

## Constructions of Collective Belongings through Art by Migrants from Cuba in Germany and South Florida

*Michaela Koettig*

**Key words:**

Cuban migration;  
South Florida;  
Germany;  
constructions of  
belongings;  
biographical case  
reconstruction; art

**Abstract:** This essay focuses on Cuban immigration to South Florida and Germany. Focusing on two biographies, this essay shall introduce the migration backgrounds and living conditions in the countries of immigration. The construction of ethnic belonging for migrants from Cuba is unquestioningly self-evident for migrants from Cuba both in Germany and Florida. In creating this ethnic belonging, immigrants refer to Cuba's history, culture and art. Strong similarities can be found in these constructions despite the rather different circumstances that the migrants face in their countries of immigration. In terms of the use of art in these constructions, a biographical empirical approach can show how occupation as an artist can either help individuals find solutions for contradictory aspects of life in the country of immigration or help create continuity with the migrants' past prior to their migration.

### Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
  - [2. Self Perception and Perception by Others in the Country of Immigration](#)
  - [3. History of Immigration from Cuba to South Florida](#)
  - [4. Migration between Germany and Cuba](#)
  - [5. Summary of the Similarities and Differences, the Decision to Migrate and Living Conditions in the Countries of Immigration](#)
  - [6. Functions of the Constructions of Belonging Based on Art in Alicia and Miguel's Biographies](#)
    - [6.1 The reconstruction of Miguel's biography](#)
    - [6.2 The reconstruction of Alicia's biography](#)
  - [7. Summary](#)
- [Acknowledgments](#)
- [References](#)
- [Author](#)
- [Citation](#)

## 1. Introduction

As a part of a collaborative research and teaching project between the Center for Methods in Social Sciences at the Georg-August University of Göttingen (Germany) and the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the Nova Southeastern University of Fort Lauderdale (Florida), this project focuses on immigrants from Cuba as a migrant grouping<sup>1</sup> in the United States and Germany.

---

1 I use the term "grouping" instead of "group" with reference to BRUBAKER's (2004) critique of the term in which he posits that there is a tendency in the sciences to assume the existence of defined ethnic groups ("groupism"). "Grouping" does not imply a group in the sociological sense of the term, but primarily refers to definitions by others (see also ROSENTHAL in collaboration with KÖTTIG in this issue).

In terms of the construction of belongings,<sup>2</sup> the study of these two groupings is of interest as Cubans who migrated to Germany did so for reasons very different from those Cubans who migrated to the United States. Furthermore, their formal residency statuses and the general living conditions in the two countries are considerably different, as I shall illustrate in my essay. In general, one can assume that the migration of Cubans to Germany is disproportionately driven by poverty or the search for employment, and Cuban migrants in Germany tend to lead a transnational existence. However, political circumstances play a much larger role in the migration of Cubans to the United States. This means that Cuban-Americans seldom travel to Cuba, and, if they do, they generally tend to withhold this information from the Cuban-American community in Florida. [1]

Strikingly, despite these differences in their motives for emigration as well as in the living conditions in their country of immigration, Cuban migrants' construction of ethnic belonging as Cubans remains unquestioningly self-evident. In this respect, Cubans contrast greatly with other groupings of immigrants—such as ethnic German immigrants in Germany who have trouble with clearly defining their belonging (see BALLENTHIEN & BÜCHING, in this issue; ROSENTHAL & STEPHAN, in press; FEFLER & RADENBACH, in press). There is a further similarity in the constructions of Cuban migrants in South Florida and Germany: The creation of ethnic belonging as a Cuban references Cuban history as well as art and culture, often in combination with the migrant's occupation as an artist. Both in Germany and Florida, we often heard references given to writers, actors, painters, or musicians during our interviews, and many of the interviewees were themselves active musicians, actors, writers, or painters. This situation requires explanation, as it is a phenomenon that exists to such an extent in no other group of migrants investigated thus far. [2]

In my essay, I wish to examine this phenomenon of a reference to art more closely. I shall introduce two evaluated biographical case studies—one from Alicia, a Cuban-German actress, and one from Miguel, a Cuban-American painter<sup>3</sup>. Against the backdrop of their quite different biographies—particularly regarding the circumstances surrounding their migration—I will investigate the functions of Cuban ethnic constructions of belonging as well as the role played by art. In Alicia's and Miguel's biographies, one can see that the construction of belonging over the course of their lives by means of an artistic career can help create a sense of self-assurance and continuity. [3]

In order to introduce the two interviewees and provide the reader with an idea of how they occupy themselves in their countries of immigration, I shall begin with

---

2 I employ the concept of collective belongings to refer to definitions of the biographers by others. Furthermore—following Gabriele ROSENTHAL (2004a, in this issue) and other researchers—I am referring to constructions of belonging as opposed to, for example, an apparently static concept of identity in favor of stressing the transformative possibility and the active act of its creation. The question, which belongings are developed and transformed in which constellations over the course of an individual's life and the meanings they are given, is empirical in nature.

3 The names in the biographies of both persons have been changed in order to prevent them being recognized.

two quotes from Alicia and Miguel in which they speak about themselves within the context of their countries of immigration. Based on these statements, I will discuss the varying histories and circumstances which led to their migration to Germany and South Florida, respectively, before thoroughly examining the development of the importance of art in the lives of these two migrants. [4]

## **2. Self Perception and Perception by Others in the Country of Immigration**

The first quote is from Alicia. She was born in Trinidad, Cuba, in 1959 and immigrated to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1989. Seven years before coming to the GDR, she had fallen in love with a citizen of East Germany who had been working in Cuba as a "foreign specialist." Alicia had studied at the university and at the time she was working as a theater actress and dancer. Her relationship to her German partner was maintained as a long-distance relationship, after he went to Nicaragua shortly after their meeting. The couple married three years later and in 1986, Alicia gave birth to a son, who Alicia raised in Cuba. During one of her regular visits to the GDR, the social upheavals of 1989 resulted in Alicia's remaining in Germany with her husband and son. Alicia soon experienced a mental breakdown that later resulted in the breakup of her marriage. Only after some time was Alicia able to open herself up to her country of immigration, Germany. She again began to work in the field of drama as, among other jobs, a dancer and theater educator. [5]

In the early summer of 2006, Alicia was surprised by her Cuban friend Manolo who asked her to tell her story to two German students. After Manolo had told her of his request on the telephone and Alicia at first agreed to his request as a favor—as she later told her interviewers—, Manolo brought the students Katharina WESENICK and Lore LEHMANN<sup>4</sup> to her apartment. In Manolo's presence and under considerable time pressure, the two students asked Alicia to tell her family and life story. They were under time pressure, as Alicia had wanted to visit a concert on that day and on the following day was leaving for Cuba for one month. The conversation was therefore interrupted in the afternoon and was resumed in the evening, after Alicia had visited the concert—this time without Manolo—, and continued late into the night. As a part of the self-structured introductory presentation<sup>5</sup>, which despite the difficult circumstances lasted approximately four hours and was carried out in German according to Alicia's wishes, she repeatedly spoke about her current life situation. The following quote was taken from the last part of the introductory presentation in which Alicia stated:

---

4 The interview was carried out by both students as a part of the research training project "Ethnicity and Biography" led by Gabriele ROSENTHAL and this author during the summer semester 2005 and the winter semester 2006/2007 at the Center for Methods in Social Sciences at the Georg-August University of Göttingen. The reconstruction of Alicia's biography is based on two interviews with her, one interview with her son, and one with Alicia's mother. The analysis was carried out by the students Lore LEHMANN and Anna RANSIEK and amended by the author.

5 This part of the narrative interview generally follows an invitation to speak from the interviewer and is not interrupted by questions (ROSENTHAL, 2004a).

"... a new space opened up (2) yes [I: hmm] so, and we did that ourselves without any support whatsoever and absolutely no money from the state and no sponsors, nothing, because I uh think that when you give something that is good, and by good I mean=because that is always relative, what is good and what is bad, by good I mean um that which is really (2) real ... what truly comes from the heart and, when you really give everything you can in the moment, or everything you have to give, [I: hmm] then it really has a=a=you know=it=it=it goes down well, and then the people will also recognize ok there is a difference between someone who wants to sell something=anything, and all of the others like us, who offer something authentic (2) and I also really believe that it is possible to live from this, it is hard because you have to open up a space of course, you have to establish yourself and the people say the Germans say, look here, you know the Rumba, you know the salsa, but this is me too, and you've never seen this before, and that's what you're going to get now (2) because uh in the end we live here and I can't just uh spend my whole life here and just repeat what uh was done in Cuba seventy or a hundred years ago or what do I know how many years it was [I: 'yes'] that's uh, and we've been doing that and uh (3) ... for four years [I: yeah hmm] we've been doing that, and that is what you would call hmm: (3) yeah (2) that is somehow a piece of home (3) that I have made for myself here (3)"<sup>6</sup> (11/15/40-59).<sup>7</sup> [6]

Alicia spoke about the opening of a basement theater which she had founded together with her new partner. She stressed how her project was able to get by without any form of public subvention and how she believes that only art should be shown which is authentic and is important to the artist—not the art that is expected of them and with which they could most likely make more money. Here, one can already see that it is of the utmost importance to Alicia to realize her own ideas and artistic projects. For Alicia, the creation of a social surrounding which she herself calls "home" and her mission is to not only expand the horizons of her host country's citizens but also to "educate" people and "correct" their views about "what makes Cubans tick." There is a latent criticism in Alicia's statement according to which she sees herself faced with outdated and unfounded ascriptions in Germany. It is these ascriptions which she attempts to tackle in her work. [7]

But what does Miguel have to say about the United States? Miguel was born in 1953 as his parents' third child. He grew up in a very privileged environment near Trinidad. The family prepared their escape from Cuba shortly after the revolution, but only two of Miguel's sisters managed to leave the country on one of the Peter Pan flights<sup>8</sup>. Miguel and his parents were not able to flee the country until 1963.

6 The following transcriptions symbols are used in this essay: I interviewer, brief pause; (4) pause in full seconds; : sound lengthened, ((coughs)) moods & non-verbal utterances or sounds; / marks beginning and end of phenomenon; **no** syllable (sound) stressed; **NO** loudly; much-break; "no" softly, in a low voice; ( ) incomprehensible, space between brackets approximately corresponding to length/duration of passage; ... breaks in the text by the author; (says he) approximate transcription; Yes=Yes rapid speech, words closely linked.

