

Mental Health Issues of Cuban Families in South Florida

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Immigrants to the U.S.

Place of origin and place of settlement

Top ten Countries:

- Mexico
- China
- Philippines
- India
- Viet Nam
- Cuba
- Korea
- Canada
- El Salvador
- Germany

States with the highest concentration of immigrants (Gateway States)

California

Texas

New York

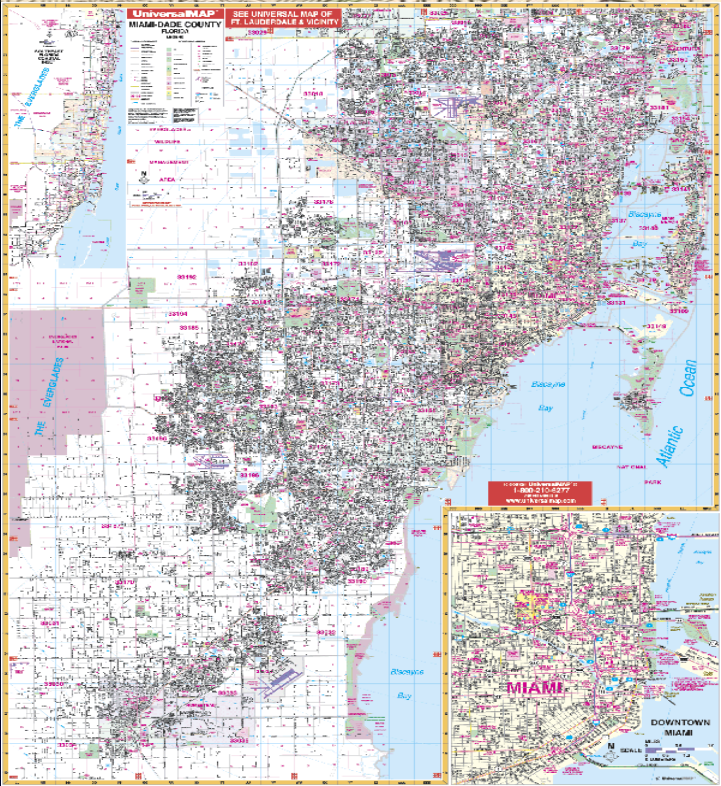
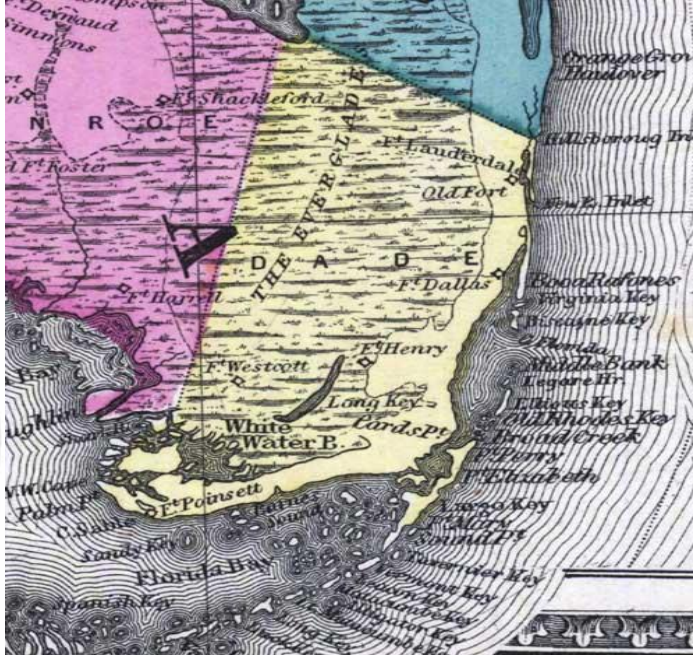
* *Miami*

