A Visit to Cuba: Performance Ethnography of Place

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A Visit to Cuba: Performance Ethnography of Place

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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DEDICATION

For my father who lost his father and his country before becoming an adult. Thank you for creating a better life in a different place. For my wife, Giselle. Your love, patience and support sustained me throughout this project. To our son, Marlon, who will inherit the complexities of Cuban identity, you are my why. To the Cuban exile community that established, contributed to, and maintain the park. Each day the gates are open is an opportunity for others to reconnect with Cuba. Finally, to the Cubanos y Tampeños who visit the park. Without your presence, the notion of Cubaness could not be realized. Thank you for being the key to the park and this project.
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ABSTRACT

Bestowed to the Cuban government in 1956, The Parque Amigos de José Martí in Ybor City, FL is a historical site intended to symbolize the relationship between Tampa and Cuba that facilitated Cuba’s independence. Cuban cultural identity and the sense of Cubaness are confounded by the history of exile and the constraints of the United States Embargo. This project articulates the experience of the Cuban exile community and their descendants through descriptive accounts of visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí. Visiting a place is framed as a means of identity performance and a method of performance ethnography, enabling discursive, situated, and constitutive acts to reinforce the visitor's sense of Cubaness and the park's import as a cultural site. With pending renovations to the park, this project serves as a heuristic in understanding the conditions that impact people’s expressions and sense of Cubaness, and as an intervention to reconsider how the proposed park design speaks to the interests and values of the Tampa Cuban community. This project seeks to elevate the voices of those that want to bridge political divides to enhance the cultural connections that helped establish both places.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

When José Martí imagined Cuba free from Spanish colonial rule, he did so beyond its shores. Cubans in the late 19th century fought to create a sovereign nation, but Cuban-Americans today desire independence from the historical, political and social constraints, that have prohibited visiting Cuba. On November 25, 1891, José Martí climbed the steps of the Vincente Martínez Ybor Cigar factory in Ybor City, Florida and delivered his speech, "With All, and for the Good of All" inspiring the gathered crowd to envision their sense of Cuban identity through an independent Cuban nation (Martí 142). “Here where we keep watch for the absent ones, where we rebuild the house that topples upon our heads down there, where we must create what must replace the things destroyed for us there – here, no word so closely resembles the light of dawn, no consolation enters our hearts with greater joy, than this ardent and ineffable word: Cuban” (Martí 145)! Martí emphasizes the place from which Tampa Cubans came as integral to their identity. Cuba needed to exist for those in Tampa to be Cuban. Tampa's Cuban community, located mainly within Ybor City, was one of the largest in the United States, having surpassed Key West due to a massive fire that decimated most of the cigar industry there. However, Tampa's Cuban population was not a permanent fixture, as people moved freely between Tampa and Cuba (Villamia). Most of the traveling back and forth was due to work. As Cuban historian Louis Pérez notes, "the nearness of the island and the frequency of travel between Cuba and Florida, together with family and work ties, combined to make the world of the cigar workers on
both sides of the Florida Straits a single universe" (131-32). However, some Cubans abroad, including José Martí, were exiled from Cuba for political reasons, having spoken out against Spanish colonial rule (Sellers). Whether by institutional mandate, or being economically pressured to find other opportunities, most Cubans that left Cuba adopted the label of exile in political solidarity with others (Medina). Taking from Martí's writings, the desire to be connected with the homeland is a defining characteristic of the Cuban exile community. The sheer nature of exile, to be barred from one's native country, impacts how exiles related to Cuba. Martí spoke of his longing to return, and in doing so described the kind of Cuba he missed and hoped for the future. On the cigar factory steps in Ybor City, Martí portrayed his vision through memories and aspirations. He spoke of how Cuban exiles and immigrants should see themselves and Cuba, including the gift of seeing it from afar.

Martí spoke of a free and industrious people, Cubans who had experienced life out from under colonial rule. In doing so, Martí formulated a specific Cuban identity, one that combined an inviolable heritage with enlightened expatriation. Considering the audience during his speech and their strong ties to Cuba, Martí articulated a transnational Cuban identity by calling upon those in Tampa to return to Cuba to claim their land and independence. Those that gathered on the steps that day, as with much of the Tampa Cuban population, had deep ties to their homeland. "Few responded to Martí's appeal with more enthusiasm than the cigar workers in Florida. Subsuming into his nationalism a vague radical populism, Martí appealed directly to the exiled cigar workers to serve as the cutting edge of the independence movement" (Pérez 133). By describing the Tampa Cuban as firmly rooted in both locations, Martí brought forth the notion of nationalism in and through exile. The Tampa Cubans held strong ties to Cuba on their own, but it
was through Martí's construction of the Tampa Cuban as being the seed for the future of Cuba that the exile found purification as the native child.

For Martí, Cuba Libre signified not only a nation free of Spanish rule, but also a country from which racism, exploitation, and oppression had been eliminated. No other sector of the exiled patriots was more disposed by temperament and tradition to identify with Martí's version of Cuba Libre than the Florida cigar workers. (Pérez 1978, 133)

To contribute to Cuba’s independence meant a reconnection for those exiled, a greater sense of belonging and mutual investment for those yearning to return. Nationalism became a hallmark of the Cuban identity, one that would continue to this day domestically through the revolutionary slogan, "Patria o Muerte" (Homeland or Death), and abroad through the Cubaness that defines the Cuban cultural enclaves throughout the United States.

Cuba's liberation from Spain resulted in a confirmation of the nationalism Martí extolled; however, for some Cuban exiles, the consequences of war left them stranded on foreign soil. The previous self-proclaimed exiles found little economic opportunity in returning to Cuba. With the Cuban countryside decimated from battles, and upwards of 50,000 Cuban soldiers in need of work, many exiles decided to stay in Tampa due to the saturated workforce and limited jobs (Pérez 1995). During the struggle for Cuban independence, exiles established their livelihood, buying houses, and having children in Tampa. They fought tirelessly for the revolution, donated daily earnings, and sent supplies to the island all in the name of influencing the industrial independence of Cuba, but the outcome was quite the opposite. The Cubans who were previously free to move back and forth between Tampa and Havana now had little reason to leave Tampa. Through Martí's construction of a transnational Cuban identity, Tampa became a permanent home.
However, what about the descendants of Cuban migrants, the second or third generation Cuban-Americans, or Tampanians? What of those that seek not to return to Cuba, but rather to rekindle Martí’s transnationalism by identifying as Cuban and possibly visiting Cuba? How do descendants of exiles sense and express their Cubaness not only from afar, but after generations of being separated from the island because of the U.S. Embargo? The goal of this dissertation is to explain how the experience of descendants of Cuban exiles emerge and are articulated by a culturally specific place: the Parque Amigos de José Martí in Ybor City, Florida. Beginning with Martí’s construction of a Cuban identity that spans the Florida Straits, an identity that has endured through the political upheaval, social unrest, and international tensions that outline the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba, the park encapsulates and demonstrates the exile condition. The park is foremost symbolic of the historical connection between Tampa and Cuba (Villamia). Tampanians (Cuban-Americans in Tampa) unite around a kinship between Havana and Tampa that is defined by their mutual history of cultural influence. Considering the historical and political ties that bind the island nation and nation state, this project details how Cubaness is understood and performed by the exile community in Tampa. I focus on how the performance of Cubaness is influenced by a uniquely specific cultural site in Tampa, one that entails historical significance as a place where influential events occurred, and political and cultural significance through property ownership and decades of protests and demonstrations. The relationship between the United States and Cuba impacts how exiles and their children envision themselves as Cuban, and how they perform their Cuban identity. Furthermore, the influence of the places where identity performances transpire is the central theme throughout this project, and I emphasize place as more than context or setting during these performances. For this project, place is a representation of belonging, an indicator of self and culture, and a reminder of the past,
as well as a symbol of the present and future direction of the exile community’s relationship with Cuba.

This dissertation is guided by the following questions: How is Cubaness, formulated with the undertows of nationalism and patriotism, performed through the history of exile? To what extent, do the later generations yearn to redefine themselves, not as descendants of exile, but as a new generation able to connect both sides of the Florida Straits? Even more so, how does the sense of belonging that stems from being in a Cuban place impact performances of Cuban identity? While there are numerous accounts of individuals traveling to Cuba to visit where their ancestors came from, how do these visits impact their sense of Cubaness, and how does this differ from those who vow never to visit, or want to but have been unable? Answers to these questions emerge through a visit, a performance of being in a Cuban place: the Parque Amigos de José Martí in Ybor City. In this dissertation, I argue that a visit is a performance of cultural identity and a reclamation of the land left behind through migration. In this case, a visit animates the relationship between the exile community and Cuba. The concept of a visit entails notions of pilgrimage, but for this project, the visit does not involve visiting the island of Cuba. Instead this project highlights visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí because it is a unique place. Through historical significance and cultural narratives, the Parque Amigos de José Martí is considered Cuban property; not just through land ownership, but as a satellite territory of the island of Cuba. Considering the unique factors regarding this specific location, I argue that the place-making practices, the establishment of cultural sites in a community’s relocation, offers insight into the relationship between cultural identity and cultural places. Furthermore, the historical accounts of events at the site articulate how Tampa-Cubans envision themselves, where they came from, and how they recreate places that enable disparate and divergent cultural identities. The transnational
Cuban identity is constrained by the social and political context; therefore, performances of Cubaness are influenced by the places within which they occur, which in turn influences what the place means, what they represent, and how that representation is reflected back onto the visitor.

Cubaness is the practice of performing Cuban identity to maintain cultural ties. It is the means by which connections to fellow Cubans and the island of Cuba as origin are maintained. Throughout this dissertation I use my own experience to describe where my longing to visit Cuba originated and how it has manifest. However, my experience is not unique. Instead, it is a representative example of the diasporic condition, and is presented to describe the historical, social, and political influences that amplify the desire to visit through denial. In the next sections I offer a description of my Cubaness, which is followed by a narration of my visit to Parque Amigos de José Martí. This story was experienced and written before my conversations with other individuals regarding their sense of Cuban identity and how they perceive visiting Cuba and the park. While this description reveals a level of naiveté, it is intended to capture my genuine curiosity and initial observations of the park’s purpose and meaning. I do this while acknowledging the conditions that have distanced me from others who identify as Cuban, as well as my geographic distance from Cuba. The distance from Cuba and my sense of Cubaness is presented through the central themes of the Cuban nationalism extolled by Martí: blood and soil.

**Blood of My Blood**

I am Cuban by descent, not birth, nor acculturation. My father was born in Cuba, as was his father before him. While I carry their same name as a first-born son, I do not share their rootedness or sense of belonging to Cuba. One's national identity often stems from their birthplace and their bloodline. These are two areas where I diverge from generations prior, and
identifying myself as Cuban, "is a contested idea, due in part to the varying experiences of those arriving in the United States during the different waves of migration" (Cooper 20). My father left Cuba in 1964. I was born in Puerto Rico, so while I carry within me the Cuban blood and DNA, I lack the criteria of birthplace in the claim of "being" Cuban. In other words, while Cuban blood courses through my veins, I have never set foot on Cuban soil. The two islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico share a common history of Spanish colonization and similar language, cuisine, dance, and music. Cubans that left and landed in Puerto Rico found a welcoming and familiar geography and culture. A common phrase in the two islands is that they are the two wings of the same bird (Dos alas de la misma paloma). While the two islands share cultural practices, they are politically severed. Puerto Rico remains a colony of the United States and Cuba was exiled after the Castro Revolution. My family members that fled Cuba for Puerto Rico and then for the U.S. have returned to Puerto Rico several times, as have I to visit relatives or to re-commune with my birthplace. Upon moving to the United States, my family did not gravitate towards places with large Cuban-American populations such as Tampa, New York, or Miami. Although Spanish was my first language, we moved to the United States when I was very young. I learned English along with my parents, so my only opportunities to speak Spanish were when visiting relatives. Lacking the geographic and linguistic connections to Cuba, my claim to being Cuban is by blood.

Since my claim to Cuba is genealogical, I assume that visiting Cuba will amplify the language barrier I've encountered with relatives and friends here in the United States. I admit that I have considered Cuba exotic, imagining a potential visit as a stranger in a strange land. I am not a member of a Cuban social club, and although I live in Tampa, my social circles include few Cubans. Living in Miami before, I socialized with many second-generation Cuban-Americans
with whom I shared a similar association with Cuba. I can confirm Cooper’s findings that "while the older first-generation immigrants identify passionately with Cuba, the country of Cuba is important to the second-generation immigrants only as a place they would like to visit someday to meet distant relatives" (24).