7 11/15/40-59: Interview 1, page 15, lines 40-59 (of the transcript).

8 Operation Peter Pan (*Operación Pedro Pan*) was an operation coordinated by the United States government, the Roman Catholic Church, and Cuban exiles. Between December 26, 1960 and October 23, 1962, over fourteen thousand children were brought from Cuba to the United States (see <http://www.pedropan.org/> [accessed June 6, 2009] or LEVINE & ASÍS, 2000, p.24).

They first traveled to Spain and from there they made their way to Delaware in the United States. Miguel attended a private Catholic school, studied architecture for a few semesters, completed a course of studies in the humanities at an established college, and graduated with a degree in Spanish literature. He later received an MA in literature and art. In the course of his life, Miguel has made several trips to Europe and South America and he teaches architecture, art, and free painting at a university in Miami. One of Miguel's acquaintances arranged a meeting in February 2006, and Miguel agreed to tell me his biography. He justified his participation in the interview by stating that he thought he might discover new ways of looking at his own life. The biographical interview took place in Miguel's small, typically Floridian house on the edge of a wealthy neighborhood that is home to several established Cuban-Americans. The interview was carried out in English and consisted of three meetings: two of two and a half hours and one of three hours and forty-five minutes<sup>9</sup>. After Miguel was asked to tell his life story at the first meeting, there followed a discussion as to where exactly he should begin with his story. In the end, Miguel began at the present, reassured himself of his present-day stability as well as his achievements, and summarized by stating that he felt "very fulfilled." Miguel stated that it took him a long time to "come to this point." He said that, as a person, he was always in search of connections, "for the way that things relate to each other." He continued:

"when I draw when I paint this is something that I-I use as a challenge and at the same time as a as a means of finding solutions and I think that a seeing that my-my teaching even though it is limited in terms of time and my art are combining is ah satisfaction because it tells me that things are connected (I: umm) so um in short I guess um right now I'm living in this very beautiful area of the United States where it just gets a little bit too warm in the summer for for my taste too humid but basically it's a really um ideal location it's ah situated in a country where you have a lot of opportunities (I: umm) and um at the same time you know the location with the beaches and the-the influx of people that you meet make it a very rich ah um, spot where you know where to live, so ah I fe-feel myself very fortunate in that way ah sometimes I feel like Miami because it is ah tourist location is not as deep as perhaps a city in Europe would be for me because I am very, very much in love with European art history especially and I wish I lived in Italy sometimes or Spain or France but um I have the books and I can maybe travel there now" (11/2/33-3/9). [8]

This quote illustrates how Miguel views painting as a challenge that he can use to find solutions and connections. He stresses that he appreciates the options available to him in South Florida. With this statement, he might be reproducing the stereotypical ideas about life in the United States, emphasizing his own development, or even alluding to the options that might be available in Cuba. At the same time, he expresses a light criticism or dissatisfaction—manifested here in his statements concerning the climate and tourism in Miami. Europe appears to Miguel to be much "deeper"—as he himself puts it—thanks in particular to its art history. [9]

---

9 The biographical case reconstruction is based on interviews with Miguel as well as an examination of his webpage.

Both quotes, Alicia's as well as Miguel's, represent typical attitudes of Cuban immigrants in their respective social contexts towards their country of immigration. The fact that Cuban migrants are confronted with ascriptions by others, as it is true for nearly all other groupings of immigrants in Germany, is reflected in one way or another in almost all of the interviews we carried out. Alicia defines her manner of dealing with such ascriptions by letting her art show others how she really is as a Cuban. Art allows her to explain herself and to present her "manner of being." [10]

Similar to Alicia, Miguel concerns himself with his own artistic development. While Alicia emphasizes the manner, in which she uses art to present herself and thus encourage "processes of understanding" in her country of immigration, Miguel more strongly emphasizes his use of painting as a means of gaining new insights into himself and increased self-assuredness. In light of his country of immigration, Miguel points out the many opportunities that are available to him in the United States. The manner, in which Miguel criticizes his environment, clearly illustrates that he has no doubts about belonging to U.S. society. Both of these aspects—the opportunities available to him as well as the generally latent criticism of the way of life in the United States—are characteristic themes of Cuban immigrants in South Florida that surfaced in all of the interviews that we conducted there. These themes originate in the conditions of residency and living conditions for Cubans in the United States—particularly those living in South Florida. [11]

In order to explain these specific themes and current living conditions, I shall discuss in greater detail the history of Cuban migration to South Florida. I will then contrast this history by outlining the history of migration and the living conditions of Cubans in Germany in order to illustrate the immense differences faced by these two migrant groupings. [12]

### **3. History of Immigration from Cuba to South Florida**

Alongside Canada and Australia, the United States can be considered a typical country of immigration. This is how the country conceptualizes itself, and this idea is symbolized by the Statue of Liberty from 1886 as well as by John F. KENNEDY's 1958 essay, in which he describes the United States as a "nation of immigrants"<sup>10</sup>. The entire history of the United States is characterized by immigration, and according to the historian Oscar HANDLIN in his introduction to his now classic book on the subject: "I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history" (1951, p.3). Immigration can thus be understood as a constitutive characteristic in the history and society of the United States, and this is of course true of South Florida in particular. According to the U.S. Census<sup>11</sup>, Florida ranks among the four states with the highest percentage of foreign-born residents and among the

---

10 With regard to the conceptualization of this coexistence—by which I mean the theories of assimilation, pluralism, and integration—, the history and implementation of these policies, and their effects on the ethnic consciousness of minorities in particular, I refer to Donata ELSCHENBROICH (1986).

11 See <http://usgovinfo.about.com/cs/censusstatistic/a/foreignborn.htm> [accessed June 9, 2009].

nation's largest cities, Miami is the city with the highest percentage of foreign-born residents (60,6 percent) (ibid.). Due to the city's geographical proximity to Caribbean countries and Latin America, the percentage of immigrants from these regions is particularly high in South Florida<sup>12</sup>. [13]

With twenty-two percent of Florida's total foreign-born population<sup>13</sup>, Cubans constitute the largest grouping in this state. Most Cuban immigrants came to Florida after the revolution, meaning the number of Cubans in Florida rose dramatically after 1959, even though the history of migration between Cuba and South Florida spans the colonial era to the present. For example, many of Florida's residents fled to Cuba, after England seized Florida from Spain in 1763 (see GONZALEZ-PANDO, 1988). During the thirty-year struggle of independence from Spain (1868–1898), many Cubans fled to the United States as well as other countries (LEVINE & ASÍS, 2000, p.14). After Cuba achieved its independence and annexation by the United States was formally ended with the 1901 Platt Amendment (ZEUSKE, 2002a, p.158<sup>14</sup>), Cuban history was primarily swayed by the U.S. political influence and economic investment over the course of the following five decades. There was a great deal of exchange between the two countries. For example, Cuban holidaymakers came to Florida and vice versa, and the University of Havana's football team played against the University of Miami (LEVINE & ASÍS, 2000, p.18). Cuban students came to the United States and U.S. companies owned a large percentage of Cuban agricultural land and controlled most of the nation's capital and trade (MASUD-PILOTO, 1996, p.20; NAVARRO, 1998, p.76). [14]

The close relationship between the two countries is also reflected in Miguel's family. Both his father as well as his paternal grandfather were doctors, and his father completed his medical degree in the United States in the 1940s. His maternal grandparents were also quite well-to-do. His grandfather, a lawyer, served as mayor in the 1930s and during that time, he brought in an American company to design and build a housing development along the lines of housing developments in the United States. The homes were even equipped with electricity, and members of Miguel's extended family lived in some of the houses. [15]

Some Cubans owned companies in the United States during this phase of Cuba's history (GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003, p.18). During the era of prohibition in the United States (1919–1933) and later during the presidency of Fulgenico Batista, many citizens of the United States came to Cuba for the amusements on offer in Havana (LEVINE & ASÍS, 2000, p.18), while at the same time thousands of Cubans fled the political instability resulting from opposition to various Cuban dictators, including Batista. These refugees landed in the United States, and in particular Miami, in order to organize their resistance to the Cuban dictatorships (GONZALEZ-PANDO, 1998; LEVINE & ASÍS, 2000). However, as LEVINE and

---

12 According to the 2000 U.S. census, the top three countries of birth for Florida's foreign born inhabitants were Cuba, Mexico, and Haiti (see <http://www.census.gov> [accessed June 9, 2009]).

13 See <http://usgovinfo.about.com/cs/censusstatistic/a/foreignborn.htm> [accessed June 9, 2009].

14 See also <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/ip/86557.htm> [accessed July 25, 2009].

ASÍS have pointed out, "the total number of Cuban-born residents in the United States before the late 1950s was modest, probably fewer than twenty thousand" (2000, p.3). Furthermore, "by 1958, only about 10,000 Cubans lived in Miami: 3,500 residents and the rest mostly young people fleeing Batista" (2000, p.21). [16]

It is assumed that since the revolution an estimated total of two million people have left Cuba, and, according to the 2000 U.S. Census<sup>15</sup>, about 1,2 million of these Cuban-born migrants now live in the United States. The reasons and motives, which moved Cubans to emigrate, are mainly associated with the political situation under Fidel Castro's regime. Broadly speaking, Cuban emigration was caused by a combination of political opposition (often involving repression and/or persecution) and excruciating living and working conditions (see for example GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003). The majority of those, who left Cuba, came to South Florida. According to the US Census, 74% of all Cubans living in the United States—around 900,000 people—live in this area<sup>16</sup>. Miami-Dade County developed into the main area of Cuban settlement and can now be regarded as a Cuban "enclave" (PORTES & MANNING, 1986). As Lisandro PEREZ stated as early as 1992 (p.86), "Miami is the capital and the mecca of U.S. Cubans." Political relations between Cuba and the United States as well as international political developments (such as the Cold War and its consequences) resulted in recurring waves of immigration. Guillermo GRENIER and Lisandro PÉRES (2003), as well as other researchers, have defined these waves as follows: the Early Exiles of 1959–1962 (also known as the Initial Exodus), the Airlifts or Freedom Flights of 1965–1973, the 1980 Mariel Boatlift, and the 1994 Rafter Crisis. Each of these waves involved specific social circumstances, specific social groups, and specific reasons for emigration, and each of these aspects had a particular effect on South Florida and its Cuban community (see COOPER, EDSALL, RIVIERA, CHAITIN & LINSTROTH in this issue). [17]