Pacific North West

Washington DC

Demographics of Miami-Dade County

- **Total Population: 2,554.766 / 18% live below the poverty line**
- **57% Hispanic (42% Cuban)**
- **21% White-Non-Hispanic**
- **20% Black (35% Afro-Caribbean)**
- **7% Other**
- **51% Foreign born / 47% Naturalized U.S Citizens**
- **MAYOR NON-WHITE GROUPS**
- **Cuban 42%**
- **Nicaraguan 16%**
- **Colombian 6%**
- **Haitian 6%**
- **Dominicans 3%**
- **Jamaican 3%**



History of the Cuban Migration

- **The Exiles (1959-1962)** Exiles from communism 2,000
- **Port of Camarioca and the Freedom Flights (1965-1973)** The middle class pushed out by communism 250,000
- **Maríel Boatlift (1980)** 125,000, including 2,500 criminals and undesirables
- **Guantanamo-the “Balseros” (1994)** 37,000 boat people
- **Approximately 2.5 million Cubans in the US, mostly in S. Florida and W. New York**
- ***Ongoing influx of Boat People and a quota of 15,000 legal arrivals per year since 1994***

Rothe & Pumariega, 2008



Early Cuban Migrations: Characteristics

- **Victims of Communism and “The Cold War”:** Benefitted greatly from attitudes of U.S. solidarity and financial incentives
- **High Human Capital (professionals, entrepreneurs and skilled workers).** *Upper and middle classes exiled from communism*
- **Initial arrivals were overwhelmingly White and middle class, accepted into the U.S. mainstream**
- **Formed a strong “Ethnic Enclave” (maintains culture-slows down acculturation)**
- **Politically active, most financially successful Hispanic group. Dominant group in South Florida. They paved the way for other Latin American immigrant groups to South Florida**

Cuban Exiles: Early Mental Health Studies

- **Adult Cubans had < Substance Abuse (ETOH and Drugs) than other Hispanics and Blacks (2.6%) vs. White-Non-Hispanics (2.5%)**

SAMHSA, 1998; Ruiz & Rothe, 2001

- **Elevated Benzodiazepine abuse by adult Cuban women**

Allgulander, 1978; Gonzalez & Page, 1979

- **Operation Pedro Pan (15,000 un-accompanied Cuban children) (high rates of Depression and maladjustment-anecdotal)**

Eire 2003; Triay 1999; Torres 2003; Rothe, 2005

- **“Well acculturated Cuban-American adolescents that did not speak Spanish, living with poorly acculturated parents that spoke little English: More delinquency and substance abuse in the adolescents”**

Szapocnick et al. 1976,1979

- **The longer the family of the Hispanic child remained in the U.S., the lower the School Performance and professional aspirations**

Portes & Rumbaut, 1996

Cuban Boat people: *"The Balsaeros"*



PTSD Studies on Cuban Refugee Boat Children and Adolescents I

- **Elevated Rates of PTSD in 300 C&A examined inside the camps**
- **Pre-Existing conditions such as ADHD, LD, ASTHMA, & EPILEPSY were more than double the rate than in Cuban-American children living in the US**
- **Adolescent girls and Latency age boys, more vulnerable to certain traumatic stressors**
- **20% left behind one parent, 65% grandparents & 75% left behind uncles, aunts and other relatives**

