Cuban Exile Identity: Determinants and Durability of Right-Wing Politics

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Results

- **The key determinant of this phenomenon is the construction and use of exile identity.** Three themes were investigated to arrive at this conclusion:

  - **“Political” versus “Economic” Migrants/Motivations**
    - Through a case study of the Mariel Exodus, this is exposed as a false dichotomy that obscures how Cuban migrants remain politically motivated throughout the years

- **Exile Identity/Ideology and Political Party Affiliation**
  - Key aspects of exile ideology (support for “hardline” policies towards Cuba) are directly correlated with GOP affiliation
  - Despite differences on key issues (e.g., the embargo) their decision to vote GOP is still informed by their exile identity. They also project their exile identity onto current conditions
  - Democrats flex their exile credentials to gain support, but fail by operating in a social context dictated by an exile identity that the Right has a hold on, thereby reinforcing right-wing politics

- **Institutional Connections: Pervasiveness and Robustness**
  - Exile is the raison d’être of the Cuban-American community and tethers people together
  - The crucial nexuses connecting unrelated interviewees are found to be Brigade 2506 (Bay of Pigs Invasion force) and political prisoners in Cuba

Background

- The history of Cubans in the United States took a radical turn due to the explosive growth of their community in South Florida after the Cuban Revolution of 1959
- Right-wing politically motivated remnants of the Batista regime and the petit-bourgeoisie were the first to establish themselves in Miami-Dade County
- Decades later, the Cuban-American community remains right-wing
- What explains the right-wing hold on the Cuban-American community?

Data and Methods

- Qualitative data from Cuban-American newspapers and coded interviews
- Prioritized equal Democrat and Republican participation