Generally speaking, one can state—and this appraisal is shared by all of the researchers known to this author (see for example PÉREZ, 1992; PORTES & STEPICK 1993; GARCÍA, 1996; MASUD-PILOTO, 1996; GONZALEZ-PANDO, 1998; LEVINE & ASÍS, 2000; GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003; HENNING, 2001; STEPICK, GRENIER, CASTRO & DUNN, 2003)—that the immigrants, who came to South Florida in the years immediately after the revolution, saw themselves as exiles. They assumed that their stay was only temporary—they believed Fidel Castro's revolutionary leadership would not hold and they would soon be able to return to Cuba. With the support of the CIA and other political organizations, they attempted various (unsuccessful) attempts to overthrow Castro's regime<sup>17</sup>. Enabled by their higher socioeconomic status, these so-called Early Exiles (about 200,000 people) were also the ones who paved the way for the following waves

15 See <http://www.census.gov/> [accessed July 24, 2009].

16 See <http://usgovinfo.about.com/cs/censusstatistic/a/foreignborn.htm> [accessed June 9, 2009].

17 The most spectacular of these incidents in Cuba is known as "The Bay on the Pigs Invasion" (*La Batalla de Girón*)—an unsuccessful attempt to invade southern Cuba on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1961. Supported by the U.S. government, an American-trained force of Cuban exiles tried to overthrow Fidel Castro's government. The Cuban government and the militias defeated the invasion in three days (ZEUSKE, 2000a p.190; see also <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/baypigs/pigs.htm> [accessed June 12, 2009]).

of immigrants. To South Florida they brought social, cultural, and economic capital (BOURDIEU, 1992) that was already interwoven with the contacts they maintained in the United States prior to the revolution. Miguel and his family can also be considered members of the Early Exiles<sup>18</sup>. Miguel's father studied medicine in Delaware. After the revolution, Miguel's family migrated there, and his father took a position at a hospital. [18]

It was particularly the early immigrants—such as Miguel and his family—who invested in companies and hospitals in South Florida, founded private schools, and developed networks to assist the newcomers. As a result of these activities, the early immigrants were increasingly successful and gained substantial political influence. GRENIER and PÉREZ summarize:

"The importance of this first wave in shaping the character of the Cuban presence in the United States cannot be overstated. As might be expressed given its socioeconomic origins, this wave possessed skills and attitudes that would facilitate adjustment to life in the United States and give it enduring political and economic hegemony within the Cuban community" (2003, p.23; see also PORTES & STEPICK, 1993, p.123). [19]

Of course, this development cannot be separated from the U.S. policy regarding immigrants from Cuba. As a result of the Castro regime's embracing of communism, its close relationship to the Soviet Union and other socialist/communist states, as well as the backdrop of the Cold War, Cuban immigrants were defined as "political refugees," even though individual cases were not investigated to determine if this was actually the case. The Cuban Refugee Adjustment Act of 1966 set special conditions for Cuban immigration (ZUCKER & FLINK-ZUCKER, 1996). U.S. Immigration Support, an independent organization which provides information pertaining to immigration to the United States and provides assistance to those wishing to immigrate, summarizes the immigration and residency conditions that existed up until the mid-1990s as follows:

"Unlike immigrants from other countries, Cubans were granted a special status which made it easier to gain residency. Other immigrants had to prove that they were fleeing for political reasons so that they could be granted the status of a refugee. On the other hand, upon entry onto United States soil, Cubans were automatically given refugee status along with other privileges. Some of these special privileges were introduced in 1966 and included gaining permanent residency status if the Cuban immigrant had resided in the U.S. for at least one year. For Cuban immigrants that had stayed longer than the time period granted on their visitor visas, they were still granted permanent residency"<sup>19</sup>. [20]

---

18 As a result of the difficulties in gaining access to migrants from other backgrounds, the sample in South Florida (ten persons in total) is comprised mainly of interviewees of Spanish ancestry with relatively high social and cultural capital. Further interviews will concentrate on U.S. Cubans with lower social and cultural capital as well as U.S. Cubans with Asian or African backgrounds.

19 See <http://www.usimmigrationsupport.org/cubanimmigration.html> [accessed June 12, 2009].

Furthermore, Cuban immigration was both directly and indirectly supported by the U.S. government. For example, from 1965 to 1976, the United States initiated a special assistance program to the tune of one billion dollars known as the Cuban Refugee Program, which made it possible for Cuban immigrants to declare capital losses for properties in Cuba, among other benefits<sup>20</sup>. Against this backdrop of substantial support for Cuban immigrants by the U.S. government, it is not surprising that immigrants—including Miguel—are grateful for the opportunities, that were made available to them, and are thus more likely to identify with the United States. [21]

In return for this special assistance, many immigrants were trained as spies (approximately 12,000 in the early 1960s), or their knowledge of Cuba was used by the U.S. government for political ends (see for example GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003, p.53). One result of this cooperation was a close networking of Cuban immigrants with the Republican Party, which experienced substantial growth as the first wave of Cuban immigrants in particular flocked to the party. Thanks to these immigrants' substantial influence, the Early Exiles were able to absorb following waves of immigration (particularly those immigrants coming to Florida as a result of the 1980 Mariel Boatlift and the 1994 Rafter Crisis) into South Florida. This is particularly surprising as both of these incidents of mass immigration were quite chaotic, and a large number of new immigrants arrived in Florida within a very short period of time: The Mariel Boatlift resulted in 125,000 people arriving within a period of less than five months, whereas the Rafter Crisis brought 35,000 to 37,000 refugees to Florida in less than two weeks. Furthermore, in these two waves of immigration, particularly the Mariel Boatlift, those migrants coming to the United States were strongly represented by "Cuba's lower socioeconomic sectors and its nonwhite population. There were convicted felons among the arrivals ..." (GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003, p.24). [22]

The Cuban exiles might have been able to integrate all of these migrants into South Florida with the assistance of US-Cuban networks, but they could not prevent a tightening of Cuban immigration policy following the Rafter Crisis that set an annual quota of 20,000 immigrants coming to the United States from Cuba. Thus the Cuban Refugee Adjustment Act was essentially revoked (see for example MASUD-PILOTO, 1996; DICKEL, 2002; GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003). Yet Miami-Dade County can still be regarded as an "enclave of Cuba" (PORTES & STEPICK, 1993), in which the Cuban community—particularly the Early Exiles—was able to develop substantial political and economic power that allowed them to put forth a conservative exile ideology in opposition to Castro's regime directed

---

20 The political motivations behind the treatment of Cubans as opposed to other immigrants can clearly be seen in the case of Haitian immigrants to South Florida. Cuba and Haiti experienced political transformations that included repression and persecution at roughly the same time. There were also simultaneous waves of immigration to South Florida from both countries. Haitian immigrants were declared "economic refugees to be determined on a case-by-case basis" and no assistance programs were developed to help them. Instead, the authorities as well as the executive branch were determined to send back as many Haitian immigrants as possible or to prevent them from entering the country in the first place. This led to considerable tensions between the Haitian and Cuban immigrant communities in South Florida (see also: STEPICK 1992, 1998; MASUD-PILOTO, 1996; ZUCKER & FLINK-ZUCKER, 1996, ÖPITZ, 1999, DICKEL, 2002, and the essay by LINSTROTH, HALL, PROSPER & HILLER, in this issue).

at both their own community as well as at their Cuban homeland. Their political influence made any sort of rapprochement between the United States (including the exile community) and Cuba under Castro impossible (see for example GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003). Only in the last few years has it been possible for a faction to develop within the exile community that actively supports a normalizing of relations between the United States and Cuba. This movement appears to be gaining in strength (OSTERMANN, 2009), thanks in part to the Obama administration's relaxing of the restrictions affecting travel to Cuba in early 2009 as well as its attempts to initiate relations with the country. [23]

In contrast to this complex historical process consisting of the eventful course of migration between Cuba and South Florida resulting in a strong exile community with a dominating presence in Miami-Dade County, the connections and history of migration between Germany and Cuba—although this history reaches far back into the past—is far less striking. This can be seen alone in the fact that the connections between Cuba and Germany have to this day hardly been the subject of extensive research. There is very little literature on the subject, particularly in comparison to the huge amount of literature reconstructing relations between the United States—especially South Florida—and Cuba. [24]

#### **4. Migration between Germany and Cuba**

The patterns of migration between Cuba and Germany show that at first there were a small number of cases in which Germans immigrated to or resided in Cuba. Alexander von Humboldt visited Cuba in the early nineteenth century (in 1801 and 1804) (ZEUSKE, 2002a), and there were also Germans involved in the first wave of forced immigration (of slaves) to Cuba—for example, a French-German ran a coffee plantation on the island in the 1820s (ZEUSKE, 2002a, p.88; p.118). As Matthias HUCKE (2001) and Martin FRANZBACH (1993) reconstructed, in the first four decades of the twentieth century, between 140 (in the 1920s) and around 380 (in the 1940s) Germans lived on Cuba. HUCKE and FRANZBACH have shown that these immigrants often held nationalist and conservative convictions. They have described how a local group of the NSDAP was founded in Cuba which actively advanced national socialist propaganda. The group experienced a substantial amount of growth, but it was dissolved in 1939 due to pressure from Cuba's Jewish community and as a result of surveillance by the Cuban authorities as early as 1939—before the German army's invasion of Poland. After Cuba declared war against Germany in December 1941, many Germans were held in an internment camp on the Isla de Pinos (HUCKE, 2001). According to Patrick von ZUR MÜHLEN (1988), Jewish refugees and other victims of political persecution by the Nazis were granted asylum by the Cuban government. Between the end of the war and the revolution, a few Germans continued to live on Cuba, but their numbers decreased even further in the wake of the revolution (FRANZBACH, 1993). [25]