Similar findings in a subpopulation that migrated to the Cayman Islands

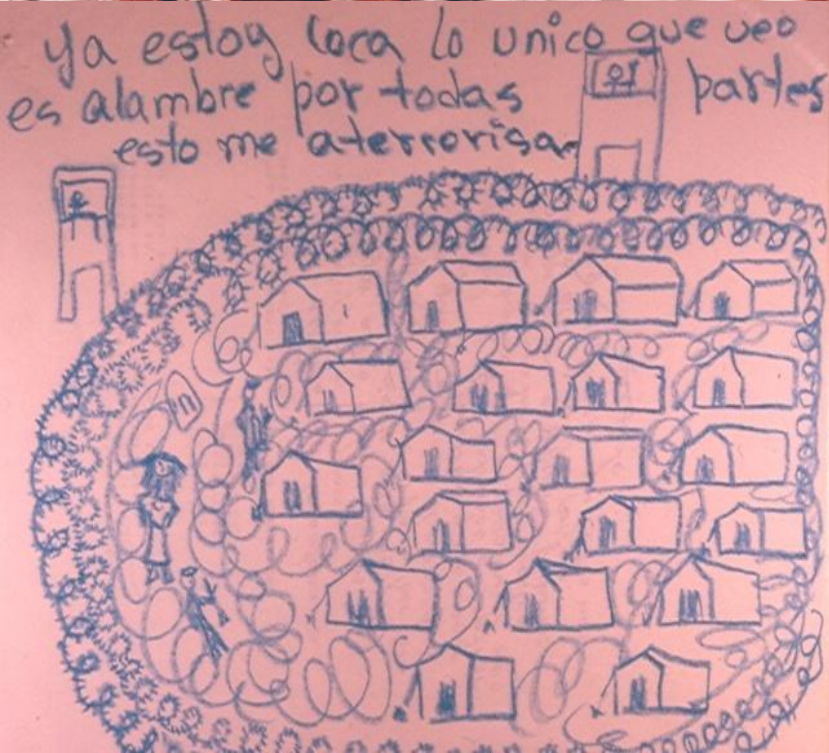
PTSD Studies on Cuban Refugee Boat Children and Adolescents II

There was a significant relationship between 1) duration of the traumatic events and 2) exposure to violence, and severity of PTSD

PTSD symptoms, in certain refugee children may continue unabated even after the stressors have been removed

The symptoms are experienced subjectively, may remain silent and go unnoticed by the adults responsible for the child's care, such as teachers

While the overall functioning of the children remains intact, subjective symptoms of PTSD continue after the stressors have been removed



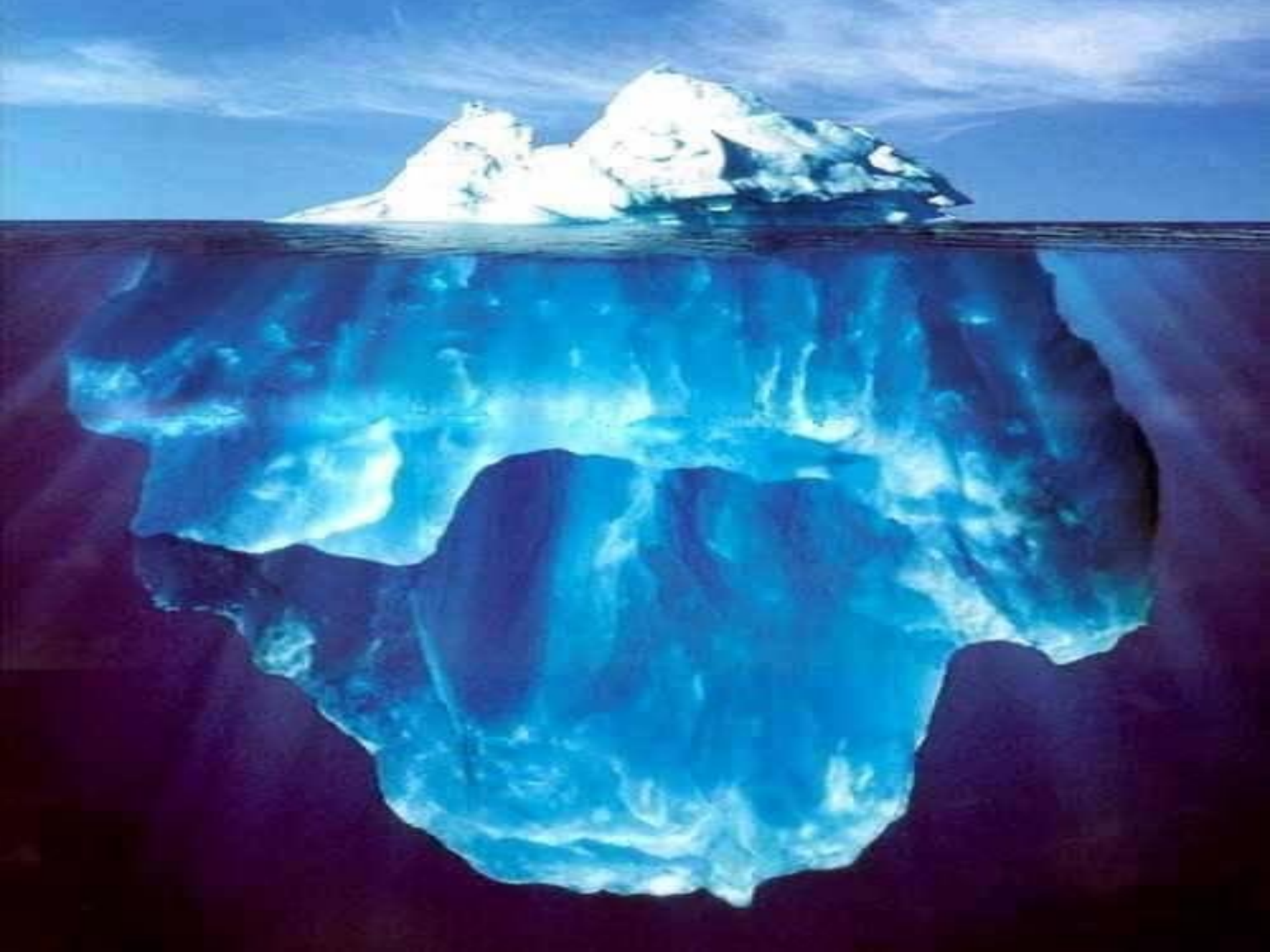
Historical Trauma, Losses and Separations: A Pilot Study to Evaluate the Psychological Problems of Cuban Exiles