Cultural identification in terms of birthplace, home, migration, and group membership, present instances of origin stories, narratives about a former place and time. Origin stories are often the inspiration for commemorative sites, places that attest to an event of historical importance. How we identify ourselves through narratives about our past frames how we connect with our culture. Visiting the place my family came from is a cultural practice, but stepping foot on Cuban soil, saying, "I've been to Cuba" is embroiled in the political tensions within Cuban culture. The narratives I've listened to about Cuba have framed my position on a future visit there and reinforce the significance of native land.

Soil of My Soil

Aside from the genealogical and historical claims to Cuban cultural identity, is the claim that Cuba is one’s homeland. As birthplace, Cuban soil becomes a powerful marker of Cuban identity. While my claim is through blood, the Parque Amigos de José Martí’s claim to its relationship to Cuba is through its dirt, and so I begin on the ground. To visit a place is to enter it, stepping onto it, contacting it. What makes the ground one walks on Cuban? The island of Cuba’s boundary has always been water, the boundary drawn on any map traces the shoreline of the island. Before Cuba was an independent nation, even before it was a colony, Cuba was and is an island. However, the dirt’s meaning and its ability to invoke a sense of belonging was made through its declaration as a nation. The nationalist slogans of blood and soil are material markers
of membership and are contingent upon the belief that they fulfil a certain requirement. To say that I am Cuban by descent is to mark myself as Cuban through one of these nationalist criteria.

While part of me yearns to set foot on the land my father left over fifty years ago, I also feel a sense of alienation that seems impossible to overcome. For me, traveling to Cuba would be in the form of tourism. I only have stories of the past from family members that left and vowed never to return, and the corpus of books, novels, newspapers, and archives. I have stories from close friends that recently visited as tourists and some relatives that went for the first time, but these are just glimpses into what I imagine my experience will be. I wonder if stepping into the apartment where my father spent his childhood would give me a greater understanding of my Cubaness. I wonder if the sights, sounds, and smells will trigger an emotion – a feeling of catharsis, harmony, or accomplishment. Or will it be the opposite and I leave more confused? Will witnessing the conditions that so many relatives voiced heartbreak over give me a greater understanding of their struggles and allow me to be more empathic towards them? Or will seeing it with my own eyes confirm the partiality of their perspective?

Considering the factions of Cuban-Americans, those that have exiled themselves from Cuba as an identity marker, and those that yearn to reconnect with the island, what does it mean to visit Cuba, or a Cuban place, a site that symbolizes Cuban identity? For example, the Parque Amigos de José Martí is reported to be Cuban land, but the claim that dirt was imported from the different provinces in Cuba to the park cannot be verified. However, soil from Cuba and Spain were imported for the planting of tobacco and guava plants in the Vincente Martínez Ybor park also located in Ybor City (Cuban Soil Arrives). However, the practice of a visit, of stepping onto Cuban soil as an accomplishment of claiming Cuban identity, is the premise for visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí as a performance of Cubaness. Furthermore, visiting is a way to
understand how the park was and is used as a place for cultural performance where one can
“stage” their Cuban identity.

The story of Cuban soil being imported to the Parque Amigos de José Martí, and the long-disputed meaning of the park being Cuban property has kept it within the larger discussion of Ybor City’s historical sites. Periodically, the park has resurfaced in newspapers, magazines, and local news shows discussing its unique appeal to locals and tourists. In 2011, the Parque Amigos de José Martí was featured in “Why do They Call it That” a local interest section of Channel 10 News, which explains the history of a local landmark. “Step under the arch, and you walk into a different country” was the opening line of the report, a profoundly metonymic claim of the park’s ability to transport visitors to the prohibited land of Cuba (Kamm). Equating the park with Cuban soil was my invitation to visit, and my response details the aspects of how a visit provides a rich opportunity for understanding Cuban identity. I was hailed by the proposal's call to my Cuban heritage and my desire to visit Cuba. As marketing hyperbole, the phrase suggests a symbolic accomplishment, an instance that animates notions of how we visit places created from, through, and by a shared cultural identity. I accept the invitation, honored to be welcomed, but anxious about my reception. My entire life, I've heard stories about Cuba, and for as long as I can remember, I've had to weigh my desire to visit against the accounts. My interest in what the performance of visiting a culturally significant place can do for the visitor and what its impact is on the site visited was piqued by the proposal of a symbolic visit to Cuba. When asked "why visit the Parque Amigos de José Martí?" the response not only illustrates the meaning of the place and the visit but also determines how the visitor perceives themselves and their relationship with the place.
While I have yet to visit Cuba, I have set foot in Parque Amigos de José Martí. The assertion that one can visit Cuba by stepping foot on foreign soil within domestic land is fantastical, a performative utterance that calls upon the visitor to make the inferential leap across the Florida Straits to reconnect with their culture. This notion explains some of the histories of the Parque Amigos de José Martí and offers a view of Cuban culture through the place-based practice of a visit. As an identity performance, visiting is viewed in both the doing and its denial. In other words, resistance to visiting a place of origin is also considered to be an affirmation of identity. As an act of expression, a visit is a place-making practice that gives a culture a sense of rootedness in the soil of one’s former home, and their current place. In sum, visiting the park is an act of embodying cultural identity in a culturally significant place.

**Visiting Parque Amigos de José Martí**

I bring my laptop, notebook, pencil, my copy of “Species of Spaces and Other Pieces” by Georges Perec, and my phone, keys, and wallet. It is a ten-mile drive to Ybor City. From I-75 to I-4 the road traces the outskirts of Tampa, across the Hillsborough River dams and the executive airport. Sections of the road traverse swaths of warehouses and old neighborhoods, as I cruise at eye level to the bridge decks of the ships in port. The 22nd Street exit descends upon an enormous water feature surrounded by security fencing. I watch the water flow, listen to the burbling from the fountains. The breeze carries the smell of chlorine as the water cascades upon itself, and I feel the rhythmic hum of rubber whirling over concrete. The light changes and I smash the gas pedal to get in front of other cars and avoid the construction ahead. Two blocks in I park the car, lock it twice, and pay the meter. Even with this short of a drive, I feel I'm already not close enough. "The surprise and disappointment of traveling. The illusion of having overcome distance, of having erased time" (Perec 77). I'm not a local, I don't know the better
bars, or who sells the best Cuban sandwiches. I start walking down the street towards the main avenue.

My footsteps along the cobblestone streets follow the path of many before me. I get the sense that pieces of history exist in every crack and joint along the road, but only some are visible. I concentrate on what I observe, glancing around until I find something of interest, accepting the condition that I am most likely missing something else. Ambling, looking for what has been left behind, what did not get cast or engraved into the sidewalks and signs. Cars cruise down 7th Avenue, reassuring me that walking enables a connection with history in a more haptic and embodied way. I imagine being in the previous century, or before the turn of the 19th century when walking was the way to observe the environment. I buy a cigar at one of the local tobacco shops and let the smoke mix in the humid air with the other smells: grilled meats, perfumes, stale alcohol, coffee grounds, and the occasional whiff of urine. I traipse over the blackened chewing gum spots and saunter over mosaic tiles and poetic inlays, past ornate black light poles and inset storefronts. I turn north on Sixteenth Avenue and left on Eighth Avenue. This corner is where a famous picture of Martí was taken after his speech, "With All, For the Good of All.” Formerly the V.M. Ybor Cigar factory, the building Martí was pictured in front of now has a small bust next to the steps. The Church of Scientology now owns the building.

With each step towards the park, I've gathered my bearings and traced a trail along the way. From across the parking lot, I can see the statue of Martí surrounded by a tall wrought-iron fence. From his perch, he peers just over the top of the pickets marking the border between Cuba and the United States. I stop directly in front of the entrance and turn south. With one gated entry, the park looks more like private land than a public park. The Parque Amigos de José Martí is a 0.14-acre private park at 1303 East Eighth Ave. in Ybor City. According to the Hillsborough
County Tax Collectors records, the park is owned by "Estado Cubano" (The Cuban State). The park is a "green space" meaning that it is designated by a green color on maps indicating that there is grass or other landscaping. Like a gated community, the park appears pristine because of its sense of exclusivity. There is a concrete archway with the words, "Parque Amigos de José Martí" engraved in a Classical Greek style font, above the entrance. On the entry gate are two signs: "service dogs are allowed in the park," and the other stating the park's name, operating
hours, and the organization that I assume operates the park (Cuban Historical and Cultural Center) and a contact number that as of this writing is disconnected.

The rustic double gate lay wide open, each side held back with iron rods piercing the ground. Inching forward, I see a padlock hanging from a thick metal chain on one of the gate doors. My eyes travel upward and just inside the park, I notice a green patina sign to my left.

![Image of La Casa de Pedroso sign.](image)

**Figure 2:** Image of La Casa de Pedroso sign.

**The Sign**

*La Casa de Pedroso*

*Paulina Pedroso was one of the great women patriots of Cuba. After an attempt on the life of José Martí, the Pedroso House became his refuge. Whenever Martí stayed here the flag of the budding Republic of Cuba fluttered outside. Evenings, the Cubans formed groups outside the little house to watch the Apostle of Freedom through the windows. Martí's room remained lighted until late at night, and at times, in the silence, the scratching of his pen could be heard. An intruder would have found Ruperto, Paulina's husband, on guard duty.*

*Erected by the Tribune Company – 1961*
On December 16, 1893, José Martí arrived in Tampa for his eighth visit since 1891 to continue his campaign in support of Cuban independence. That night, while staying at a cottage located where the Circulo Cubano stands today, two Spanish men visited with Martí and attempted to assassinate him. They poured a poison into Martí’s wine, and upon tasting it he quickly spit it out (Salcinas). Martí fell ill soon after and was moved that night to the Pedroso house (Casa Pedroso). Paulina and Ruberto Pedroso were two immigrants from Cuba who supported the cause for Cuban independence. Martí had befriended the Pedrosos during previous visits. Over the next three days, Paulina Pedroso and her husband, Raul, nursed Martí back to health. Martí, left Tampa on December 22, 1893 and arrived in New York on Christmas Eve. Martí would continue to visit Ybor City and deliver his famous lectures to the cigar factory workers in support of Cuban independence from Spain (Salcinas). Martí died on the battlefield in Dos Rios, Cuba on May 19, 1895. It was the beginning of the war.

Without the care of the Pedrosos, Martí may have died that fateful night in December, and the dream of an independent Cuba might have died with him. It is for this reason that the Pedrosos are considered the saviors of the “apostle of freedom.” Paulina was hospitable to the point of creating a home for Martí. Aside from his recuperation, the stories of Martí’s presence in the boarding house, describe Martí’s visits as frequent and important. The Cuban flag waved out front of the house whenever Martí was there, attracting visitors to catch a glimpse of him while writing by candlelight deep into the night. While the connection between Martí and Pedroso began with an almost tragic end, their friendship became a symbol of racial equality for a future Cuba. It was because of Martí’s visits, not just to Tampa, but to the Pedrosos and their house, that made it important to preserve and remember. Paulina Pedroso supported Cubans during the
war and returned to Cuba in 1910 to help with the tobacco workers’ strike. She died in 1925, and her connection to Martí is remembered to this day.

An old photograph of the original boarding house shows the wooden structure covering almost the entire plot and its proximity to the street. The fence around the Parque Amigos de José Martí is not just a border between American and Cuban property, it also marks what used to be the boundary between exterior and interior space. In this sense, walking into the park means stepping into the boarding house, since the concrete archway is where the front door of the building used to be. The plaque tells the story of people walking past the boarding house and hearing the scratching of Martí's pen as he wrote by candlelight late into the night. Martí's writing was a public display. People could witness his labor. I look back out to the sidewalk and street, through the window, through the fence, and get a sense of the connections between Martí writing late at night, and how his practice was accessible to others. However, writing is a private act. While the text becomes public, the crafting of it tends to be something done alone.

At the gate, looking down at my feet, I notice the threshold of the entrance to the park, my eyes travel upward towards the statue of Martí. The bright white sculpture greets me with an outstretched right arm. Martí invites me to approach him, to meet him. José Martí was a luminary, and the glare of the sun makes the statue luminous as it stands elevated on a pedestal. Martí's arm extends as a request to join, a gesture that calls for reciprocation. Martí's posture depends on my interpretation for this meaning to be perceived just as much as any other persons' movements do. My expectation animates the statue as inviting. Martí motions towards unity and I reply by stepping onto the park and stepping into Cuba. "Countries are divided from one another by frontiers. Crossing a frontier is quite an emotive thing to do: an imaginary limit… is enough to change everything" (Perec, 73).
Inside the park, three stripes of darker colored tiles guide me along the walkway towards the gleaming statue of José Martí, but several other objects capture my attention, I notice the white tiled walls on both sides of the statue of Martí like outstretched wings. The figure of Martí is flanked by flagpoles: one with the flag of the state of Florida, the other with the flag of Cuba. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a small granite tombstone below the "Casa Pedroso 1893"
The tombstone sits at an angle and is barely noticeable from behind the bushes along the fence.

