacting the embargo. By being in the huge swing state of Florida, Cuban-American’s contributions to voting have the opportunity to greatly alter American politics. Since their arrival into America, Cubans have contributed much to the American culture.

Conclusion

Despite the short amount of time they have been in the United States, Cuban Americans have become a powerful Hispanic subgroup. About 60 years after the first refugees escaping from Castro set foot on America, Cuban Americans have had a very successful assimilation into American culture. Cuban Americans used every resource they could to get ahead of the curve. They helped one another in order to build strong infrastructure in Miami, which allowed them have a higher socioeconomic status than any other Hispanic group. They also used their voting rights avidly to gain political representation in Florida, which is now spreading to the Federal government. Today,
Cubans are present in media due to historic changes in relations with Cuba, and the possible changes to policies that impacted Cuban migration. Cuban Americans have secured a part of the American Dream for themselves, and will continue to be a dominant Hispanic subgroup in America for years to come.

**Part Three- Summary**

Fig. 5. Summary of Cuban migration, assimilation, and present. For more information about the boxes of the timeline, click [here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VhklAVNrlu6Oer020SlzdR02v1hJhpvfZr7dORfkfY/edit?usp=sharing) or follow this link,
Although Cubans in America have overcame many obstacles, the Cuban Hispanic subgroup is still a minority today. This means that the group is not treated or represented as equally in the country as the dominant majority of white Americans. Unlike the dominant group, Cubans receive special treatment by the government such as the Cuban Adjustment Act and the status of political refugee instead of immigrant (p.g. 12). They are also unequally represented nationwide due to the spatial segregation among the group. As of 2016, 68% of Cubans live in Miami, Florida, leaving only 32% of the population to represent Cubans across the country (p.g. 17). This is changing, however, as organizations are helping Cubans relocate and assimilate in other parts of the country (p.g. 17, 18). Although the majority of Cubans in the U.S. identify as Cubans since birth, they see themselves as part of the American culture as a whole. This is shown by their political participation of high voting rates of 67% in 2012 (p.g. 19) as well as being economically competitive with the earnings of American households (p.g. 23). Lastly, the incarceration rates of Cubans are drastically higher than those of white Americans, as well as the longevity of their sentences (p.g.21, 22).

Cuban-Americans have a very bright future ahead of them in the U.S. A great indicator of their future prosperity is the legislative representation they hold in the U.S. Federal Government. There is currently one Congresswoman, three Senators, and five United States Representatives of Cuban descent. Cuban Americans have the strongest political power compared to every other Hispanic group in the U.S. (p.g. 19, 20). Their growing presence in American government will help Cubans have their voices heard about political, social, and economic issues throughout the U.S. About 68% of Cuban Americans live in Florida so they have strong political representation there, with 14 out
of the 22 Cuban American politicians (p.g. 20). The concentration of Cuban-Americans in Florida provides an advantage that no other Hispanic minority has, a large, central community of support. With all of these Cuban American political figures it is clear that Cuban Americans are heavily involved in politics, this will ultimately lead to political action in their favor. Within the past year, Cuba and U.S. relations have normalized. There has been a lot of press about Obama’s decision and there will continue to be news coverage about Cuba and U.S. relations. The spotlight on Cuba will put them in the front of American minds which could be beneficial for them if everything goes smoothly. Cuban Americans are an extremely influential Hispanic minority and their influence is continuing to grow. They have higher education levels than every other Hispanic minority in the U.S., which keeps Cuban-Americans at the forefront of the Hispanic minority group. They could be the most influential minority in America.

Conclusion

Cuban- Americans should be on the same level as white Americans, but due to being Hispanic, they are still seen socially as a minority. While all statistics say that Cuban- Americans are higher in most social areas than all other Hispanics, the majority still refuses to see the Cuban-Americans as “one of them”. In all of American society, Cuban-Americans are a minority directly below white people, and at the top of all other Hispanic subgroups. The future of Cuban-Americans is very bright because it is predicted that Hispanics will become the new majority in the not so distant future. When Hispanics are the majority, Cuban-Americans will be on the top of this majority.
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