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Historical Trauma Scale

- *240 Adult Cubans residing in Miami*
- 106 Males (44%)
- 134 Females (56%)
- Mean Age: 45.6 (18-81) Std Dev. 13.7
- Married 51.7%
- **Employed-College Degree 53%**
- Retired 5%

Questions:

I- *Repetitive-Recurrent Thoughts about the Losses and Trauma (12 questions)*

II- *Feelings (16 questions)*

Time Residing in U.S.

- **Less than 5 years** **31 %**

- **6 to 15 years** **43%**

After the “Special Period”

- **More than 15 years** **26%**

Mariel and before

Feelings	NEVER	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES OR VERY OFTEN
Sad when thinking about losses	25 %	31 %	44 %	75 %
As if it was happening again	33 %	25 %	42 %	77 %
Nightmares and bad dreams	30 %	29 %	41 %	70 %

Feelings	NEVER	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES OR VERY OFTEN
Sadness or Depression	13 %	41 %	46 %	87 %
Rage	17 %	38 %	45 %	83 %
Anxiety and Nervousness	25 %	34 %	41 %	75 %

<i>Do you think about that troubles you ?</i>	NEVER	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES OR VERY OFTEN
Death of relatives back in Cuba	11 %	67 %	22 %	89 %
Loss of our traditions	11 %	65 %	24 %	89 %
Loss of our culture	15 %	63 %	22 %	85 %
Loss of the respect of elders by our children and grandchildren	15 %	56 %	29 %	85 %

<i>Do you think about that troubles you ? (II)</i>	NEVER	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES OR VERY OFTEN
<i>LOSS OF CONTACT WITH FAMILY</i>	7 %	73 %	20 %	93 %
<i>LOSS OF OUR LAND</i>	9 %	69 %	22 %	91 %
<i>LOSS OF FREEDOM TO TRAVEL TO MY COUNTRY</i>	10 %	63 %	27 %	90 %