The Tombstone

La Casa de Pedroso
1893

Paulina Pedroso fue insigne patriota cubana tras el atentado contra José Martí se hizo refugio del apóstol. Siempre que aquí se hospedara Martí desplegaba en la fachada la bandera de la naciente república Cubana. De noche grupos de Cubanos se congregaban frente a la casita para observar al apóstol a través de las ventanas la habitación de Martí permanecía alumbrada hasta altas horas y a veces en el silencio se podía escuchar el rascar de su pluma. Cualquier intruso hubiera hallado allí en guardia a Ruperto el esposo de Paulina.

Frente Cubano Unido de Tampa
Mayo 19, 2001
Cortesía de Gonzalez Funeral Home

Figure 4: Image of Tombstone at Parque Amigos de José Martí.
The tombstone strikes me as odd, not because of its symbolism, but because it bears a date much later than the original sign, and seems to have been donated by an individual seeking to make the park more welcoming to Cubans, specifically, those who speak only Spanish.

I walk along the terracotta tile path and notice the palm trees to the left and bougainvillea bushes to the right. Below each plant on either side is a small painted hexagonal rock, each with the Cuban flag and a different name of a Cuban province: “La Habana,” “Camaguey,” “Las Villas,” “Pinar del Rio,” and “Oriente.” I traverse the entire island of Cuba, east to west, as I ramble along the walkway that runs north to south. I’ve heard that there is Cuban soil from each of these provinces scattered around the plants where each sign rests. I step off the path across patchy grass and weeds to run my fingers through the dirt, to touch the soil, but the tropical rains have packed the ground down hard. These soils were sprinkled years ago, and it is difficult to distinguish between what is Florida and what is Cuba.

Figure 5: Images of painted rocks with labels of provinces in Parque Amigos de José Martí.
I step back onto the path and walk towards the statue of Martí. To the left of the statue is a catty-cornered pedestal and bust of Antonio Maceo Grajales, the Lieutenant General during the war for Cuban Independence, who led the battle at Dos Rios where Martí died. Martí's figure starkly contrasts the black marble bust of Maceo – one the literary politician, the other a war general. As a philosopher, journalist, poet, and revolutionary, Martí's words are committed to memory by the youth of Cuba, and still remembered by its eldest children. Martí lived during Spanish colonial rule and was the leading voice for the right to one's own country, and the sense of community and belonging that comes from national sovereignty. Martí spoke several times

Figure 6: Image of bust of Antonio Maceo in Parque Amigos de José Martí.
throughout Ybor City's halls and factories to drum up support for an independent Cuba. His eloquence and imagery set forth a Cuban symbolism of national unity, while also establishing the exile community as having inextricable ties to Cuba.

However, Spain's response, in attempting to assassinate Martí, motivated his followers through the exposure of a ruthless imposition of order and rule, one that does not consider the lives and desires of its subjects. While Martí convened with the Cuban population in Tampa, their time together was not about the place where they were. Instead, their meetings were about the place they came from or identified with, this was not Tampa, it was Cuba. Martí visited because although he was welcome, Tampa was not where he belonged, he knew this and advocated for a sense of belonging to Cuba, a sense of belonging that was impossible to achieve until Cuba was independent of Spanish colonial rule.

Figure 7: Image of José Martí statue and dedication plaques at Parque Amigos de José Martí.
I approach Martí, through his writings, through the history of Tampa, and through the statues and plaques within this place. I step forward and up onto the central plaza area slightly back from the center of the park. I have heard his words through other family members reciting the poems they remembered during their childhood in Cuba. Yo Soy un Hombre Sencillos, La Rosa Blanca, and Los Zapaticos de Rosa are all poems I’ve listened to but barely remember, and can hardly translate. However, I try to hear his message and understand how he came to be known as the “universal Cuban” (Seeger 7). On the roughly four-foot-high, white tile pedestal of Martí's statue are two plaques, one newer, memorializing his endeavors, the other below is older, dedicating the statue:

The Plaque

José Martí
Apostle of Cuban Freedom
Born in Havana, Cuba, on January 28, 1853.
Patriot, writer, poet, lawyer, and orator.
A lover of liberty and justice, his ideas and personal example were a universal inspiration for the world as well as for the Cuban people. He perished on the field of battle in the struggle for his country's freedom on May 19, 1895, in Dos Ríos, province of Oriente, Cuba

The Dedication
El Pueblo de Tampa
A
José Martí
José Martí Memorial Foundation
Tampa, Florida
Febrero, 1960

The José Martí Memorial Foundation no longer exists and appears to have been established solely to install the memorial. The story behind the statue and the memorial foundation reveals the symbolic tensions in the park. With partial funding from the 26th of July movement, and commissioned by Castro supporters and sympathizers, the history of the statue has been a point of contention for the organization that currently operates the park (Casa Cuba). The history of the
sculpture has also sanctioned some of the actions taken regarding the park's access. The story of Martí's arm being broken off is still unclear, but I have doubts that it was politically motivated.

As I walk around the statue, I step off the tiled walkway and onto an area paved with bricks that seem much older than anything else in the park. There are benches around and shade from the trees above. The solid back wall that separates the park from the alley behind it to the south is adorned with a large mosaic mural of the island of Cuba. As with the painted rocks at each planter, the provinces of Cuba are represented by a different color on the map. There is a bronze plaque of Martí's words underneath the map, and a small plaque above the map with the face of Paulina Pedroso.

The Back Wall

En el mundo si se lleva con dignidad
hay aun poesía para muchos todo es el
valor moral con que se encare y dome
la injusticia aparente de la vida
mientras halla un bien que hacer un
derecho que defender un libro sano y
fuerte que leer un rincón de monte
una buena mujer un verdadero amigo
tendrá vigor el corazón sensible para
amar y loar lo bello y ordenado de
la vida
Isla de Pinos – José Martí

The plaque on the back wall does not include punctuation, which made reading and understanding it rather tricky for me. Even as a native Spanish speaker, although not fluent, I needed to find another source for this poem that at the very least included some punctuation. A collection of Martí's poems along with short biographies and historical accounts of Martí's life titled "Hombres" was the only other place I found the complete text. Below is the passage quoted directly from the source with punctuation included.
"En el mundo, si se le lleva con dignidad, hay aun poesía para mucho; todo es el valor moral con que se encare y dome la injusticia aparente de la vida; mientras haya un bien que hacer, un derecho que defender, un libro sano y fuerte que leer, un rincón de monte, una mujer buena, un verdadero amigo, tendrá vigor el corazón sensible para amar y loar lo bello y ordenado de la vida, odiosa a veces por la brutal maldad con que suelen afearla la venganza y la codicia" (Martí and Quesada 285).
With this quote, I was then able to translate the poem into English. However, a direct translation yielded little understanding; therefore, I provide my interpretation of the poem, guided more by syntax rather than the accuracy of converting individual words.

*In the world, if one lives with dignity, there is poetry all around; All is the moral value with which the apparent injustice of life is faced and given; as long as there is a good to do, a right to defend, a healthy and strong book to read, a corner of a hill, a good woman, a true friend, the heart will have a vigor to love and praise a beautiful and orderly life, angered sometimes by the brutal wickedness with which vengeance and greed tend to wipe out.*

*Figure 9:* Image of Parque Amigos de José Martí facing North towards Ybor Square.
I decide to sit down behind Martí and consider his words in the shade, to reflect on the performativity of cultural sites concerning cultural archetypes. The mythos of José Martí presents admirable qualities for Cubans, and his iconic status guides my understanding of Cuban identity and my performance of it. From the park's features, I've gathered that Martí wrote the origin story of Cuba, and is a germinal figure of Cuban national and cultural identity. Sitting in his shadow, I look up to him as a leader, ready to follow. Martí is facing North, reaching out at what lies ahead for Cuba, but Cuba is South. Martí is not guiding me back to Cuba—he is bringing me to Tampa. When I exit the park, I step back into Ybor City, leaving Martí behind, sequestered on Cuban property, surrounded by a fence and gate that will soon be locked.

**Outline of Chapters**

In the next chapter, I provide a timeline of the Parque Amigos de José Martí. Starting from Martí’s visits and the events that led to the park being established as a memorial to José Martí and the relationship between Tampa and Cuba, I then provide a chronology of how Tampanians, the Cuban-Americans living in Tampa sought to define the park as a symbol of their Cuban identity. The park's history is rife with conflict and controversy, and the developments and happenings within the park indicate the tenuous nature of Cuban identity. The sense of Cubanidad is heavily influenced by nationalist sentiments, ideological positions, international relations, and political disagreements. I demonstrate these aspects by providing accounts of the conflicts that occurred in and around the park, some of which continue to the present. In sum, I use the chronology of the park, to provide examples of how a culture, especially a diaspora, negotiates their sense of self-identity and their cultural-identity by establishing cultural places.
Upon detailing the park's history and meaning for Tampanians here and Cubans in Cuba, and after defining how cultural identity is performed and established, chapter three provides the theoretical definition for a visit. I describe the visit through three central tenets: it's dialogic nature, it's situatedness in both place and time, and how the practice of visiting impacts both personal and cultural identity (Cubanidad). After establishing the parameters of a visit, I then move to define the performance of a visit as a research method. A visit is an example of performance ethnography, a way of understanding how cultural identity is created and maintained by engaging with the people who identify as part of said culture. To accomplish this, I invited twelve individuals who identify as Cuban to visit the Parque Amigos de José Martí with me. During our visits, I asked them questions regarding their Cuban identity and how they felt about visiting the park and Cuba to gain an understanding of how they perceived their Cubanidad.

In Chapter four, I propose the park and a visit to the park as a heuristic for understanding the various types of Cubaness, and how visitors perform them. I use the visit to offer descriptive accounts of the park, descriptive accounts of the embodied engagement with the park during my interviews, and verbatim accounts extracted from the interviews conducted at the park. I take a descriptive approach in articulating the intricacies of visiting and Cubaness by analyzing the symbolism within the park and sharing how others experienced visiting the park. Considering visits as dialogic, situated, and constitutive of visitor and the place, the interpretations offered of the park within the categories of Cubaness explain how visitors accomplish their own Cuban identity and reinforce the park’s import and meaning.

In the final chapter, I reflect on my experience as a researcher, paying attention to how my perceptions of Cubaness and my own performance of Cuban identity impacted the
interviews. Through reflexive and critical analysis, I summarize how the park’s current state and operation influences performances of Cuban identity and the formation of what life in Cuba is like for those still there. I include suggestions by visitors for alterations to the park and how this research may be used in proposing improvements to Parque Amigos de José Martí. Finally, I conclude this project with a summary of the complexities within performing Cubaness.
CHAPTER TWO

There is an ineffable characteristic of being Cuban outside of Cuba. Sentiments and meanings get lost in translation from Spanish to English. Political restrictions of the U.S. embargo and the "culture of exile" have prohibited those who left from staying connected to the island (Medina). For Cubans that left Cuba, their sense of Cubaness has depended upon their personal history, their social connections, and their enduring desire to stay connected to the island. This connection takes different forms all of which are described throughout this chapter. The curious conditions of Cubaness as an identity performance begins with the question, what does it mean to be Cuban? I begin with the same curiosity that distinguished the focus of Latin American anthropology from other schools of anthropological thought. While anthropology in other countries centered on foreign cultures (the other), Latin American anthropology, led by the call of Fernando Ortiz to look inward, studied their own cultural identity (Gonçalves).

Cuba has different meanings. It is an independent island, yet some geographers argue it is part of a larger archipelago. Cuba is a sovereign nation having fought for independence from Spain, only to then fall under the influence of “el Norte,” United States until the Platt amendment was removed from the constitution in 1960. Antoni Kapcia contends that Cuba’s ongoing struggle for independence has led to an “obsession with identity, which dominated politics and dissidence from late in the colonial period until present day” (24). He continues, “the search for independence and later ‘sovereignty’ became naturally a search for a lost ‘history’ and an attempt to rescue an identity” (24). In this sense, Cuba is also an identifier that differentiates it
from other Latin American countries as a place from which cultural practices originated and were exported. The different meanings of Cuba influence how Cubaness is constructed, which amounts to an understanding of Cubaness through its relationship to the places from and within which Cubaness is expressed or felt.