After this phase of migration to Cuba, the GDR's official recognition of Cuba's government in 1963 after the 1959 revolution as well as the treaties signed between the two governments in 1975 and 1978, dealing with work exchange

programs, led to a phase of diplomatic, cultural, and workforce exchanges between the two countries. However, diplomatic relations between West Germany and Cuba were put on ice—a result of the GDR's recognition of Cuba as well as the perceived threat and "block discipline" that prevailed during the Cold War (GRATIUS, 2001; BREUER, 2001). As Susanne GRATIUS (2001) and Ralf E. BREUER (2001) have determined, this position influenced West Germany's official policy until the late 1990s, despite the official resumption of diplomatic relations in 1975. However throughout this period, a degree of contact between Cuba and West Germany was maintained by NGOs, foundations, religious organizations, and the representatives of political parties. [26]

The treaties between the GDR and Cuba led to the presence of approximately 30,000 Cuban "contract laborers" in the GDR between 1975 and 1990. Some of these laborers were involved in job training programs, but the majority of them were employed in the cement, textile, and chemical industries (GRUNER-DOMIC, 1996, 1999). There was also a degree of contact between the GDR's Ministry of State Security (MfS) and Cuba's Ministerio del Interior (MININT). As a part of the program, East German spies were trained in Cuba and then deployed in Nicaragua (EHLERT, STAADT & VOIGT, 2002). [27]

Alicia's husband, who she met in Cuba and with whom she remained in the GDR after 1989, was most likely one of these spies. It is probably due to her husband's activities that Alicia was unable to return to Cuba after the "fall of the Berlin Wall" and the subsequent collapse of the treaties between the GDR and Cuba (GRABENDORFF, 1992). [28]

Although Alicia came to Germany with her husband in 1989, most Cuban "contract laborers" returned to Cuba. GRUNER-DOMIC (2002, p.282) calculated that "in 1989 8,300 Cubans still resided in East Germany, in 1990 only sixty remained. Only a few of these contract laborers remained, usually because they had married a German partner." This small number of Cuban immigrants gradually rose again during the 1990s, generally as a result of the acute poverty that spread throughout Cuba and the Soviet Union after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the subsequent abolition of state subsidies. Although Castro's government attempted to avert this poverty by investing all of the country's resources into food production as a part of the "Special Period in Times of Peace" (*Periodo Especial en Tiempo de Paz*), the government's policies could not entirely remedy the situation, and Cuba found itself forced to alter its position vis-à-vis emigration. Emigrants were no longer despised as "traitors," but instead migration was officially allowed by the government. With the introduction of a foreign residency permit (*Permiso de Residencia en el Exterior*, PRE)<sup>21</sup> in 1990, migration for work and marriage with the option of returning to Cuba was now possible. The plan also included a provision for remittances to aid in the support of family members remaining in Cuba (MONREAL, 1999; HOFFMANN, 2005).

21 See the Cuban embassy in Bonn for further information: <http://emba.cubaminrex.cu/Default.aspx?tabid=10311> [accessed July 24, 2009]. This ruling is also important for Cuban migrants as they do not lose their property in Cuba. It does not however apply to Cubans who immigrate to the United States, with the exception of artists who are married to a U.S. citizen.

The 1990s saw the beginning of migration from Cuba to Germany based on marriages that were not necessarily the result of true relationships—in part a result of increased tourist travel of Germans to Cuba (KUMMELS, 2004)—as this was one of the less complicated means of obtaining residency status due to Germany's difficult immigration requirements. In many instances, those Cubans that come to Germany already have some sort of connection with Germany—either through Cubans, who have already emigrated, or connections to contract laborers who resided in the GDR (see also GRUNER-DOMIC, 2002). A small number of Cubans have also managed to receive a residency permit by applying for political asylum—a strategy that is much more complicated and unsure, as their asylum-seeker status can be revoked at a later date (GASEROW, 2009). Relations between Cuba and Germany began to improve in the mid-1990s. As a result of the ratification of a common EU standpoint regarding Cuba in 1996 and the change of government in Germany from a CDU–FDP coalition to a government led by the SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in 1998, the two countries have gradually approved a number of official treaties and agreements. This development gradually led to closer cooperation on economic and developmental assistance programs—a trend that continues to the present day. However, the number of Cuban immigrants coming to Germany remains very small. According to the STATISTISCHES BUNDESAMT (Federal Statistical Office)<sup>22</sup>, by the end of 2008 only 8,713 Cuban citizens were residing in Germany (3,377 men and 5,336 women). Even though naturalized Cubans are not included in the total, this number represents a hardly noticeable grouping that is distributed throughout the entire Federal Republic of Germany. Additionally, as recently discussed by Erol YILDIZ (2007) and earlier by Wolf-Dietrich BUKOW and Robert LLARYORA (1988), the migration discourses in Germany still do not recognize immigrants as a part of German society, but instead continue to define them as "foreigners" in terms of "we" and "others" while stressing "cultural differences." In such a climate, it is hardly surprising that Alicia feels a need to educate Germans about Cuba in order to—if she can only belong to her country of origin in a limited way—at least contribute to the German public's understanding of Cuba. [29]

## **5. Summary of the Similarities and Differences, the Decision to Migrate and Living Conditions in the Countries of Immigration**

The preceding pages have clearly established that the reasons for and, most importantly, the consequences of migration to South Florida and Germany are quite different. In the cases of Alicia and Miguel, Miguel and his parents left Cuba only a few years after the revolution when he was ten years old. The family's decision to leave Cuba was sparked by their fear that the family would suffer limitations and disadvantages as a result of the Castro regime's embracing of communism. On the one hand, the family found itself faced with expropriations, such as those announced in Castro's first agrarian reform in early 1959 (ZEUSKE, 2002a, p.188). On the other hand, the family was marked by its close relationship to the United States, which was eventually broken at the very latest by the attack at the Bay of Pigs and the U.S. embargo of Cuba. After migration,

<sup>22</sup> See: <https://www-ec.destatis.de/csp/shop/sfg/bpm.html.cms.cBroker.cls?cmspath=struktur.vollanzeige.csp&ID=1023733> [accessed July 24, 2009].

the family managed to establish itself in the United States. Miguel reached adolescence, received an excellent education, and—even though he is not a tenured professor—can now count himself among South Florida's "established." Since migrating to the United States, Miguel has made a single, two-week visit to Cuba together with his mother—a trip that their Cuban-American circle of friends believed was a holiday in Costa Rica, as conservative Cuban exiles do not at all approve of visitors to Cuba providing the government with a source of hard currency. [30]

Alicia, on the other hand, lived in Cuba until she was thirty. She grew up under the communist regime and was able to make a name for herself as a dancer and actress. Thanks to her marriage to a German (who was most likely an agent of the GDR's State Security), she enjoyed privileges that included visits to several different countries. One can assume that Alicia accepted the Cuban government's policies—at any rate, she did not publicly criticize the regime. Her unplanned emigration was the result of the political situation—as well as her husband's employment situation—in 1989. She did not feel comfortable in the GDR after her arrival. She retreated into her own shell and only began to establish social contacts two years later. She organized a three-year theater project for right-wing extremist youth. In her interview, it becomes clear that this project served to confront Alicia with the particular threats that foreign-looking women face in Germany. At the same time, Alicia was interested in teaching the youths involved in the project something about Cuba. It was also during this phase that Alicia's marriage fell apart, and both her residency status and financial security were suddenly called into question. With a great amount of effort on Alicia's part and by "selling" herself as a "Tropicana dancer"—as Alicia herself puts it—together with her participation in smaller projects in which she worked as a drama educator, Alicia was able to support both herself and her son. She adopted German citizenship and together with her new partner founded the small theater. She also initiated and developed theater projects in which she performed both in Cuba and Germany. She also managed to finance her mother's care in Cuba by providing one of her cousins and his partner, with whom her mother now lives, with money and helped them equip a photography shop specializing in digital photography. Alicia's current living situation can be considered prototypical for what is generally described as transnationalism—a phenomenon observed by the anthropologists Nina GLICK-SCHILLER, Linda BASCH, and Christina BLANC-SZANTON in numerous research projects and which they suggested in the early 1990s as a new concept in the migration debate. They saw that migrants from different backgrounds and in various countries of immigration

"were forging and sustaining multistranded social relations that linked their societies of origin and settlement. We called this immigrant experience 'transnationalism' to emphasize the emergence of social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders. Immigrants are understood to be transmigrants when they develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political—that span borders. We came to understand that the multiplicity of migrants' involvements in both the home and host

societies is a central element of transnationalism" (GLICK-SCHILLER, BASCH & BLANC-SZANTON, 1992a, p.IX). [31]

Furthermore, "Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously" (GLICK-SCHILLER, BASCH & BLANC-SZANTON, 1992b, p.1). Transnational social spaces are mainly characterized by the effects of globalization, here meaning increased mobility and worldwide communication networks—as described by Ludger PRIES (1996, 2001), for example. Those interested in the various forms taken on by Cuban migrants' transnational forms of living in Germany should take a closer look at Jennifer EGGERT's (2008) ethnological study. She describes how Cuban migrants' transnational spaces create reciprocal relationships of exchange, both in terms of the country of origin as well as the country of immigration—a phenomenon that she describes as both an emotional as well as a financial survival strategy (ibid., p.84). However, these results must be seen against the backdrop of the time of her observations in which the effects of the "special period" were much more noticeable—almost every member of EGGERT's sample was affected by these circumstances. At present—and this can also be seen in Alicia's biography—, transnational social spaces, alongside financial and emotional relationships of exchange, are indeed manifested at the level of work or, more precisely in the case of Alicia, at the level of self-realization and self-presentation. [32]

However, in addition to the obvious differences between Miguel's and Alicia's biographies, there are also striking similarities. For example, they both define themselves as Cuban in their countries of immigration—Miguel as a Cuban in the United States and Alicia as a Cuban in Germany—, even though they both were subject to differing socialization processes in both their countries of origin and immigration. Furthermore, one must take into consideration the fact that Miguel and his family migrated to a self-designated country of immigrants that provided special assistance programs to Cuban migrants. Ever since he was a young adult, Miguel has lived in an environment in which people with his ethnic background represent the "mainstream." Alicia, on the other hand, met with much less support in both the GDR and "unified" Germany. She was confronted with a much stronger sense of "foreignness" or "otherness." [33]

Yet both Miguel and Alicia define themselves as Cubans. This unquestioningly self-evident construction of belonging as a Cuban is a phenomenon that is noticeable among all of the interviewees in this grouping (WESENICK, 2008; BRANDHORST, in this issue; COOPER et al., in this issue<sup>23</sup>), although—according to Ursula APITZSCH (1995)—there are groupings of migrants who have absolutely no awareness of ethnicity whatsoever. [34]

---

23 This statement only seems to contrast with the findings of COOPER et al. (in this issue) according to which primarily young women of the "second generation"— the children of the Cuban-born population—said they felt "American," as this feeling must be seen within the context of their desire to disassociate themselves from their parents. At the same time, they express a "pride in their Cuban heritage and a desire for their own children to learn Spanish and to be connected to the culture of their past" (p.50).