Historical Trauma in Cuban Exiles

- *More than 70 % of those interviewed positively endorsed questions regarding “NEGATIVE FEELINGS OR PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS CONNECTED TO THE LOSSES OF THE EXPERIENCE OF EXILE”*
- *16 % ADMITTED FEELING A NEED TO USE alcohol or drugs WHEN thinking about the losses of exile*
- The experience of exile has a negative effect on the mental health of the persons interviewed in our sample
- **Characterized by: Depressive Feelings, sadness, rage, and re-experiencing of the traumatic events**
- Some of these symptoms are similar to those found in individuals suffering from Depression and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Value Orientations of Recently Arrived Cuban Immigrants

- **Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1963)** developed a framework to measure value orientations
- **Gomez & Rothe (2004)**
 - measured value orientations of “Recently Arrived Cubans in Miami” (less than 6 months in the U.S.) Using the Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck model
- **Contrary to the stereotypes about individuals raised in communist countries:**
- **Future oriented**
- **Sought to dominate nature**
- **Sought egalitarian authority**
- *These values were very similar to the mainstream middle class in the U.S.*



Protective Factors

The Ethnic Enclave

- A community of immigrant compatriots that maintains and validates the original culture and language of the immigrant group
- Offers a **“Protective Factor”** against the feelings of alienation that are part of the immigrant experience
- *Facilitates entry into the “Workforce” and “Upward Mobility”*
- *Slows down acculturation*



Cubans have a Positive Self-Concept

- Miami-Dade County Public School System Psychiatric Epidemiology among 19-21 y/o. N = 1803 recently graduated H.S. students
- **Asian and Cuban:**

Social > Cognitive Supports > Felt “most welcomed”

Most “Phenotypically-White Hispanics” resided in Miami and reported:

< discrimination > mainstream identity (assimilation)

- **Cubans = Substance Abuse (all drugs) to Whites (less than Blacks and other groups)**

Turner & Gil, 2002

Asians and Cuban youth excelled in various studies

- **> Parental Support > Cognitive Supports > Social Supports**
- **Groups with > Established Inroads (more prosperous immigrant communities)**

Portes, 1999

Cubans in the Second Generation and Beyond

- More likely than other Hispanics to identify themselves as “hyphenated” (Cuban-American)
- More likely to identify themselves as “American” than other Hispanics
- Unable to forget their identity as members or descendants of the “Cuban Diaspora”. Differentiating their identity from other Hispanics
- Differences with working class Cuban youth (especially in inner-city Public Schools), who may identify with symbols of social confrontation of the underclass (rap music, graffiti-art etc)

Education

- Education is the **“Golden Dream”** and **the gift** that every immigrant parent wishes to give to their children
- Second generations Cubans have a higher level education than the generation of their parents
- **Cubans have higher levels of education than other Hispanics and Blacks, but the levels have had a slight decline**

Rumbaut & Portes ,1996; Rumbaut 2001a, 2001b

- Studies show it is the most effective way to adapt to American Society

By Succeeding in school immigrant children:

- Pay back their parents efforts and sacrifice
- **Pave their way for success in America**
- *Rather than shamefully distancing themselves from their parents cultural roots, they make their community proud, anchoring their sense of identity and enhancing their self esteem.*

Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001



“...or ring-up groceries as my mother did for twenty years, so I could write this poem for all of us today”

Rosileidy



Rosileidy

**A 29 year old Cuban woman who arrived
in the US at the age of 9 after leaving
Cuba on a raft**

**She spent 5 months in the refugee camps
at Guantanamo.**

**She works during the day and studies at
night for a Masters Degree**

*“When my parents boarded all of us on that raft to bring us here they gambled against death
(se la jugaron con la muerte).*

We were very lucky that they won that hand...

Now that I am going to be a mother... I have often wondered if I would have the courage to do the same for thing my child...

All I can say is that I hope life never puts me in that kind of situation.

When I think about how I got to this country... I feel a great sense of responsibility... To be the best that I can be... As a mother, as a wife and a professional, because that was the reason for my parent's sacrifice”