The Parque Amigos de José Martí locates Cubaness for the exile community that seeks to recover an identity lost in the political turmoil of U.S. Cuba relations. As a symbol of the relationship between Tampa and Cuba, the park is Cuban property and contains Cuban soil, which amounts to the possibility of visiting Cuba by stepping into the park. Albeit a satellite territory, the park’s historical import, cultural symbolism, and weekly occupation presents a unique lens through which to understand how Cubaness is felt, construed, and performed by visiting it. Therefore, this chapter begins with a description of Cuban cultural identity and applies the specific constructs to the conditions of exile, immigration, and diaspora. I then provide a chronology of the events that led to the exile community establishing, designing, and dedicating the Parque Amigos de José Martí, as well as the events over the last 6 decades that have redefined the park’s purpose and meaning. This chapter seeks to lay the framework for how Cuban identity is construed and performed outside of Cuba and how the park has been a symbol of the diasporic identity that spawned from a history of exile.

**Cuban Cultural Identity**

The cultural practices of the Cubans abroad (exiles, immigrants) are dependent on a sense of Cubaness; however, Cubaness is the English translation of several Spanish concepts. Cubanidad, Cubanéo, and Cubanía are terms that provide greater clarity to the quality of being Cuban. At a keynote speech for the Cuban Studies Association Conference in 1997, Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, a Cuban-American writer and scholar, detailed the intricacies between each of
these terms. Following the footsteps of Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, who initiated the self-reflexive focus on Cubaness in his lecture “Los Factores Humanos de Cubanidad” (The Human Factors of Cubaness) at the University of Havana in 1939, the task of understanding what it means to be Cuban has endured and grown in complexity since (Gonçalves). Throughout this section, Cubanidad, Cubanéo, and Cubanía are detailed as distinct forms of Cubaness in the attempt to clarify what Cubaness means, how it is identified, how it is practiced, and how it is personally experienced.

Cubanidad

As an identifier of Cubaness, Cubanidad was first to appear and is the most commonly used of the three. Ortiz first used the term Cubanidad in his lecture "Los Factores Humanos de Cubanidad” (The Human Factors of Cubaness) (Gonçalves). Cubanidad is “generic rather than individual, uniform rather than idiosyncratic. In its narrowest sense, Cubanidad designates the junction of nationality and citizenship” (Pérez-Firmat 3). In this sense, Cubanidad is both official and fragile. Predicated on citizenship or naturalization, and demonstrated through birth certificates and passports, Cubanidad denotes an arrangement between a person and the nation of Cuba. However, in this formal relationship, one does not need to be of Cuban descent, as anyone could migrate to Cuba and become a Cuban citizen regardless of ethnicity.

In addition to revealing the tenuousness of Cubanidad’s basis in nationality, Pérez-Firmat describes the potential consequences of this claim – that if Cubaness is dependent on a state’s designation of who is or is not Cuban, then one's Cubaness is external to them. Its impact stems from paperwork rather than behavior and is susceptible to revocation. However, the ability to rescind one's Cubanidad does not solely lie with the state. For instance, the exile community took it upon themselves to revoke their own Cubanidad as a political stance. Each period of
development for the island, from Spanish colony, to independent nation, to falling under American imperialist influence, to the Castro revolution, saw a steady stream of new exiles; each carrying with them a sense of responsibility to maintain cultural bonds while rejecting their nationality, citizenship and birthright – their Cubanidad.

These Cubans took some comfort in the fact that they were actors in a complex world struggle between authoritarianism and democracy, between communism and free enterprise. They were victims—"martyrs"—of a political cause. Consequently, they resisted being called "immigrants," particularly those who arrived during the first decade of exile, and many continue to resist the term even today. Immigrant implies a choice, and most Cuban emigrés believed that they had no choice; they had been pushed out of their country by the social, economic, and political chaos of the Castro regime. When the Cubans called themselves "exiles," it was a powerful political statement, a symbol of defiance that at the same time distinguished and isolated their experience from that of other immigrants. (Garcia 1996 84)

This statement demonstrates a purposeful rejection of Cubanidad; however, this led to exiles establishing themselves in Tampa (or other places) and in doing so gave birth to second and third generation Cuban-Americans who had to contend with their lack of Cubanidad. Being a second or third generation Cuban-American is already a disqualification of Cubanidad. Underneath this inquiry “are you from Cuba?” is the assumption that being from the island is the main determining factor of one’s Cubaness. Within this consideration is the material effects and conditions of mass migrations from Cuba throughout its history and the formation of exile communities in the United States. In this instance, the second-generation Cuban-American does not have the birthright of Cuban citizenship.
Cubanidad considers Cuba as a nation, a country defined by its political boundary, marking a difference between those who are from there and those who are not. In this case, the border is not only the water’s edge surrounding the island. The divide is invoked through the differing life experiences. This is a claim of membership through institutionally sanctioned accomplishments that suppose Cubaness is earned by qualifying citizenship (current or previous) to the nation-state of Cuba. Two issues arise here: that one can gain citizenship without Cuban heritage, and that the practice of Cubanidad, of claiming Cubaness as a relationship to Cuba allows for the revocation of others supposed Cubaness. "Of the many ways to claim Cubaness, one of the most pervasive and insidious is to deny the Cubaness of those who are not like us" (Pérez-Firmat 3-4). However, this issue does not only emerge through conversations about the nationalist sentiments of being Cuban, it also comes up in discussions about visiting Cuba. Where one instance may entail denial of someone's Cubaness for having the desire to visit Cuba. As in, "how could you consider yourself Cuban if you support the Castro regime by giving them money to visit Cuba?" Yet, a similar situation could invoke Cubaness through the inverse, as in "how can you understand what it means to be Cuban without visiting Cuba?” A veritable catch-22 emerges here. According to some, Cubaness stems from the denial of visiting. To others, Cubaness is accomplished by performing a pilgrimage to the homeland.

Cubanéo

Cubanéo is also an external aspect of Cubaness, but does not require the formal designation of being Cuban through legal or institutional decree. Instead Cubanéo is a “loose repertoire of gestures, customs, vocabulary” otherwise defined here as communicative behaviors, or more specifically, performances of Cuban identity (Pérez-Firmat 4). The practices of Cubanéo include everyday routines, for example, drinking a cafesito at a local coffee shop, or smoking a
cigar from a neighboring Caribbean country at cigar shops. Both are acts that enable and accompany interactions with fellow Cubans. While the customs of drinking, eating, and smoking are identified by the specific type of drink, food, or cigar, they are accompaniments to the exchanges of cultural values and beliefs. What is often overheard in establishments serving signature Cuban accouterments are conversations about Cuba's current political state, stories of past experiences, or discussions regarding the future direction of Cuba.

Cubanéo is best recognized in the moments when Cuban-Americans, gathered together, speak about their individual connection to Cuba, and express their sense of Cubaness to each other. These conversations center around the specific lived experiences and are concerned with the social, political, and economic conditions of Cuba, the U.S., and the relationship between the two countries. A prevalent influence in this relationship is the U.S. embargo (also known in Cuba as the American blockade), which as previously noted, has an immense impact on how Cuban-Americans identify themselves due to limitations on travel and communication.

Because the Cuban-Americans in Tampa, and other parts of the U.S. have disavowed their citizenship through exile or immigration, Cubanidad is a marker of their identity. While Cubanidad may provoke instances of differentiation between individuals, where one does not belong to the nation, Cubanéo invokes a sense of “national character” in the sense that one can perform in ways that accomplish belonging. As Pérez-Firmat elaborates:

Rather than naming un estado civil, Cubanéo names un estado de animo, a mood, a temperament, what used to be called a "national character." Its frame of reference is not un pais - a political entity - but un pueblo - a social and cultural entity. Thus, Cubanéo finds expression in all of those habits of thought and speech and behavior that we know as typically criollos - the informality, the humor, the exuberance, the docility. (4)
In the case of exiles/immigrants, Cubanidad is a negative term. To shed one’s Cubanidad, their citizenship to Cuba, through expulsion or by leaving Cuba in the name of freedom, is a badge of honor for most Cuban-Americans. Yet there is discomfort as well in “living on the hyphen” that Cubanéo resolves, or at least helps them endure (Pérez-Firmat 5). Cubanéo is often practiced through a political responsibility to preserve the glory of a past Cuba and the aspiration for a future Cuba that will welcome back those previously exiled. Cubanéo is a way to understand and protect one's Cuban identity considering their departure from the island, and their immigrant status in America. In a sense, Cubanéo as a survival tactic within the liminality of not being utterly Cuban because of estrangement, but not being completely assimilated into America (Garcia 1996).

Cubanéo is the performance of one's Cubaness by expressing their individual beliefs and values concerning Cuba. Therefore, Cubanéo takes on indefinite form, but has tended to reflect certain aspects of Cuba's history. Two distinct periods in the history of Cuba provide insight as to how the social and political conditions within Cuba and the U.S. and between the two countries influenced how Cubanidad has been proclaimed and performed. The first period of cultural transition came after Cuba's independence from Spain, and the second period emerged after Fidel Castro's revolution. While each period is unique, both influenced the Cuban identity of those who left for the United States. The subsequent events that followed each period illustrate the transitions for Cuban Americans from exile to immigrant – from Cuban, to Cuban-American, and at times American-Cuban, or merely American.

The end of the Cuban revolution brought the opportunity for many exiles to return to Cuba. While some, independently wealthy or with promising economic opportunities in Cuba, returned, others who had established lives in Tampa found it difficult or impossible to leave.
"The war had allowed many to persuade themselves that exile was a function of political commitment… [but] peace transformed the meaning of exile" (Pérez 1978 135). The loss of the exile identity, meant that Cubans in Tampa existed as immigrants, establishing themselves more permanently. Although Cuban exiles previously felt they were forced out, whether by Spain's rule or due to other political or economic pressures, the ability to return to Cuba and the conscious choice not to meant that their move was permanent. In this sense, the Cuban community in Tampa, although perhaps previously sharing characteristics of the diaspora were now decidedly so.

The culture of exile became a deeply ingrained aspect of Cuban identity. While Martí spoke of Tampa Cubans potential impact on creating a new free and independent Cuba, the condition of being an exile in Tampa meant that they were also required to establish a home there. What facilitated these mutual establishments (Cuba as a nation, and Tampa as a home for exiles) was that "in those days Cubans truly thought of Tampa and Key West as extensions of Cuban territory… By all accounts, there was a sense among Cubans that Tampa was, for all intents and purposes, no different from Cardenas, Matanzas, or any other city on the island" (Medina 640). Both Tampa and Cuba benefited from the shrunken divide, bridging the Straits of Florida to create satellite territories, spreading the political, economic, and cultural influences in both directions.

The Tampa experience showed Cubans that you could be away from Cuba and remain Cuban; for thousands, it was a place of relative safety and stability away from the economic and political troubles of the island. For some, such as Martí, the Ybor City model provided a foundation for the ideals that would coalesce in their concept of the Cuban nation. (Medina 642-3)
However, Cuba winning its independence, created conditions that expanded the distance between the two cities in terms of economic opportunity and social mobility. Also, the passing of time meant that the exiles that did not return after the revolution became more entrenched in their new home and farther distanced from their former home. The social practices of Cubanéo can be understood as an outward or external performance of Cuban culture, but Cubanía is an essence, an internal feeling of being Cuban in response to exile.

Cubanía

Antoni Kapcia explains Cubanía “as the teleological belief in Cubanidad” and traces how it has changed throughout the course of Cuban history (6). Cubanidad is identified by nationality, citizenship and birthright, but it relies on a sense of belonging as both its point of inception and the enduring desire to maintain a connection as a means of identification to endure the struggles Cuba and its people have experienced. Cubanía is a sense of belonging to the construct of Cuba. The identity that Cubans sought through the declaration of Cubanía was more positive than the denial of something. As Louis Pérez notes, the history of Cuba has been defined by the rejection or negation of something else; Spanish colonial rule, American imperialism, and Catholicism for example (Pérez 1999, 89). Identity, especially regarding Cubanidad, as a product of rejection has its limitations. Cubanía on the other hand has existed in positive terms since the early writings of José Martí. As he dreamed for a Cuba Libre, a sovereign and free Cuba, he posited Cubanía as an affirmative ideal of Cuba and Cubans.

“Rather than an accident of birth or a menu of manners and mannerisms, Cubanía forms part of one's inner life, it's not asserted but felt, it's not flaunted but desired. It's not a reflex but a choice” (Pérez-Firmat 7). Considering the exile’s disavowal of Cubanidad, Cubanía is a historically radical term, derived from the culture of exile, rooted in José Martí’s creation of a
transnational Cuban identity. It is an identity born of dislocation and the desire to return. Whether forced or voluntary, the exile has a strong connection to the homeland and Cubanía is the inner sensation and drive to maintain the relationship.

Unlike Cubanidad, which requires documentary support, this variety of Cubaness inheres in an act of the will. Unlike Cubanéo, which requires the society of like-minded individuals, Cubanía appears in the theater of the individual's consciousness. One could summarize the distinction this way: Cubanía finds expression not in a nation - un país - and not in a people - un pueblo - but in something more abstract and ineffable - in a homeland, una patria (Pérez-Firmat 7).