But what are the origins of this unquestioningly self-evident construction as Cubans? Guillermo GRENIER and Lisandro PÉREZ (2003, p.34) describe this phenomenon as a product of Cuban history:

"Throughout their history in Cuba as well as outside the island, Cubans have had ample reasons to develop a sense of exceptionalism. It has been a perennial national cultural trait, with mixed consequences. Exceptionalism has contributed to a very strong sense of national identity—an unshakable shared identification with their national place of origin." [35]

However, the authors do not address the issue of the creation of the reciprocal conditionality of exceptionalism and national identity—a question that requires further empirical study. [36]

As is true of other researchers who have examined this question, such as Miguel GONZALEZ-PANDO (1998, p.83) or María Christina GARCÍA (1996, p.83), both of the authors assume that the self-definition of Cubans has actually been strengthened as a result of their perception of themselves as exiles in South Florida. They argue that, even if a great number of Cuban immigrants no longer wish to return to Cuba, they keep their exile-status alive by constantly referring to "*cubanidad*" or "*cubanía*"<sup>24</sup>. These terms refer to a feeling of community as well as the historical and cultural roots which they can draw upon when abroad regardless of all existing differences. The reference to *cubanidad* helps to create both solidarity and a group feeling. PORTES and STEPICK (1993, p.137) speak of a "moral community" and see this as the main factor leading to the creation of a "Cuban enclave" in Miami. One aspect of this understanding however—and various researchers have been critical on this point—is the Cuban community's tendency to separate itself from other immigrant groupings. Guillermo GRENIER and Lisandro PÉREZ (2003, p.34) summarize this development as follows: "In the United States, Cubans exhibit a strong tendency to resist being culturally assimilated into non-Cuban categories, especially pan-ethnic labels. As one bumper sticker in Miami reads: *Yo no soy hispano ... yo soy cubano* [I am not Hispanic ... I am Cuban]". [37]

The separateness described here can lead to serious tensions between the "we-group" of the "Cubans" and other immigrant groups resulting from the developing balances of power—a phenomenon which Norbert ELIAS and John L. SCOTSON (1965/1994) have so accurately described. The pressure to conform rises in the we-group of the established, and as a result the expectations of the we-image are further strengthened. [38]

However, the attribution of national or cultural belonging<sup>25</sup> by others who find themselves in an "outsider position"—as has been hinted in the case of Alicia in

---

24 "Cubanidad" or "cubanía" are terms that were introduced by the Cuban anthropologist, lawyer, historian, and publisher Fernando ORTIZ (1940, 1964). He sought a means of defining Cuba's diverse cultural roots—particularly the influence of African cultures. He describes how the contact between people from different cultural backgrounds led to a process of "transculturation," meaning the cultural changes that led to the creation of "cubanidad"—Cuba's "national identity."

Germany, but also as it was described by WESENICK (2008)—can lead to migrants adopting these attributions and lead to a strengthening of ethnic self-attributions. This process has been described by, for example, Wolf Dietrich BUKOW and Robert LLARYORA (1988). As Rosa-Maria BRANDHORST (in this issue) illustrated in one particular case, attributions can also lead to problematic actions and developments in the individual's biography when trying to justify a "collective we"—as in, "Cubans are like that," or, "They do it like that." As Katharina WESENICK (2008) pointed out in a case study, ethnic self-attributions can be used to counter discriminating attributions (such as being attributed as black). [39]

It is clear that the reference to *cubanidad* is maintained to a much higher degree by the we-group and the feeling of community that exists in the United States, yet in Germany the concept instead serves the individual search for meaning and self-description. The clear and uncontradicted self-definition as a "Cuban" is thus an aspect of both Miguel's and Alicia's biographies that many other Cubans share. I would like to go a step further and show what function constructions of belonging can serve in an individual's biography. [40]

## **6. Functions of the Constructions of Belonging Based on Art in Alicia and Miguel's Biographies**

As described above, the definition of being Cuban is determined by the reference to common roots—Cuba's connecting history as well as the reference to art and culture or, in this case, Miguel's and Alicia's artistic careers. This phenomenon could easily be described as a surface phenomenon, as every book about Cuban migrants—particularly books about Cuban migrants in South Florida—is structured around a reference to art (most prominently, PÉREZ-FIRMAT, 1994), or the subject of art is highlighted in individual chapters (LEVINE & ASÍS, 2000, p.123; GONZALES-PANDO, 1998, p.95; GARZÍA, 1996, p.169). These books focus primarily on painting, writing, and music and show, how art serves to maintain a lively (as well as nostalgic) sense of Cuba and "Cubanness" in the social environment of the country of immigration in order to create a sense of community. This means that references to their artistic profession among the interviewees in Germany and Florida could also be considered from this context. Their careers as artists dealing with Cuban artistic symbols and forms—such as appearing as a "Tropicana dancer," for example—on the one hand serve to satisfy the (expected) market and enable them to make a living. On the other hand, it allows the artist to ensure and locate his or her self in relation to the attributions of their social environment. Maria Christina GARZÍA wrote about writers with a Cuban background:

"Since these authors wrote as immigrant minorities living in the U.S. they were labeled 'ethnic' writers rather than Cuban or Latin American writers. Their quest to

25 I will not go into detail here about the discourse concerning the effects of ascribed belonging, but instead refer to the 1997 essay by Armin NASSEHI, in which he traces the various threads of the discourse which claim that, in the end, the proclaiming of a "multicultural society" remains caught in the logic of the ascription of cultural and ethnic belonging while minimizing the describing of differences.

define *cubanidad* for themselves, however, links them to generations of Cuban authors equally concerned with defining a national identity" (1996, p.170). [41]

This means that their occupation as artists can also serve in the construction or the "myth" of "collective ethnic belonging" and allow them to maintain and define *cubanidad* for themselves. Michael J. PARSONS (1987)—who, on the basis of KOHLBERG, has presented a gradual model of individuals' aesthetic development—sees herein "a way we have of articulating our interior life. We have a continuing and complex inner response to the external world" (PARSONS, 1987, p.13). Furthermore, PARSONS posits that art serves to aid in self-assuredness, although expression in art "is a social and historical construction, a joint product, though it must be individually grasped" (ibid). [42]

When the construction of belonging can be considered transformable, a biographical approach (see BRECKNER, 2007; ROSENTHAL, 2004a) can be used to highlight the functions of this form of expression—in the case of Alicia and Miguel—and in which manner this form of expression is transformed over the course of their lives. For this purpose, I wish to delve deeper into both of their biographies beginning with Miguel's. [43]

### **6.1 The reconstruction of Miguel's biography**

In the introductory quote from Miguel's interview, we learn that he views painting as a challenge that provides him with a means of finding solutions and connections. The question is, what does this statement mean within the context of his life story? Have transformations in terms of his artistic expression taken place over the course of his life, and, if yes, what brought these transformations about? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to look at earlier phases of Miguel's history. [44]

Miguel's childhood was, despite his growing up in well-to-do, upper-middle-class surroundings, characterized by insecurity and fear. When he was between four and five years old, Miguel experienced a bomb alarm and heard shots fired by Castro's rebels. His father and grandfather were called in by the rebels to provide medical care to wounded guerrillas in the mountains. Although the family went to great lengths to keep the children far away from the dangers, Miguel remembers sharing the rest of his family's fears that his father and grandfather could be injured or might not ever come back at all. His closest confidants during this phase of his life were his two older sisters (two and a half and five years older) as well as his nanny. Although the family was at first sympathetic towards Castro's revolutionaries—particularly in the hope that they would bring about a change to Batista's arbitrary and corrupt regime—they soon discovered that the new regime had the upper-middle class in its sights. At first, they took revenge on members of the previous regime and their sympathizers, and Miguel can remember stories of executions that were usually told in the back garden of his maternal grandfather's house. When Miguel was nine years old, his two sisters and two cousins were sent away and the rest of the family planned to follow soon afterwards. This did

not happen as planned<sup>26</sup>, but the other members of the family gradually managed to leave the country. Over the next two years, the family did everything it could to avoid separating and struggled to find a way of leaving the country. Some of their escape attempts failed. During this phase, the family traveled back and forth between Havana and Trinidad with their luggage packed. For Miguel, the separation from his sisters was a huge loss that was combined with the fears and insecurities that he could sense among the other members of his family. Miguel, a rather reserved and sensitive child, channeled the fears and insecurities into magical and religious fantasies that were passed on within the family, particularly by his mother, and at the Catholic school that he attended<sup>27</sup>. Miguel had the following to say about the time when he was between eight and ten years old:

"this hatred for the Catholic church um so as a part of that I remember that there stories told in the porch about um first of all there being some ah signs in the sky and apparitions of the of the Virgin um particularly the Virgin of Fatima who who had left behind these letters do you know the story (I: yes) and there was one letter that was not opened yet and that the remaining shepherd that she that the Virgin had appeared to had that letter and it had not been disclosed, and so in the stories in the porch one of the stories was that this this letter had something to do with Cuba and with the end of communism coming from Cuba from this ah big world cataclysm and so I would hear these stories and also about signs in the sky I think it was some some phenomena that took place ah with the sun and the moon I forget what it was these circles that was in the sky ah and so my imagination ah became very enfevered by all of this because I saw that it had a connection with ah deep emotions that I had losing all the cousins that started disappearing you know just going away and that whole world coming to an end so I-I saw that um perhaps the the source of help would be in praying you know 'cause and so um going to Havana with my parents I remember with my mom and my mom would frequently go inside a church and pray that ah the separation of our of our family would come to an end that we could be even reunited with my sisters and so I became really um passionately um immersed in that energy so I remember um like I I even asking to have a little image of Our Lady of Fatima that was my own that I could have near the bed in the hotel um I have this little rosary that I that I um, that I got in one of these churches in Havana it was the Church of St. Ann the mother of the Virgin and my mom had such a devotion for her that she transmitted to me and I have this little rosary that I would often pray for the reunification of my family" (42/15-38). [45]

This excerpt illustrates how Miguel attempts to explain why his family developed such mystical symbols and explanations, as well as why he was so drawn to them, from the perspective of the present. Apart from a desire to explain the past, one can clearly see a child's intense emotions in this terrifying and insecure phase of his life that drew him to faith and religious rites as a "means of salvation." In particular, in his prayers Miguel asked the Holy Virgins (such as Fatima)—as well as the Virgin Mary—for their assistance. [46]

26 This is most likely because, as a doctor, Miguel's father had virtually no chance of leaving the country.

27 Catholic institutions and representatives of the Catholic Church were also subject to increasing persecution during this time, and churches and private Catholic schools were soon closed.