Although Pérez-Firmat describes Cubanía through Patria, he is not stating it as an allegiance to the Cuba as fatherland, which is the more frequent use of the phrase as it applies to Cubanidad and civic duty. The Castro revolutionary slogan “Patria o Muerte” (fatherland or death) is predicated on citizenship. However, Cubanía in this sense is the post-political notion of patria, as in “this is where I’m from, and where my heart resides.”

In parsing out the different forms of Cubaness, Cubanía is the most difficult to describe and the most tenuous of claims. At the very least, Cubanía depends solely on the proclamation of a desire, but does the claim, I want to be Cuban, make one more Cuban? This is the paradox of Cubanía, that the desire to reconnect, express, and become Cuban is already the accomplishment of Cubanía. In Christina Garcia’s novel, Dreaming in Cuban, Pilar, the main character, by taking on the journey of discovering what it means to be Cuban for herself, begins to dream in Spanish (1992). As evidence of being influenced by the actions to quench her desire to find her identity through her Cuban heritage, Pilar senses her Cubanía through her dreams. Her subconscious has already become Cuban by dreaming in Spanish (Garcia 1992).
Cubania is, on a personal note, one of the reasons for this dissertation. In the introduction, I elaborated on my curiosity of Cuba, and my sense that there was something missing within me that I needed to accomplish. A void, or piece to a puzzle, the image of which I cannot see or know until I witness it for myself. The underlying drive of Cubania is what creates the desire to visit Cuba for second and third generation Cubans who have never been. However, considering the political restrictions of the embargo, the social conflicts that play out in situations of Cubanéo, when Cuban-Americans engage in discussion about visiting Cuba, and the familial tensions stemming from the trauma of exile experienced by first generation Cuban-Americans, Cubania must persist in the face of these restrictions and constraints.

I locate the inception of Cubania in the realization that it is absent. For me, the realization was through my family’s stories of their past. Emerging from a nostalgic and utopian recollection of life in Cuba, my family spoke of their experiences with a passion that I did not share, not because I rejected it, but because I lacked any reference. While I related to the almost too perfect framing of the innocence and joys of childhood, I could only imagine how the people and the environment shaped their childhood, and what features stayed with them as evocative features of their memories: a particular street corner, room in a house, balcony, or neighbor. Operating within this nostalgic remembering is a sense of privilege in having lived through it. Pablo Medina discusses Cubania as being manifest through the preservation of his memories, but again, this privileges geography, territory and citizenship. (1990). Perhaps the trauma of the revolution, leaving, immigrating, and having to start over was all worth it for having experienced Cuba, for being able to say, I'm from there. However, as Pérez-Firmat argues that even his own children are not Cuban because they were born in the United States, I, like them, must depend on a curiosity that seeks the unknown and yet senses that it is not entirely foreign. That in some
sense, a part of me will not only recognize but rejoice in connecting with the island (the people and places).

Alma DeRojas notes, the sense of Cubania is ineffable because it is an inner feeling, so too is the expectation that visiting Cuba will somehow provide the means of accomplishing Cubania (180). Yet the same desire holds true for Cuban-Americans, those born in Cuba, having a substantial claim to their Cubanidad, and now living in Cuban enclaves in the United States, surrounded by other Cubans to interact with, share their longing for a Cuba that they can return to. In this sense, both the second or third-generation Cubans who have never been to the island, and the first-generation Cubans who have perhaps at this point spent more of their lives in the U.S. than they did in Cuba, share an ideal image of Cuba. Cuba here is not only a dream for those who have never seen it, but also a dream for those who only want to see it resemble the past which they know to be familiar, even if so idealistic that it doesn't resemble what it was. Cubania, therefore, survives off the island, in the avenues, buildings, street corners, houses and rooms of the enclaves: Key West, Tampa, Miami, Union City, NJ, or Queens, NY, but most importantly in the hearts and souls of those who declare, “soy Cubano.” Because of the physical separation, moreover the dislocation and relocation of the Cuban spirit, Cubania is placeless, it does not belong in a specific location, but rather in a mood. Which brings me (and others) to the Parque Amigos de José Martí, and the accessible and straightforward notion of stepping on Cuban soil in Tampa, FL.

Cubanidad, Cubano and Cubania are various ways to define, express and feel a sense of Cubaness. Depending on which is invoked in each circumstance determines how those involved view their own Cubaness and the Cubaness of others. While Cubanidad entails the institutional documentation, and Cubanéo is situated within a particular place with others sharing similarly
Cuban characteristics, Cubania is the personal sense of longing or belonging and is the most subjective and therefore the most difficult to share with others. However, taking from the works of previous scholars mentioned above, the expression of Cubanidad and the practice of Cubanéo are dependent upon a sense and proclamation of Cubanía. Additionally, as Cubanidad relies on institutional sanction, Cubanéo necessitates a gathering and a place for the gathering to occur. As such, instances of Cubanéo that occur outside of Cuba requires being separated from the island and situated in a new place. This dislocation and relocation occurs through proclamations of Cubanía that create Cuban places for the exile community to reconnect with each other and Cuba.

**Diaspora and Place-Making Practices**

In the aggregate, diasporic studies have focused on two central themes: the cultural bonds that unite a displaced group, and the connection between the group and their locations (current, former, real, or imagined). Thomas Tweed defines diaspora as, "a group with some shared culture which lives outside the territory that it considers native place, and whose continuing bonds with that land are crucial for its collective identity" (84). These bonds are not established but practiced and are considered to be "proclaimed" (Brah 2). Considering the various forms of Cubaness, proclamations of Cuban identity occur through the practice of Cubanéo, which constitutes a bond to a collective identity. However, the practice of Cubanéo requires evolving and adapting to political and social conditions and ensures that “a Cuban remains a Cuban in Havana, in New Jersey, and in Miami” (Medina 643). Therefore, the practice of Cubanéo facilitated the transition from Cuba to Tampa, and from exile to immigrant.

While a diaspora may be defined by "the attachments to a former home and, typically, on a fantasy of return," the cultural bonds of this fantasy constitute another essential part of a
diaspora, its unity through the establishment of cultural places (Hirsch and Miller 3). Therefore, a diaspora can be understood by practice, but this does not mean that culture is aspatial. While a diaspora is defined by the desire for a place, the desire to take on the task of preserving and perpetuating their culture is enacted by establishing cultural sites in their new location. Places that enable ongoing relationships with other Cubans, "might be considered a liminal space—not quite Cuba, not quite the United States" (Cooper 18). In other words, while a diaspora shares a collective identity with a former place, they are also united in the establishment of new places that symbolize the old and the new, enabling visits that reify their individual and collective sense of cultural identity from abroad.

Evidence of place-making practices, acts that establish sites as meaningful or essential symbols of both past and present can be found throughout cultural enclaves. For instance, a group may declare a place to be indicative of their cultural identity due to the location of a historical moment, or association with a prominent figure or movement. Cubans are often identified by their relation to Cuba, whether longing for a return, troubled by the diffusion of leaving, or staunchly opposed to the idea of homecoming (Behar). The longing for return is encapsulated in the immigrant condition. For exiles, the preservation of Cubanéo occurred through collective sharing of beliefs and practices brought from the island, and realized, altered, or manifest in and from the new surroundings. Felipe Gonçalves notes that the concept of Cubanéo “can be read as a particular instantiation of the visions of cultural hybridity” (450). Conclaves follows Fernando Ortiz in his proposal of a counterpoint to the concept of acculturation, “the process of cultural contact and change never moves in one direction only. Rather, all cultures in contact transform each other and create a new culture, different from the original ones” (Conclaves 449). The Cuban influence on Tampa confirms this through what
Pérez-Firmat labels, *a cubanizar algo* (to cubanize something). This is to say that the expression of Cubaness can exert an influence on someone else and somewhere else. Therefore, Cubanéo is witnessed through the instances of cultural impact on others, the place within which the meeting occurs, and the evidence of previous influences.

As further evidence of Cubanizing a place, Cuban immigrants brought with them "its cultures, languages, foods, social and familial practices, politics, music, and, of particular interest, a highly-developed tradition of popular performance" (Dworkin Y Mendez 125). Tampa Cubans established homes, social gathering places, and practices that made Tampa decidedly Cuban. “That the industry established in Tampa was Cuban, and a large percentage of the workers were too, essentially guaranteed that Cuban culture would end up being the de facto cultura franca" (Dworkin Y Mendez 125). Evidence of how Cubans influenced Tampa’s establishment can be seen through the concentration of cigar factories, restaurants, the mutual aid societies, and street names. As the dominant cultural influence, the Cuban exile community created Tampa as a reflection of their former home. Places created in Tampa had similar architectural styles to Havana, and the industrial manufacturing within Tampa resembled the industries of Cuba as well.

**Cuban Place**

Beginning with Martí's notion of the Cuban exile's ability to influence Cuba's fight for independence, while simultaneously establishing themselves as exiles in Tampa, the exile practice of Cubanéo relied on a "'curriculum of culture,' a phenomenon whose impact then and even now in Tampa, Florida, is a culturally situated set of values that convey knowledge, beliefs, and behavior" (Dworkin Y Mendez 124). The curriculum of culture was manifest in four key places in Tampa. The Mutual Aid Societies, such as El Circulo Cubano, a public hall where
Cubans met to share drinks and conversation, access healthcare services, and participate in social events. The Cigar factories, where lectors educated the workers on current events and inspired them to be political actors in the revolution. The coffee houses, where again exiles could converse over traditional Cuban coffee, in a less formal atmosphere. Finally, the theater with classic low-brow political satire of current events, known as Bufo theater. These four locations produced a "situated social identity" that in ways resembled life in Cuba while also being distinctly new from it (Dworkin Y Mendez 124).

Each of these locations enabled a "staging" of Cuban culture and identity, providing a space for the exiles to voice their opinions, concerns, beliefs, and values. As public places, they were usually occupied by other expatriates; therefore, the sites formed "a milieu through which individuals and groups of individuals learned through mimesis or imitation" (Dworkin Y Mendez 126). As such the places where exiles gathered and ultimately performed their Cubanidad "became an identity-establishing manifestation of their sense of collective belonging, of being a community, with community signifying a form of togetherness that a group attempts to foster through a search for common ground" (Dworkin Y Mendez 126). However, in addition to the four representative location where Cubanéo is practiced, this project proposes the Parque Amigos de José Martí as a site where those who identify as Cuban gather. Furthermore, the Parque Amigos de José Martí in being Cuban property is identified by its Cubanidad, and by enabling a visit to Cuban soil, represents the Cubanía that exists within every Cuban exile or immigrant.

**Parque Amigos de José Martí**

The history of the Cuban diaspora and the ways in which Cuban culture is practiced by exiles and immigrants in Tampa can be understood through the Parque Amigos de José Martí.
Beginning on the fateful night of December 16, 1893 when a failed assignation attempt on Martí catapulted the cause for Cuba’s freedom from Spain and created Tampa as “the cradle of Cuban independence,” the chronology of the park offers insight into how the Tampa-Cuban community created a place for them to connect with their Cuban identity. The park symbolizes the Cuban identity in Tampa, the relationship between Tampa and Cuba, and is a place where one can express their Cubania by stepping foot on Cuban soil.

Tampa resembled Cuba through surrounding landscapes, homes, commerce, and structures, but Ybor City was missing a key component in marking the Cubanidad of the exile community - memorials or statues of historic Cuban figures. In 1945, during a meeting at the Circulo Cubano, with mutual aid society representatives and members of the Tampa Cuban community, Victoriano Mantiega, editor of la Gazetta newspaper, proposed erecting a bust or statue of José Martí (Villamia). Four years later, the first commemorative symbol to José Martí was built in Ybor City, a bust outside the Circulo Cubano was unveiled August 7, 1949. Just around the corner, a historical marker was added to the steps of the V.M. Ybor Cigar factory where Martí delivered his famous speech, "With Love, and For The Good of All" a year later. Afterward, Martí needed only to walk west to the next corner to enter his room at the Pedroso house. This and other influential events shaped the park’s design, meaning and use is an optic for viewing how Cubanéo is performed, and how Cubanía is experienced. Since the park is a memorial to José Martí and to the Tampa/Cuba connection, it encapsulates and symbolizes what the Cuban community wants to remember about Cuba. Through archival research, I provide a chronology of the park to illustrate how it has been populated with other artifacts of Cubaness, how it has been occupied and used by Tampa Cubans, and how it has been deployed as sacred land in an ongoing struggle for Cuba’s future. The chronology of the park is offered as a
narrative of the ways in which Cubaness has been performed within it, and how it has impacted notions of Cubaness within the diasporic condition of exile.

Memorial and Oblivion

After Paulina Pedroso's death, the property changed ownership several times, but few renovations were made to the building (Sellers). A bill introduced in the Florida Congress sought to establish the park as a memorial to José Martí. Included in the bill were plans to renovate the boarding house in addition to other historical sites within the Latin Quarter of Ybor City (Ybor Restoration Plans To Be Further Discussed Today). In 1951, the property was purchased by Mercedes Carillo la Guardia and Manuel Quevedo Jaureguizár. Quevedo ran the Cuban airline Aerovias Q, which contributed to Cuba being a premier tourist destination. The Quevedos were Cuban citizens living in Havana with the intent of bestowing the land to the Cuban state for the establishment of a memorial to José Martí. In addition to selling his airline company to General Julio Iglesias de la Torre, who in turn claimed Batista as the principal owner of the company, the property was transferred to the Cuban state "for and in consideration of their love and affection for their native country" (Sellers 35). The couple stipulated that the boarding house be preserved, and in a personal conveyance wrote, "On the same lot is builded [sic] a wooden-walled and roof-tiled house at which, during his stay at the above-mentioned City of Tampa, resided the Apostle José Martí" (Sellers 35). Batista accepted the property, and on September 10, 1956, the American consul in Havana approved the transfer (Sellers).

The previous November, in 1955, a twenty-nine-year-old mustachioed Fidel Castro was in Tampa gathering up support against the tyranny of the Batista regime (O’Conner, Tom Anti-Batista Cuban Comes Here to Seek Revolt Funds). Castro was banned from speaking at the Italian Club stating, "the dictator's agents have done their best to destroy this meeting," but
managed to convene with three hundred fellow Cuban exiles seeking change (O’Conner, Tom. Cubans Here Give Funds to Aid Revolt Against Batista). While in Tampa, Castro visited the boarding house during a tour of Ybor City with Raul Villamia and Victoriano Mantiega. Following in the footsteps of Martí, coming to Tampa to raise support for another revolution from the historically radical Cuban community, Fidel wrote the next chapter in Cuba's struggle for freedom and independence.

A year after Fidel Castro's visit, the Pan American Commission, along with Batista as honorary board member proposed a commemorative statue of José Martí be built on the site, and established the property as the "Parque Amigos de José Martí." The boarding house was in severe disrepair, infested with mold, termites, and dry rot, and "leaning crazily to one side" (O’Conner, Tom. Cuban Patriot José Martí’s House in Ybor City Begins to Fall as Mayor Swings Axe). On October 27, 1956, Ybor Latin Quarter native and Tampa Mayor Nick Nuccio swung an ax into the front door of the building. The same door Martí passed through during his many visits to Tampa was ceremonially split apart, sending the house, "on its way to oblivion… to make for a monument and park to be dedicated to the memory of Cuba's apostle of freedom" (Cuban Patriot José Martí’s House in Ybor City Begins to Fall as Mayor Swings Axe). The ax was sent back to Cuba as a gift to Batista, and the house was demolished the following Monday.

Designing the Parque Amigos de José Martí

The memorial park project began with a declaration. Where once the walls of the building separated Cuba from Tampa/U.S., a wrought iron fence was erected with a central front gate under a stone archway bearing the name of the park, and a solid back wall. The boundary was established in 1957, but the park was barely tended for, except an occasional mowing of weeds. "It had become an enclosed vacant lot, with an absentee landlord, unkempt and an
eyesore" (Villamia). In response to city official wondering what would be done with the overgrown lot, Ruben Fabelo, Chair member of the José Martí Memorial Foundation, revealed alternate plans for what the park is today. The interior of the park was to have "walks, gardens and a replica of the house which formerly occupied that very corner…. [with] a caretaker, exclusively for the park" (Fabelo). Most importantly, Fabelo expressed that the park was being visited, cared for, and attended, even if it didn't always look that way. An open lot, but never empty, just incomplete.

On New Year's Eve in 1958 the 26th of July Movement, led by Fidel Castro, invaded Havana and Batista fled the country for the Dominican Republic. The newly established M267 government took over the consul offices in Tampa along with control of the park. Throughout 1959, several ceremonies, speeches, and fundraisers were held at the park. Although the park was more in order, the political upheaval in Cuba resonated in Tampa. Just as some Tampa-Cubans found themselves siding with or against Martí half a century earlier, Castro also galvanized some and was despised by others. Up to this point, it is unclear if the groups responsible for brokering the establishment of the José Martí Park with Batista outright supported his presidency, but those who supported Castro were now in charge of the park.

The Tampa branch of M267 consisted of several members of the José Martí Memorial Foundation, making for a sound partnership and smooth transition of partial funding for the proposed statue of José Martí in the park. Alberto Sabas, a Cuban born sculpture living in Tampa, who had previously created the Columbus statue on Tampa's Bayshore Drive, was contacted by M267 to commission the statue (Villamia). Through meetings at Circulo Cubano, the two groups continued the plans for the park, but the story of the statue began long before this alliance.
The Statue of José Martí

In 1951, Dr. Jorge Trelles, and Dr. A.A. Fernandez, members of the José Martí Memorial Foundation with the support of then Cuban president Carlos Prío Socarras, commissioned Cuban sculpture José Manuel Fidalgo to create the likeness of José Martí. Soon after Batista launched a coup, ousting Socarras. Fidalgo created a six-foot-tall wax figure that was to be cast in bronze for the park, and also made miniature versions of the icon. The small sculptures, with the inscription "Para Cuba que sufre" (for Cuba who suffers), were circulated and sold throughout the island, becoming a symbol of the anti-Batista uprising, and raising funds for the 26th of July movement. Proving rather profitable, Cuba's Bohemia magazine ran a picture of the statues, infuriating Batista and leading him to order a raid on, and wreck of, the sculpture's studio. Fidalgo was exiled to Mexico. Tony Pizzo of the José Martí Memorial Foundation inquired about the whereabouts of the sculpture and wax statue, which was found to have been destroyed in the studio. Although Batista agreed to honor the partnership between the Socarra government and the Foundation, members were uneasy about accepting funds from the regime that exiled the sculptor. Additionally, although Batista stated that promised funds for the park would still be delivered, most of it was used for the perimeter fencing and wall. The 26th of July Movement (M267) raised funds for the statue through community donations (After Rift Cuban Consul Removed).

Although Sabas envisioned a bronze statue, he decided on synthetic granite. For a proposed cost of $400, and the labor of a few masons from M-267, the monument was erected. The statue was installed on a pedestal with a small bass relief plaque depicting the Cuban people yearning for freedom and the engraved watchword for Cubans seeking liberty, "para Cuba que sufre" (Villamia). This was the second physical feature created within the boundary of the
Parque Amigos de José Martí, the first being the planting of white rose bushes. The fencing and wall used to separate the Cuban space from surrounding Ybor were funded by the Cuban government of Fulgencio Batista, but the park's interior was furnished by the Tampa chapter of M267 and supported by Tampa Martianos (those who followed the principles of José Martí). From its humble beginnings, the park was Cuban space, cared for by Tampa Cubans.

The unveiling of the statue was initially planned for February 24, 1960, to coincide with the anniversary of "El Grito de Baire" (the shout of Baire) which was the beginning of Cuba's second war for independence in 1895, the war Martí inspired and died in. However, for reasons that seem more nefarious than simply trying to schedule the ceremony on the weekend, Renee Dechard, the then Cuban consul in Tampa moved the unveiling to the 28th and demanded M267 surrender the keys to the park (After Rift Cuban Consul Removed). M267 decided to perform the ceremony on February 24th, only to find the gates closed with a new lock installed. They laid wreaths of white roses on the gates with a placard saying, "This wreath is here because of the Cuban Consul’s refusal to open the park's gates to the 26th of July Movement" (Villamia).

M267 returned to the park on February 28th and were denied entrance yet again. As they stood outside the wrought iron fence, they witnessed Rene Dechard speaking in front of the statue, the white rose bushes in the park had been removed along with the wreath and sign they'd left days before. Dechard called the M267 traitors, criticizing them for becoming American citizens, and claiming they had not contributed to constructing the statue. Reports of the incident traveled back to Cuba, Dechard was removed of his post, and the keys to the park were returned to M267. While the statue and park were now established, what it meant to the Cuban community was not. The park would endure decades more of conflicts regarding its ownership and use (After Rift Cuban Consul Removed).
The dedication of the statue on February 28, 1960, days after the anniversary of El Grito de Baire began another war that would come to be known as the war of the roses (Bayle). On October 9, 1960, Felipe Jimenez, president of the Patriot Movement of Tampa for Aid to the Cuban Farmer, noted that six carloads of "Batista Gangsters" had tried to break up a rally at the park. On November 26, roughly 1,500 new Cuban refugees traveled from Miami to Tampa to march in an anti-Castro protest that ended at the José Martí Park. With news of the pending demonstration, two men, one of which was wearing an M267 armband, placed a wreath of red roses at the foot of the Martí statue and then locked the gates to the park. When the anti-Castro protestors arrived, they broke through the barrier and entered the park. According to the police report, a group member delivered a speech, placed a floral cross of white roses next to the statue, then left peacefully. The lock and chain had disappeared, and later that day, someone removed the Anti-Castro arrangement. Although concerns were raised, the patrolmen reporting on the incident did not interfere as there was no legal precedent regarding who owned the park. Two months later, a group of Anti-Castro Cubans celebrated the anniversary of Martí's birth (Mass March for Martí – Anti-Castro Cubans Defy Lock to Place Wreath).

The War of the Roses continued and in early 1968, anti-Castro and anti-communist groups joined forces in protest of Cubans fighting in Vietnam. The groups were demonstrating for the U.S. to invade Cuba once again, and topple the Castro Regime (Alarcon “Cuban Protest Group Marches”). The group returned to the park a week later to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of José Martí, again laying white rose wreaths at the statue (Alarcon “Ybor Pays Honor to José Martí”). The anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and two Cuban exiles that were captured, imprisoned, and later released were honored in the park (Exiles in Tampa Mark
Anniversary). White rose wreaths were laid at the statue. In October, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of El Grito de Yara (beginning of the first war for Cuban independence) was celebrated (Exiles Mark Cuba’s 100th Anniversary). White rose wreaths were laid at the statue. For the anniversary of Martí's birth in 1969, white rose wreaths were laid at the statue. In 1970, 71, 72, 73, 74… White rose wreaths were laid at the statue.

José Martí’s Dream for Cuba

The park was the focus of the territorial battle between Tampa Cubans, but the ideological war spread beyond the park. The 26th of July offices at 9th Avenue and 14th Street and the headquarters for the La Gaceta Newspaper were attacked, in addition to locations in Miami and New York, all of which echoed the demonstrations and violence in Havana and across Cuba. The park was a metaphorical flag for the opposing sides to capture. A claim on the park meant a claim to Cuba's future. In 1961, after a negative review in a tourism article about Ybor City in the New York Times, the Latin Quarter again proposed a clean-up effort. The park was overgrown with weeds, surrounding the statue of Martí in a field of tall, wavering grass. Three weeks after the negative review, the lawn was mowed, and later a plaque was added indicating the park was the site of the Pedroso house. Although not the initially planned restoration of the house, it was the first indication of the historical significance of the site and the friendship between Pedroso and Martí. Cubans around Tampa, regardless of political affiliation, appreciated the park improvements, and tensions subsided, but peace was fleeting. Three months later, the CIA attempted a foreign coup at Playa Giron, known in the U.S. as the Bay of Pigs Invasion. A group of Cuban exiles, Brigade 2506, along with US Military personnel, attempted to overthrow the Castro regime but failed.
On Sunday, November 26, 1961, roughly 300 Cuban exiles from Tampa and Miami marched to the park carrying signs stating Cuba is a "Danger only 90 miles from the USA!" Police patrolled the streets anticipating the political fervor within the group, knowing the historical precedent of socialist labor unions and mutual aid societies within Ybor. Although peaceful, three men claimed to have been attacked at the park by some in the group. The men said they could identify their assailants, and the police escorted them into the park. Once there, they rushed the stage and attempted to unplug the microphones and take down the American flag. "A fist fight broke out, and several of the men received bloody noses and black eyes" (Anti-Castro Rally Erupts into Fight at Martí Park). Twelve people were arrested, including the Pro-Castro men who disrupted the event. By Monday evening another 300 demonstrators assembled in the park, outside the fence was lined with police officers. A makeshift podium was fashioned from the posters used the day before, where a seventeen-year-old Cuban refugee channeled the passion of Martí in exhorting the principle of unity against the current brutal regime in Cuba – Fidel Castro (O’Conner, Tom Cubans Hail Martyred Youth In Emotion-Packed Gathering).