Approximately two years later, when Miguel was ten years old, the family managed to flee the country via Spain and the entire family was reunited in the United States. Miguel felt he no longer knew his sisters, who in the meanwhile had become teenagers. Although the siblings sought to rekindle their earlier bond, they were only partially successful. In this new environment, Miguel found continuity in his religious education, which he received both at home and at a private Catholic school in which he was very successful. On the surface, the situation appeared to normalize over the course of the subsequent years, but there were indications of trouble for the family on the horizon—particularly between his parents—which were not adequately confronted. There were a series of changes and events—for example, in the 1960s both sets of grandparents came to the United States, followed soon after by the death of Miguel's paternal grandparents. His sisters married young and left the family. The Catholic school—or religion as a whole—had posed an important constant, particularly in this three-year phase of constant changes, in which he and his parents first moved to Miami and then Puerto Rico for a total of two years before finally coming back to Miami. These moves could be interpreted as an attempt on the part of Miguel's parents to save their marriage. For Miguel, who by that time was sixteen to eighteen years old, these moves meant a constant change in schools and social surroundings. He developed serious physical symptoms during this phase, such as profuse sweating and fainting, which can undoubtedly be interpreted as expressions of his inner sensitivity. Back in Miami, Miguel attempted to find a way to pull away from his close connection to his parents. After discovering that they were planning another move, he managed to convince them to send him to a secular, elite boarding school, located around 100 miles from where the parents were planning to move. In Miami, Miguel experimented with drugs and had a few short sexual affairs with men, in the course of which he decided that he wanted to live as a homosexual. This discovery led to a significant crisis, marked by insecurity and feelings of guilt—mainly in response to his strong religious beliefs that had accompanied him to boarding school. At boarding school, he first began to learn painting. His first canvases depict family scenes such as a baptism in which all of the adult faces—with the exception of the priest's—are blurred. Another is a self-portrait in which he depicted himself as a kind of revolutionary or, depending on the reading, Jesus. Soon after, Miguel began to discover painting for himself during a phase in his life, in which he began to intensely question his own religious belonging—the Catholic Church rejects homosexuality as immoral,<sup>28</sup> even though this might not be reflected in everyday practice. Miguel used painting as a medium to confront these issues and attempted to draw a connection between his religious belonging and his sexuality. [47]

Over the course of the following years, Miguel traveled back and forth between his parents, who finally divorced in the late 1970s. He then served as a go-between between his parents until his father's death in the mid-1980s. To this day, Miguel has a close connection to his mother. His paintings created during this time consist of street scenes in Cuba and a self-portrait of Miguel as a painter. [48]

---

28 See <http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm> [accessed August 3, 2009].



Shortly after his parents' divorce, a motif appeared in Miguel's work which later reappeared again and again in his paintings, both in those he did for himself as well as those he painted for clients. The motif is a Holy Virgin who is worshipped as Cuba's patron saint: "La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre" (The Virgin of Charity)<sup>29</sup>. This Virgin is worshipped intently by Miami's exile community and represents a Catholic Cuba untouched by the communists, making her a symbol of freedom.

There are many stories about the Virgin, but all agree that she once appeared to three ten-year-old boys in a boat on the sea that was caught in a storm. It is also quite interesting that the Cuba's ethnic and religious influences appear to come together in the Virgin—she displays white, mulatto, and Afro-American characteristics and is worshiped by both Christians and practitioners of Santería<sup>30</sup>. In essence, she symbolizes the unification of differences. Furthermore, since Miguel's childhood, he has associated the Virgin with his pleas for protection and salvation in the times of crisis, and his image of her helps to assure him of finding a solution to his dilemma. [49]

The following years were marked by a number of travels—he refers to his travels as "enlightening experiences"—, short love affairs, a self-portrait in which he appears as a dandy, and successful entry into the university. He began to paint canvases with homoerotic allusions and placed himself in his paintings together with male models. One could assume that during this phase he was beginning to accept his sexuality, but he continued to conceal his homosexuality from Miami's Cuban community as well as in his own family. Miguel continued to battle over the relationship between his religion and sexuality, yet it appears that in this phase his sexuality seemed to gain the upper hand. [50]

After Miguel visited Cuba with his mother in 1999, he began to add paintings of Cuban cities and towns as well as scenes of interactions in Cuba to his repertoire. He depicted everyday street-scenes and encounters with Castro's revolutionaries, but also personal experiences such as his taking leave of his sisters. A striking aspect of these paintings is the presence of a small, naked boy who is either the focus of the painting or appears somewhere in a crowd of people or behind a column. It appears as if the figure represents the experiences of a defenseless child who either observes or actively participates in the world around him. This could be seen as an attempt on Miguel's part to return back to his roots and look back upon his life from the very beginning. It is also during this phase that Miguel

29 See <http://www.marypages.com/LadyCaridadDelCobre.htm>, [http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/LittleHavana/Monuments/Virgin1/The\\_Virgin\\_Mary/the\\_virgin\\_mary.html](http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/LittleHavana/Monuments/Virgin1/The_Virgin_Mary/the_virgin_mary.html) [accessed July 30, 2009]. The image depicted here is a freely accessible image and for reasons of anonymity is not one of Miguel's paintings.

30 See <http://ojinaga.com/storeitems/santos/caridad-yeso.html> [accessed July 30, 2009].

agrees to participate in the biographical interview in order to "gain new insights" into himself. In late 2008, Miguel went to Rome where he painted and began teaching. This could be interpreted as a form of rapprochement with his religion. To this day, Miguel seeks to create a relationship between his religious and sexual belonging against the backdrop of the Vatican's policy towards homosexuality. It is his paintings of Cuba's patron saint as well as Cuba in general that provide him with a sense of security in this process of confrontation, for regarding his Cuban ethnic belonging, Miguel has no doubts whatsoever. [51]

## 6.2 The reconstruction of Alicia's biography

What is the function of art in Alicia's life? In order to answer this question, we must first take a closer look at her life story. [52]

Alicia was born on her paternal grandfather's *finca* near Trinidad, Cuba. Her grandfather was a large landowner who had immigrated to Cuba from Spain. Alicia's mother separated from her father a few months after Alicia's birth, when it was discovered that—as Alicia tells the story—her father had betrayed her mother and fathered children with other women. By leaving her husband, Alicia's mother reproduced the history of her own mother, who also left her husband to escape physical abuse and took her three young children with her. Alicia continued this tradition in her own life. She left her husband when her child was four years old, after she discovered that her husband had married other women both in Germany and Nicaragua. This is a tradition that has developed within Alicia's family and is passed on by the women of the family. After her parents' separation, Alicia was raised for the most part by her maternal grandmother, as Alicia's mother had moved in with her own mother in Trinidad after the separation and was seldom at home as a result of her work. Thus, for the greater part of her childhood, Alicia was raised by her maternal grandmother, who was descended from Chinese indentured laborers who had come to Cuba in the nineteenth century (SCOTT, 2000; ZEUSKE, 2002a, p.117). Her own mother had died young and Alicia's grandmother had brought up her own four siblings. She passed on to Alicia the importance of being strong and independent and taught her that life is in essence a struggle. Alicia identified strongly with her grandmother's courage and strength when it came to dealing with adverse living conditions over the course of her entire life. As symbol of her confronting life's difficulties, during her interview, Alicia spoke of the difficulties she had as a child, particularly when she was separated from her grandmother in order to attend an obligatory country school (*escuela en el campo*). While at school Alicia, was often ill—or at least she was able to convince the doctors of her illness in order to avoid attending. [53]

From very early age, Alicia had wanted to become an actress, yet when she finished upper school, there was a lack of teachers in Cuba, and she was forced to enter into a teaching degree program. However, thanks to her luck, strategic choices, and courage, Alicia managed to be accepted to drama school in Havana. This is rather surprising, for at that time there were only a very few

number of university places for people "from the country"<sup>31</sup>. In her interview, Alicia spoke about how her acting career actually began in her struggle to avoid becoming a teacher:

"well I don't know ( ) I didn't have any desire to become a teacher, but um I couldn't just stand there and say I DON'T WANT TO BE A TEACHER because that would be counterrevolutionary and blah blah blah and you know, //hmm// and that was a problem, so then I started to act and that was my first ((laughs)) maybe my first performance, my first big performance and then I just uh presented myself uh as a mentally ill girl and I just suddenly began to ((laughs)) scream ((laughs)) in the middle of the lessons and ((laughs)) I just threw myself to the floor and started to scream ((screams out loud)) and I just made some kind of a big show and they took me to the psychologist and I just kept acting and told some stories and told them about the things I was seeing and hearing ((laughs)) and then they let me go from the school, ((laughs)) yes and then I told my mother, "OK and now (strikes the table) I want to go to acting school" ((laughs)) of course I had to um of course that was not so easy you had to take an acceptance exam, ( ) I passed the exam and then I had to go to Havana, it was a really difficult time because (2) I had never been to Havana (2) um I didn't have any family in Havana and we had only just gotten by with the bare minimum and there was no money and (food) and I couldn't afford it but I just said I don't care I want to be an actress, and then I went there and um I was accepted (1)" (11/4/8-27). [54]

This excerpt illustrates how important it was for Alicia to realize her wish to become an actress as well as how proud she is today of having achieved her goal. Similar to her presentation of her time at the country school, Alicia presents herself as a victorious fighter. Despite the truly difficult conditions she faced during her education, Alicia was able to finish drama school with good marks and immediately got a position in a renowned theater in Cuba and lived in the very exclusive milieu of artists and intellectuals. The beginning of Alicia's career as an artist can thus be viewed as the assertion of her desires and a struggle which she had successfully overcome. [55]