The Cuban struggle continued through iterations of rebellions against regimes, only to somehow end up under a different form of oppression. Martí warned of American imperialism, yet the Cuban Constitution of 1901 included the Platt amendment, which along with other provisions, ensured America could intervene in Cuban affairs if deemed necessary for its own interests. Although Cuba was established with a democratic system of elections, Batista's U.S. sanctioned coup, and Castro's revolution ensured that democratic elections would never return to the island. The park became a site for demonstrations, protests on Cuban territory with the protected rights of speech granted by the surrounding U.S. laws. In the closing months of 1961, another rally was held in the park by anti-Castro Cubans. Two hundred people gathered on
Sunday, December 17, but before Dr. José Miro Cardona could speak, the audience was removed from the site after a bomb threat was called in. After inspection and finding no evidence of a bomb, the demonstrators returned to hear Dr. Cardona's speech calling for war to liberate Cuba (Cuba Freedom Seen Soon).

On the anniversary of Martí's birth, January 28th, 1962, three hundred people came to the park to lay wreaths and praise the Cuban hero. Again, this group was comprised of anti-Castro Cubans, whom at this point appeared to be the majority in Ybor (Cubans Here Pay Tribute to José Martí). Favor with Castro was on a steady decline as more and more refugees came to Tampa sharing tales of the dire conditions back home, and the park was in an ill-kept state as well. No additional funding for maintenance was received by Cuba, and the steep decline in Cuban American relations seemed to ensure the park would suffer. In response to Cuba's nationalization of foreign business holdings in Cuba in 1960, and with justification from the recent full implementation of the embargo to include all exports to Cuba, including newly imposed strict travel restrictions, a petition was formed for the city of Tampa to seize the Parque Amigos de José Martí (City Seizure of Martí Park Opposed by Leaders Here). The Ybor City Rotary Club, consisting of several members of the original Pan-American Commission that worked with Batista to establish the park, offered to care for the property. A deal was struck with then Mayor of Tampa Julian Lane and Parks Superintendent Frank Neff for several renovations to the park (Martí Park Getting Face Lifting). Two beds of white roses from the Lowry Park Nursery were planted and spare piping was used to install a sprinkler system (Martí Park Gets Face Lifting).

The José Martí park was initially planned to be a tribute to the relationship between Tampa and Cuba that led to Cuba's independence. Tampa was hailed the "Cradle of Cuban
Liberty," and a sign depicting this historical tale was erected in 1962 outside what was the original location of el Liceo Cubano on 7th avenue and 13th street (one block south of the park). This relationship was again called upon on October 10, 1963, when demonstrators distributed over ten thousand leaflets around Tampa pleading for U.S. assistance in overthrowing Fidel Castro (Aguayo). The date was the ninety-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the first war of independence led by Carlos Manuel de Cespedes and demonstrators left wreaths of white roses at José Martí Park. The park became a symbol of the ideal of Cuba, a place where Tampa Cubans could be "in Cuba" without being in Cuba. In a sense the park was an alternate Cuba, honoring what could have been in the past, where it not for Martí's untimely death and American intervention, and what could be in the future once Castro's regime is toppled. The ideological potential of the park was more than a marker of the past, it was a portal into a future vision of Cuba.

Government in Exile

In 1965, Tampa Cubans decided to create a Government in Exile, holding a referendum for a representative body of their community. Although mostly symbolic, and with little influence on Cuba, the proposal for a government in exile was unanimously affirmed (Government-in-Exile Local Cubans to Hold Plebiscite). However, years passed, and no mention was made of the exile government until another announcement was published February 2, 1995. Along with the publication of the election, the Cuban exiles explained the group would "represent the exile community in local and national gatherings, and in Cuba should Castro fall from power" (Cabrera). In the list of candidates was Orlando Cardoso, said to have been the caretaker of the park for the last 3 years (Cabrera and Rodriguez). Cardoso was the latest in a long line of caretakers over the previous thirty years. Although the park's fence was paid for by
Cuba, and the statue was paid for by M267, the park was predominantly operated by anti-Castro Cuban exiles. The Government in Exile found a legal precedent for its existence in 1995, when Dr. José Mijares, one of the exiles responsible for its establishment, discovered that the successor to Castro, according to the 1940 Cuban Constitution, was living in Tallahassee. Former Justice José Morrell Romero was sworn in as President-in Exile in front of two hundred people at the José Martí Park on February 24, 1995. During the ceremony, Dr. Mijares stated that "from this day forward we will begin establishing contact with Cuba to create in the minds of the Cuban people the sentiment of the nationality and show them what a nation of liberty really is" (Cabrera). The Government and President in Exile were the representatives of a lost Cuba, one that existed in Key West, Tampa, Miami, and New York. Cuban exiles who yearned for the fulfillment of Martí's promises, and in the face of being separated from their home (both real and ideal) sought to unify those fragments within and through the José Martí Park. In sum, the park was the nexus of Cuban nationalism, patriotism, and cultural identity. However, this identity is contested continuously from within.

Cuban Property

The celebration of Martí's birth has been the most enduring gathering at the park, but records show another story about the park as Cuban property. Again, territory matters; who claims it, occupy it, and who are denied access to it. For two decades, as the saplings in the park grew to cover its back walls, the landscape of Ybor changed as well. What was once a sister city to Havana, with migration and movement between the two cities as steady as the tide, the recent waves of Cuban refugees represented a new relationship with Cuba. The Cuban enclaves of West Tampa and Pinecrest were established by Castro exiles, and although Ybor City was changing, there remained some who sought to maintain a connection to Cuba, and most likely their family
and friends, that was beyond politics. In 1961, Martin Bracker, the New York Times correspondent that wrote the unflattering review of Martí park, was actually tasked with finding out if there were Castro supporters in Tampa. The assignment was to discover how the Tampa and Miami Cuban communities were different. But the question only focused on impressions of Fidel, not opinions on the blockade (Wilder). Few supported Castro, if any, as they were cautious of declaring allegiance considering the political climate and the numbers of anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Tampa. However, there were Tampa Cubans that opposed the embargo, and this is echoed to this day. A vote for normalized relations is not the same thing as supporting or even contributing to the Castro government. A primary concern with anti-embargo Cuban Americans is their desire not to be impacted by the political and economic measures of the U.S. and the exiles who support them. "If you don't want to go to Cuba, fine. But why can't I see my family? Why do I have to suffer for your politics" (Alex Interview).

Demonstrations were not only held at the park because it honored José Martí. Anti-Castro Cubans such as Alpha-66 disagreed with Fidel's invocations of his principles; thus, an aspect within the significance of holding a rally in the park was for their sense of purifying Martí's memory. Of course, this is only partially accurate, since Martí's warnings of American interference for economic gain were precisely why the Castro revolution was successful. In addition to pitting Martí against Castro, rallies were held in the park because it is Cuban property. The demonstrators could defy all the regimes attempts to squash oppositional speech. According to the protestors, anyone attempting to speak truth to power in Cuba was arrested, tortured, or murdered, but in the park, those rules were unenforceable and the consequences non-existent. This is where they felt strongest and closest to Cuba, from here in the park is where an estimated 650 Cuban exiles, as part of a nationwide effort, protested President Carter's attempts
at normalizing relations in 1977. "We are doing this so the American government will know that we oppose 100% any relations with Cuba." They proclaimed that their war must continue from Cuban property (Dietz).

The Cuban exiles who held rallies at the park claimed it as a place of protest against Fidel Castro. In 1978, a group of protestors gathered wearing black armbands, which they claimed were to "mourn the death of the ‘old' Cuba when Castro took power two decades ago" (Anti-Castro Rally). Even with the current additions in the park, it feels arrested in time. The park signifies a different place in being Cuban property and a different time – that of "old" Cuba. The anti-Castro exiles demonstrating in the park claimed ownership and shaped what the park represents. In another attempt of purification, the park signifies a pre-Castro Cuba. As if to have diverted from the main timeline, the park is a symbol of that divergence by deploying the symbols of that era, Martí and the boarding house, it harkens back to that time to create an alternate present. But by 1982, the park was in disrepair again. Another unflattering article in the Miami Herald prompted local Cubans to coordinate another clean-up effort (Tampa Latins Spruce Up Martí Park).

**Burned Bridge**

1986 marked the centennial anniversary of Ybor's establishment. Tampa Tribune columnist, Steve Otto, detailed the events of the celebration. Of note was the recreation of Martí's speech at the steps of Ybor Square, and the traditional placing of white roses at the statue in the park. The audience sang both the American and Cuban national anthems, and Martí's speech was delivered in Spanish by Aurelio Pinan. After the speech, the audience marched to the José Martí park, but the gates to the park were padlocked moments before the ceremony. No one in the mayor's party had a key, so police arrived with bolt cutters, and broke into Cuba (Otto).
The new image of Ybor rejected its relationship with Cuba and used the park repeatedly to voice this position. The protestors in the park claimed themselves separate from Cuba by exiling the island, just as its new leader had exiled them. Who locked the gates is unknown, but perhaps they saw the park being monopolized by the side that so passionately advocated to stop all trade and aid to the island where their relatives and friends remained. Later that year, another rally was held, this time no longer asking for assistance from the U.S. government, but rather to drum up local support for volunteer fighters (Seegal). It is illegal to wage war against a foreign country from U.S. soil, so the protestors did so from within the park. They denounced the Castro regime and burned a Soviet flag at the foot of the statue. The group would demonstrate in New Orleans and Houston as well looking for support to fight for their ability to return to Cuba with dignity (Seegal).

Pro and anti-Castro groups are the most controversial political divisions among Cubans, but the desire to return is a shared element with different conditions and meanings. Where the anti-embargo sentiment is made up of the desire for freedom to go to Cuba, the pro-embargo side desires for Cuba to be free before they can return. Those seeking to cripple Castro's Cuba economically or to invade Cuba under the auspices of Martí's revolutionary principles, want to return, but not to a Cuba they remember, preferably to a Cuba they want to create. In a sense, this is the Cuba they have created in the park. While the park is a space reflecting an ideal Cuba, it was deployed by protestors to show the extent to which they will sacrifice to realize the same for Cuba. In 1988, seven Cuban exiles held a three-day hunger strike in the park to expose the atrocities they saw occurring in Cuba. The strike was coordinated with similar protests in “Miami, Orlando, New York City, and Washington” (Hunger Strike for Human Rights). Reports of poverty and starvation in Cuba were amplified over the healthcare and education reforms.
Protests in the park sought to make present the current conditions in Cuba, to transport the situation to the U.S. as a means of exposing for those here, the atrocities of there. It was a matter of the difference in perspective in Cuba versus Tampa that gave the protestors an audience. The political climate in Ybor had changed with more refugees arriving every year. According to reports, the demonstrations in the park were predominantly held by exiles with extreme views against Castro, and those that disagreed with them were either still in Cuba, or dared not demonstrate their dissent for fear of retribution (Melone). The end of the three-day hunger strike was celebrated with a candlelight vigil attended by over 500 protestors in the park (Lavelle). The war of the roses waged on, but only one side seemed to be fighting.

For the next decade (1988-1998), the park hosted many rallies (Sokol), (Rosen), (Koehn), (Ripley). Most notable was the slew of demonstrations in 1994 in protest of President Clinton's use of Guantanamo Bay to house intercepted Cuban refugees on their way north to the United States (Message on Ybor’s Streets), (Woitas), (Otto, “Common Soul Ties Tampa to Cuban Fight”), (Pact with Martí), (Fredrick), (Lammers). During the ‘Special Period' in Cuba, the loss of economic support and trade due to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 caused severe financial hardship. Tales of poverty and destitution felt by the Cuban people further warranted the Cuban exiles’ stance on the American embargo. Exiles continued to support the economic measure and stayed dedicated to their request for U.S. support to invade Cuba and topple Castro. Rallies held at the park were publicized as a symbol of Cuban freedom for all Cubans, invoking the unity extoled by Martí (Charney). Yet the persistent pressure for U.S. intervention from Anti-Castro groups, recalling the Rough Riders Martí warned against, increased tensions to a breaking point.
In 1998, the day after the park was renovated with new landscaping and a second plaque was installed on the Martí statue, the park was vandalized. From Sunday to Monday, Cubans tended the park, only to have the American flag stolen and the flagpole it waved from damaged (Vandals Strike José Martí Park). Perhaps this wasn't politically motivated, maybe it was just random, but the vandalism made the papers, so it was significant. The vandalism brought about questions regarding who “owns” the park, but this issue has mostly centered on access. As demonstrated, the majority of protests were anti-Castro and pro-embargo. Although few, if any, in Tampa supported Castro, certain Tampa Cubans disagreed with the U.S. embargo policies (Rupert). Regardless of the reason behind the vandalism, the gates were locked more often afterward. In June of that year, the organization Pastors for Peace held a meeting at the park to collect donations to be sent to Cuba. Several buses were parked on 8th Ave waiting to be loaded with medical supplies, and other necessities. Several anti-Castro Cubans showed up with bullhorns, decrying the Pastor's support for Castro, "All of these supplies will go right into the hands of Castro! He runs the country. There is no Red-Cross in Cuba. Everything that goes to Cuba goes to Castro" (Schweitzer). After more than an hour of confrontation, the crowd dispersed and the bus pulled away loaded with supplies.