This was a connection that Alicia continued after her migration. Alicia was able to free herself from her crisis after migrating to Germany in that she posed herself a serious challenge: As a recognizable migrant with limited German language skills, she decided to perform a theater piece with right-wing extremist youth. Furthermore, Alicia's life in Germany is characterized by "struggle" and is geared towards realizing particular projects, for after her theater project Alicia was plagued by financial problems and was only able to hold her head above water by taking on engagements she would otherwise have never accepted. At the same time however, Alicia made an effort to continue her education and began a long-term training program in dance therapy as well as various training programs in various acting techniques. [56]

---

31 This refers to anywhere outside of the capital of Havana.

After spending approximately thirteen years in Germany, it seems as if Alicia has come close to winning her struggle. She developed a "Cuban island"—a theater in Germany called "El Sótano," which is set up along the lines of her surroundings in Cuba. Alicia stated:

"in Munich there is a place where even if we um do not have the perfect conditions—we are far away from our ideal spaces and generally (I: hmm) yes actually the lamp you should see it, it's like it's in Cuba, it's totally improvised ..." (11/17/6-9). [57]

As can be inferred by this excerpt, the theater is set up to reflect how Alicia experienced her surroundings in Cuba. Her colleagues in the project also come from an intellectual and creative milieu that is very similar to the one she experienced in Cuba. These surroundings have allowed her to connect the past in Cuba to the present in Germany. Against this backdrop, Alicia can work with various subjects, such as on the development of her own life story. Together with another Cuban actor, she developed a theater piece that was performed in both Cuba and Germany. Alicia had the following to say about this piece:

"the play um=um um is set in Cuba, and it's the story of a woman who never left Cuba, (3) it's an interesting story because it has nothing to do with the tourist picture of Cuba which is sold everywhere ..... its about feelings and separations, about um migration, about loneliness, she, its her story um I think um I think um the the director wrote it herself, it's a lot about her own life, she never left Cuba, she doesn't know what is going on beyond the horizon, she can not imagine (2) and um, it has also to do with me, because, she, the woman, Mrs. Melimba is her name, she is also an actress also has to do with the revolution, um, um she was also born into the revolution (I: hmm) and grew up, studied at the same school as me" (19/25-37). [58]

As this quotation shows, Alicia has managed to come closer to her own experiences and at the same time fulfill her mission to be seen for who she really is. She receives increasing amounts of recognition as an actress in this particular German milieu. For Alicia, art represents the connection and continuity between the past in Cuba and the present in Germany. Her reconstruction of the social milieu that she experienced in Cuba allows her to approach her biographical development from an artistic perspective. At the same time, this approach is also a form of exchange, as her work with her Cuban colleague not only allows her to reexamine her own life, but her performances in Cuba also allow her to bring something of her present life situation into the past—exactly in the same manner as her performances in Germany serve to communicate something of herself and Cuba to her German audience. Art thus serves as a part of the transmigration process—perhaps even more intensely than would be possible in other professions. [59]

## 7. Summary

The unquestioningly self-evident construction of belonging as a Cuban is a quite remarkable characteristic of this sample of Cuban migrants who have emigrated to Germany as well as South Florida. This is indeed the case even though their migration histories as well as their life situations in their country of origin are so different. Alongside the self-evident construction of ethnic belonging, we can also detect a parallel in these migrants' ability to draw upon Cuban history and art. The origins of this unquestioningly self-evident construction of ethnic belonging as well as the reference to Cuban history, art, and culture are phenomena which until now have been assumed to be the result of historical exceptionalism (GRENIER & PÉREZ, 2003). However, we must also follow and/or empirically investigate, whether or not the unsure outcome of the political "island existence" experienced since 1959 contributes to the creation of references to the areas of art and culture, for example, that—as opposed to the current political situation—appear neither questionable nor assailable. In this context, references to an overriding concept such as *cubanidad* serve to negate the different ethnic backgrounds of Cuba's inhabitants and integrate them into the unifying belonging inherent to the concept. In both of these approaches, however, it becomes clear that in order to answer this question, an empirical approach is indispensable, as only such an approach can take into account Cuba's historical development in a more extensive and far-reaching manner. [60]

This essay expresses the desire to take up this approach without examining the issue in greater detail by the inclusion of a biographical-analytical perspective, which can show the functions that the creation of belonging based on art can have in the course of an individual's life, as well as how these functions have developed and changed. Various functions can be determined using Miguel and Alicia's biographies. For example, Miguel's biography illustrates how painting has allowed him to confront the connection between his religious and sexual belonging over the course of his life. In the individual phases of his life—as communicated by his art works, for example—he at times turns to one belonging or the other. To this day, the tension in his life has not been resolved, yet in his attempts to resolve this conflict the unquestioned construction of Cuban belonging offers him stability. In the process, art becomes a way of representing this state by expressing the processes of confrontation that are ensured by the unquestioningly self-evident constructions of ethnic belonging. On the other hand, Alicia creates continuity between Cuba and Germany by reproducing her Cuban milieu and through her acting. This in turn allows her to reflexively approach her own biographical development. The functions of migrants' artistic careers differ according to which themes in the family or life history are of biographical relevance and which of these themes the migrants choose to deal with. A biographical-analytical perspective allows for the reconstruction of the interrelation between social and socio-political processes. It is then possible to determine, in which manner themes relevant to the biography and family history can be addressed and how, within this process, the construction of ethnic belonging can be emphasized and transformed through art. [61]

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for providing the necessary financial support for this project in the form of the TransCoop Grant. Furthermore, I wish to thank my colleagues Julia CHAITIN and J.P. LINSTROTH as well as all of the students—particularly Patrick HILLER from Nova Southeastern University—for their hard work that allowed us to conduct research in Florida. Thanks also goes to all of the students participating in the training research project in Germany and the editors Gabriele ROSENTHAL, Bettina VÖLTER, Anne JUHASZ, Christine MÜLLER-BOTSCH, and Nicole WITTE for their efforts as well as their critical and inspiring comments concerning the various versions of this essay. Particular thanks goes to the interview partners in Germany and South Florida, particularly Alicia and Miguel, for trusting in me and supporting my work. Last but not least I would like to wholeheartedly thank Mark WILLARD, who translated this article and Walter WILLEMS, who edited it, for their excellent support.

## References

- Apitzsch, Ursula (1995). Migration und Ethnizität. In Reinhart Kößler & Tilman Schiel (Eds.), *Nationalstaat und Ethnizität. Reihe: Umbrüche der Moderne. Arbeit – Staat – Kultur* (pp.161-178). Frankfurt/M.: IKO-Verlag.
- Ballenthien, Jana & Büching, Corinne (2009). Insecure belongings: A family of ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union in Germany. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(3), Art. 21, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0903218>.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1983). *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht*. Hamburg: VSA.
- Brandhorst, Rosa María (2009). Ethnicity and transnational relations of Cuban immigrants in Germany. An insight into a case reconstruction. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(3), Art. 27, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0903277>.
- Breckner, Roswitha (2007). *Case-oriented comparative approaches: the biographical perspective as opportunity and challenge in migration research*. In Karin Schittenhelm (Ed.), *Concepts and methods in migration research*. Reader, 113-152.; <http://www.cultural-capital.net/> [ accessed: July 28, 2009].
- Breuer, Ralf E. (2001). Die deutsche Kuba-Politik nach der Wiedervereinigung. In Ottmar Ette & Martin Franzbach (Eds.), *Kuba. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur heute* (pp.773-800). Frankfurt/M.: Vervuert.
- Brubaker, Roger (2004). *Ethnicity without groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bukow, Wolf D. & Llaryora, Robert (1988). *Mitbürger aus der Fremde*. Soziogenese ethnischer Minoritäten. Opladen: Westdeutscher-Verlag.
- Cooper, Robin; Edsall, Denese; Riviera, Diana; Chaitin, Julia & Linstroth, J.P. (2009). "My country" / "this country": Ambivalent belongings of Cuban Americans in South Florida. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(3), Art. 13, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0903134>.
- Dickel, Doris (2002). *Einwanderungs- und Asylpolitik der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, Frankreichs und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Eine vergleichende Studie der 1980er und 1990er Jahre*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Eggert, Jennifer (2008). *Brücken nach Kuba: Transnationale Familienbeziehungen kubanischer MigrantInnen in Deutschland*. München: GRIN Verlag.
- Ehlert, Gerhard; Staadt, Jochen & Voigt, Tobias (2002). Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der DDR (MfS) und dem Ministerium des Innern Kubas (MININT). *Arbeitspapiere des Forschungsverbunds SED-Staat 33 / Freie Universität Berlin*.

- Elias, Norbert & Scotson, John L. (1965/1994). *The established and the outsiders. A sociological enquiry into community problems*. London: Sage.
- Elschenbroich, Donata (1986). *Eine Nation von Einwanderern. Ethnisches Bewusstsein und Integrationspolitik in den USA*. Frankfurt/M.: Campus-Verlag.
- Fefler, Irina & Radenbach, Niklas (in press). The interrelation between social mobility and the sense of collective belonging. A generation of social climbers in the Soviet Union. In [Gabriele Rosenthal](#) & Artur Bogner (Eds.), *Ethnicity, belonging and biography. Ethnographical and biographical perspectives* (pp.161-179). Münster: LIT-Verlag.
- Franzbach, Martin (1993). Die beiden Deutschlands auf Kuba. *Iberoamericana*, 2(50), 5-15.
- García, María C. (1996). *Havanna USA. Cuban exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gaserow, Vera (2009). Chor der Eingebürgerten. Erstmals teilt Merkel die Urkunden im Kanzleramt aus. Ausländer beantragen seltener einen deutschen Pass. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12.05.
- Glick-Schiller, Nina; Basch, Linda & Blanc-Szanton, Christina (1992a). Towards a definition of transnationalism. Introductory remarks and research questions. In Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, & Christina Blanc-Szanton (Eds.), *Towards a transnational perspective of migration. Race, class, ethnicity and nationalism reconsidered. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (Vol. 645, pp.IX-XV). New York: The New York Academy of Sciences.
- Glick-Schiller, Nina; Basch, Linda & Blanc-Szanton, Christina (1992b). Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration. In Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, & Christina Blanc-Szanton (Eds.), *Towards a transnational perspective of migration. Race, class, ethnicity and nationalism reconsidered. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (Vol. 645, pp.1-24). New York: The New York Academy of Sciences.
- Gonzalez-Pando, Miguel (1998). *The Cuban Americans*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Grabendorff, Wolf (1992). Die Beziehungen zwischen der Europäischen Gemeinschaft und Kuba. *Lateinamerika. Analysen-Daten-Dokumentation*, 20, 61-80.
- Gratius, Susanne (2001). Das Verhältnis Europa-Kuba: Der Antagonismus zwischen wirtschaftlicher Annäherung und politischer Distanz. In Ottmar Ette & Martin Franzbach (Eds.), *Kuba. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur heute* (pp.193-219). Frankfurt/M.: Vervuert.
- Grenier, Guillermo J. & Pérez, Lisandro (2003). *The legacy of exile. Cubans in the United States*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gruner-Domic, Sandra (1996). Zur Geschichte der Arbeitskräftemigration in die DDR. Die bilateralen Verträge zur Beschäftigung ausländischer Arbeiter (1961-1989). *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (IWK)*, 32, 204-230.
- Gruner-Domic, Sandra (1999). Beschäftigung statt Ausbildung. Ausländische Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen in der DDR (1961-1989). In Jan Motte, Rainer Ohlinge & Anne von Oswald (Eds.), *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik – 50 Jahre Einwanderung. Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte* (pp.215-240). Frankfurt/M.: Campus-Verlag.
- Gruner-Domic, Sandra (2002). Lateinamerikanische Immigrantinnen in Deutschland vor und nach 1989. Entwicklungen, Formen und Motive einer Migration in zwei Gesellschaften. In Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung/Institut für Sozialgeschichte e.V. (Ed.), *Sonderdruck Bd. 42 aus Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* (pp.275-293). Braunschweig: J.H.W. Dietz-Verlag.
- Handlin, Oscar (1951). *The uprooted*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
- Hennig, Doris (2001). Kuba in Miami: Migration und ethnische Identität. In Ottmar Ette & Martin Franzbach (Eds.), *Kuba. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur heute* (pp.617-668). Frankfurt/M.: Vervuert.
- Hoffmann, Bert (2005). Emigration and regime stability: Explaining the persistence of Cuban socialism. *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 21(4), 436-461, [http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp02\\_hoffmann.pdf](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp02_hoffmann.pdf) [accessed: July 24, 2009].
- Hucke, Matthias (2001). "Wir sind wahre Nationalsozialisten". Die deutsche Kolonie auf Kuba 1933-1944. In Ottmar Ette & Martin Franzbach (Eds.), *Kuba. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur heute* (pp.801-824). Frankfurt/M.: Vervuert.
- Kennedy, John F. (1958). *Nation of immigrants*. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

- Kummels, Ingrid (2004). Liebe und Leben in den Zeiten der Diaspora. In Miriam Lang (Ed.), *Salsa Cubana. Tanz der Geschlechter. Emanzipation und Alltag in Kuba heute* (pp.30-39). Hamburg: konkret texte.
- Levine, Robert M. & Asís, Moisés (2000). *Cuban Miami*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Linstroth, J.P.; Hall, Alison; Prosper, Mamyrah & Hiller, Patrick T. (2009). Conflicting ambivalence of Haitian identity-making in South Florida. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(3), Art. 11, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0903118>.
- Masud-Piloto, Felix R. (1996). *From welcomed exiles to illegal immigrants. Cuban migration to the U.S., 1959-1995*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Monreal, Pedro (1999). Migration und Überweisungen: Anmerkungen zum Fall Kuba. *Lateinamerika, Analysen und Berichte*, 23, 73-97.
- Nassehi, Armin (1997) Das stahlharte Gehäuse der Zugehörigkeit. Unschärfen im Diskurs um die "multikulturelle Gesellschaft". In Armin Nassehi (Ed.), *Nation, Ethnie, Minderheit. Beiträge zur Aktualität ethnischer Konflikte* (pp.177-208). Köln: Böhlau-Verlag.
- Navarro, José C. (1998). *History of Cuba. The challenge of the yoke and the star*. Havana: SIMAR S.A.
- Opitz, Götz-Dietrich (1999). *Haitian refugees forced to return. Transnationalism and state politics, 1991-1994*. Münster: LIT-Verlag.
- Ortiz, Fernando (1940/1973). Los factores humanos de la cubanidad. In Julio le Riverend (Ed.), *Orbita de Fernando Ortiz* (pp.149-157). Havana: UNEAC.
- Ortiz, Fernando (1964). Cubanidad y cubanía. *Islas*, 6(2), 91-96.
- Ostermann, Dietmar (2009). Neue Töne in Little Havana. Unter Exilkubanern wächst die Fraktion der Obama-Anhänger. Ein Besuch bei Castro-Gegnern in Miami. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12.05, S.10.
- Parsons, Michael J. (1987). *How we understand art: A cognitive development account of aesthetic experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pérez, Lisandro (1992). Cuban Miami. In Guillermo J. Grenier & Alex Stepick (Eds.), *Miami now! Immigration, ethnicity and social change* (pp.83-108). Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Pérez-Firmat Gustavo (1994). *Life on the hyphen. The Cuban-American way*. Austin: University of Texas Press
- Portes, Alejandro & Manning, Robert D. (1986). The immigrant enclave: Theory and empirical examples. In Susan Olzak & Joane Nagel (Eds.), *Competitive ethnic relations* (pp.47-68). Orlando: Academic Press.
- Portes, Alejandro & Stepick, Alex (1993). *The city of edge: The transformation of Miami*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pries, Ludger (1996). Transnationale Soziale Räume. Theoretisch-empirische Skizze am Beispiel der Arbeitswanderungen Mexico – USA. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 25(6), 456-472.
- Pries, Ludger (Ed.) (2001). The approach of transnational social spaces. Responding to new configurations of the social and the spatial. In Ludger Pries (Ed.), *New transnational social spaces: International migration and transnational companies in the early twenty-first century* (pp.3-33). London: Routledge.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele (2004a). Biographical research. In Clive Seale, [Giampietro Gobo](#), Jaber Gubrium & David Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp.48-64). London: Sage.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele (2004b). Ethnisierung der Biographie und Traumatisierung. In Markus Ottersbach & Erol Yildiz (Eds.), *Migration in der metropolitanen Gesellschaft: Zwischen Ethnisierung und globaler Neuorientierung* (pp.217-227). Münster: LIT-Verlag.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele in collaboration with Michaela Köttig (2009). Migration and questions of belonging. Migrants in Germany and Florida. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(3), Art. 19, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0903191>.
- Rosenthal, Gabriele & Stephan, Viola (in press). Shifting balances of power and changing constructions of ethnic belonging: Three-generation families in Germany with ethnic German members from the former Soviet Union. In Gabriele Rosenthal & Artur Bogner (Eds.), *Ethnicity, belonging and biography. Ethnographical and biographical perspectives* (pp.347-370). Münster: LIT-Verlag.

- Scott, Rebecca J. (2000). *Slave emancipation in Cuba: The transition to free labor, 1860-1899*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Stepick, Alex (1992). The refugees nobody wants: Haitians in Miami. In Guillermo J. Grenier & Alex Stepick (Eds.), *Miami now! Immigration, ethnicity and social change* (pp.57-82). Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Stepick, Alex (1998). *Pride against prejudice. Haitians in the United States*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Stepick, Alex; Grenier, Guillermo; Castro Max & Dunn, Marvin (2003). *This land is our land. Immigrants and power in Miami*. Berkeley.
- Yildiz, Erol (2007). Migration bewegt die Gesellschaft. Von der hegemonialen Normalität zur Alltagspraxis in der Migrationsgesellschaft. In Batholomäus Figatowski, Gabriel Kokebe Haile & Malte Meyer (Eds.), *The making of migration. Repräsentationen, Erfahrungen, Analysen* (pp.33-45). Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
- Wesenick, Katharina (2008). *Biographie und Ethnizität*. Unpublished thesis, Georg-August Universität Göttingen.
- Zeuske, Michael (2002a). *Kleine Geschichte Kubas*. München: Becksche Reihe.
- Zeuske, Michael (2002b). Humboldt, Historismus, Humboldtianisierung. Der "Geschichtsschreiber von Amerika," die Massensklaverei und die Globalisierungen der Welt. *HiN*. III(4), [http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/romanistik/humboldt/hin/hin4/inh\\_zeuske\\_1.htm](http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/romanistik/humboldt/hin/hin4/inh_zeuske_1.htm) [accessed: July 24, 2009].
- Zucker, Norman L. & Flink-Zucker, Naomi (1996). *Desperate crossings. Seeking refuge in America*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.
- Zur Mühlen, Patrik von (1988). *Fluchtziel Lateinamerika. Die deutsche Emigration 1933-1945: Politische Aktivitäten und soziokulturelle Integration*. Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft.

## Author

Dr. *Michaela KÖTTIG*, born 1965, is currently a research assistant at the Center of Methods in Social Sciences at the Georg-August-University of Göttingen. She studied at the University of Kassel and was employed at the University of Cologne. Her research concerns female right-wing extremism in Germany. She also focuses on political socialization, family sociology, and family history as well as the influence of these factors on peer interactions. Furthermore, she is interested in young people's transition from school to work and the construction of belongings in transnational families. Here, she focuses on the constellations of families with very different political opinions and patterns of actions. In her research, she employs biographical, intergenerational, and ethnographical methods and has written about the productive transfer of interpretative research methods to different fields of social work. As of 2003, she has been secretary of the Research Committee on Biography and Society (RC 38) at the International Sociological Association (ISA). In October, she will begin a professorship at the University of Applied Sciences at Frankfurt/Main for interviewing techniques, communication, and conflict management.

Contact:

Michaela Köttig  
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen  
Methodenzentrum Sozialwissenschaften  
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 3, 37073 Göttingen  
Tel.: 0551/39 14206  
Fax: 0551/39 12286  
E-Mail: [michaela.koettig@gmx.de](mailto:michaela.koettig@gmx.de)  
URL: <http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/sh/28239.html>

## Citation

Köttig, Michaela (2009). Constructions of Collective Belongings through Art by Migrants from Cuba in Germany and South Florida [61 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(3), Art. 31, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0903318>.