Broken Arm

Other than the roses that were occasionally changed from red to white or vice versa, with all the demonstrations, protests and rallies that took place, the park was mostly preserved. Both sides battled for what the park symbolized and represented for themselves and others. They cared deeply about the park, and in attempting to shape its meaning, the actions and demonstrations became part of its composition. However, whether through malice or a random and unaffiliated case of vandalism, the war of the roses took a dark turn the week after the Pastors for Peace
demonstration. On June 10, 1999, the outstretched arm of José Martí was broken off. Visitors to the park were greeted by a mangled limb, barely connected save for the rebar structure protruding from the granite statue (Cabrera). Martí’s right forearm dangled from plaster fibers in the thick Tampa air.

Again, headlines politicized Martí and the park. "The Price of Freedom," an interview in the Tampa Bay Times with Orlando Rodríguez, president of the Centro Historico y Cultura Cubano, the organization that tended to the park, claimed the park as "the only free Cuban land in the World" (Cabrera). What underlies Rodriquez’s claim is the unverified statement that the park “contains dirt from Cuba’s six provinces,” an attempt to link the two islands materially (Cabrera). The importation of soil and the elevation of Cuban owned property to the status of territory, created the condition of the park being understood as such. Demonstrations continued, linking the two places through mutual sacrifice. As Cubans mulled over who should and how to fix the park, demonstrators gathered for a forty-day hunger strike in solidarity with government opponents in Havana. In stark contrast to the invocations by Rodriquez throughout the interview, forty days after the arm was broken off, a small bulletin buried on page 82 in the Tampa Tribune announced the statue had been repaired in one hour for $75. Although the park was restored, the vandalism pronounced the political divides in the Tampa Cuban Community (Statue Reborn).

War of the Keys

The tussle for what the park symbolized and for whom, transitioned the war of the roses into the war of keys. The Cuban Historical and Cultural Club maintained the park and held the keys, but other Cubans denounced that they should not have keys as well. This conflict centered around the freedom to visit the park, but also included the freedom to demonstrate within it. The Cubans vying for keys stated that the custodians of the park “would lock it up if anyone that
doesn’t agree with their position tried to use it” (Zayas 2002). Although labeled as “commies and pinkos” by Anti-Castro Cubans, those demanding keys to the park where anti-embargo, and sought a connection with the park to counter the politically mandated disconnection with Cuba. In stating that pro-Castro or anti-embargo speeches were not allowed in the park by its custodians, the group of Cubans vying for keys challenged the statement that the park was “the last free patch of Cuban soil.” This was the material manifestation of the ideological differences within the Cuban community, and the dispute for access to the park became part of the practice of Cubanidad. Although already symbolic for Cubans as a physical site to practice Cubanidad, the clash over the park keys symbolized the intricate, complex, and contested aspects of Cuban identity. In other words, what was “allowed” in the park reflected what was “Cuban.” Access was not only a statement as to what freedom meant to Cubans, but also how the specific notions of freedom reflected what kind of Cuban was allowed in the park.

**Conclusion**

Cubanidad, Cubanéo, and Cubanía are different forms of proclaiming, practicing, and perceiving being Cuban. The nationalistic notions of citizenship and birthright have been rejected by the exile community, yet the Parque Amigos de José Martí’s status as Cuban property, and its overarching identity as a memorial to a founding figure of Cuban independence project the parks identity as akin to Cubanidad. The history of protests and demonstrations in the park for the last six decades represent how the park enables, and is a site for, the practice of Cubanéo. As a location for gatherings and a symbolic space for visiting Cuba, the park is a unique place to witness and participate in Cuban cultural practices based on the ethos of independence and the communal bonds that support and preserve the memories of Cuba for the Cuban diaspora. Finally, the park, as a liminal space, encompasses the second and third
generation experience of a desire to be Cuban. For those who cannot visit Cuba for personal, social, or political reasons, the park is a surrogate place for performing a visit.

The Parque Amigos de José Martí is a culturally relevant and historically significant site for the Cuban population in Tampa, as well as Cubans in Cuba. For some Cubans who visit, or for those who live in Tampa, visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí is a ceremonial duty. However, the park is not public land, and throughout its history, access has been controlled in ways that reflect the broader political relations between the U.S. and Cuba. The park exists somewhat apart from its creators and creation. Those that created the park, the organizations responsible for its establishment, as well as the ceremonies and plaques that commemorate the special occasions that led to the park becoming what it is today, do not wholly articulate what the park means. Rather these are indications of the intent of the persons or organizations involved with the park's establishment. However, as detailed through the park's history, its meaning is generated through the interactions that occur(ed) within it. Case in point, the statue being paid for by pro-Castro revolutionaries, but the park is a sight of many anti-Castro protests. In other words, the park's meaning is generated by those who visit it rather than those who created it. The symbols and plaques located around the park lack consistency and do not directly bear the names, reasons for, or even dates they were created.

What is not mentioned within the park enables it to stand as an object separated from its history and those who established it as meaningful. The park is therefore apart from the culture it signifies and is dislocated from its origins. The consumption of the park is made more efficient, enabling misreading or obfuscating reading altogether – consumption still occurs, but it depends more upon what the individual brings into the park (predetermined meaning), than what they may take from the park (experienced sense). Furthermore, cultural production in and of the park
is polyvocal, making the park an amalgamation of cultural identities that yield contestations as to how the culture functions as an indication of identity. The intersections of varying Cuban identifiers and the ways in which the park enables and constrains the performances of each present a unique opportunity to study Cuban culture through the relationship to places. The park as representative of the nation, territory, and island of Cuba locates the diasporic condition and how the Cuban exile community navigates and expresses their identity within the specific places that represent their cultural identity. In the next chapter, I discuss using a visit as a research method to understand the relationship between Cubans and Cuba. As a cultural space the Parque Amigos de José Martí has been a site of intense conflict, but also a site of pilgrimage, paying homage to Cuban leaders and invoking a sense of Cubanidad by inviting one to step foot into Cuba.
CHAPTER THREE

This project centered on visiting a place as an enactment of cultural identity. The relationship between visiting a cultural place and enacting a cultural identity was explored through the lens of the Cuban exile and immigrant communities and their individual and collective responses to restrictions on travel to Cuba. Considering the U.S. Blockade on Cuba and that the Parque Amigos de José Martí is Cuban soil, visits to the park offered a unique setting for researching the relationship between cultural places and performances of cultural identity. My goal was to gather information as to how visiting the park informed their notions of Cuban identity and influenced their sense of Cubaness. Each time I observed the park and conversed with other visitors, I gained new perspectives on what the park means to the Tampa-Cuban community, and how I and others identify as Cuban.

I begin this chapter with a working definition of a visit, focusing on the reasons why we visit in general, then moving to the specific experience of visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí. I discuss how performance and ethnographic research are a means of understanding a culture by participating in its practices. As a theoretical and methodological discussion, this chapter is organized by what I identify as three main properties of a visit: its dialogic, situated, and constitutive qualities. I explain each aspect of a visit and propose the act of visiting as an emplaced ethnography of identity performance through a discussion of the intersections between a visit’s three main features and Judith Hamera’s four principles of performance studies research. This chapter concludes with the importance of reflexivity in performance and ethnographic
research methods where I offer some initial thoughts about the process of visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí with others and how the visits impacted me as a researcher.

**Why Visit?**

For decades, I have yearned to visit Cuba while accounting for the conditions under which my family had to leave. The tension in visiting Cuba is common among second and third generation Cuban-Americans and is consistent within other diasporic cultures. However, the second-generation Cuban-American's desire to visit Cuba, and the acceptance, or lack thereof, from the first-generation Cuban immigrant parents is confounded by the political relations between the two countries. Cuba has historically been defined within the framework of the United States, but through the embargo and the Helms Burton Act, the U.S. exiled Cuba (Congressional Research Service). Cuban-American’s claim to never visit Cuba is sanctioned by the preceding six decades of American blockade on commercial trade and the travel and communication restrictions that stem from its legal precedent, not to mention the U.S.’s designation of Cuban migrants as refugees, granted amnesty through ‘Wet-foot/Dry-foot’ legislation (Congressional Research Service). Along with the subgroup of Cubans who left and vowed never to return until Fidel Castro was removed from power is the response from the U.S. that shaped the relationship to Cuba.

The embargo, or blockade as it is known in Cuba, represents the relationship between the two countries and provides the institutional sanction for Cuban exiles. In other words, it legitimizes their belief that the Castro regime has destroyed the once vibrant country, and his oppressive measures have redefined what it means to be Cuban-American. The U.S./Cuba policies influence and promote the notion of never returning as it creates and projects the image of a lost Cuba. The premise that a once great Cuban nation is now in ruins denies the validity of
reasons to visit, the impact of which seeks to reshape what visiting Cuba means for Cuban-Americans. Under these circumstances, the desire to visit Cuba is understood by Cuban immigrants who came over during tumultuous times as both personally offensive and politically radical.

My interest in visiting as a means of understanding cultural identity emerged from my own curiosity about my Cuban identity, and the confounding issues of travel restrictions and the familial tensions that exist between first and second generation Cuban-Americans regarding visiting Cuba. However, due to these restrictions and considering cultural places located outside of Cuba, I focus on the ways in which a visit to the Parque Amigos de José Martí simulates and replaces a visit to Cuba. The Parque Amigos de José Martí is Cuban property and a symbol of Cuban history, and people who usually visit the park identify as Cuban. The process of visiting entails an interaction with the place. Interacting here means taking into consideration the physical surroundings of the site. Material features such as plaques, signs, statues, busts, architecture, landscaping, and murals are all considered objects that a visitor can observe. While some features may explicitly state what they represent such as a memorial statue, others are less noticeable. For instance, Seventh Avenue in Ybor City is a street as old as the city itself and although there are historical markers throughout its stretch of cobblestones, the street itself is a place where one can observe its function, use, and meaning for the visitor and the local community. In this case, visiting a place is an embodied way to get a sense of what life is like for those who inhabit it. The history of Cuba, the establishment of Tampa as a Cuban enclave, my family's stories of leaving, and my desire to return to Cuba merge once I walk into the park.
Visiting a Place: working definition

There are distinct practices in visiting. We prepare to visit. We perform our routines in preparation: grooming, shopping, packing, cooking, and traveling. The visit, in this sense, is defined by its development. The measures taken before the visit are enactments of anticipation. During the visit, we are thrust into a confluence of persons, place, and time, bringing with us an expectation of the event, and perhaps bearing gifts. The expectation of a visit begins the negotiation of the relationship between one's performed identity as a visitor, and the people, place, and occasion of the visit. When we visit, we are enacting the part of the visitor because it is vital to fostering a sense of belonging. In other words, a visit is a communicative event whereby the visitor observes the surrounding environment, taking cues regarding what the place represents. Additionally, the site where visits occur yields certain perspective on how to perform as visitor which can only be produced through a collaborative visit whereby the event creates a shared and agreed upon understanding of the other and the relationship between the visitor and visited. In whatever level of formality prescribed, the manners by which we interact are sorted out during a visit. After the visit, we leave, in some form or another influenced by others and impacted by the place and event.

The co-presence of the visit is a palpable aspect, not just in a haptic sense, but in the awareness that visiting creates a relationship between us and others. However, I seek to highlight the specific instances of visiting a place, perhaps with others but also alone. We visit places for different reasons: for vacation, to explore, or to re/connect. The phenomenon of visiting a place is predicated on the confluence of what the place entails (it's material features), and what we bring into the space as individuals (our thoughts and beliefs produced from narratives about the place). Therefore, the possibility for dialog with a place is occasioned by the visit in that the
visitor engages with and deciphers the place. The visitor possesses the conceptualizations of what the experience within the place will be and then negotiates the differences, seeing and relating to the place for themselves. This is the premise for the dialogue with a place through a visit as it frames the co-performance as a traversing of boundaries. Additionally, the outcome of a visit can impact the place and the space within.

Visiting a place is defined as an embodied interaction with the material features of a location. The first distinction in this definition is between a visit in the more general sense of visiting places, and the specific visit to a place of cultural and/or personal significance. Visiting a place is outlined by the condition that the visitor has some pre-conceived connection to it. In other words, the visitor identifies themselves by some aspect of the place. The phenomenon of a visit is a setting for understanding interactions between people and the sites they visit. A rich moment within this type of communicative act is when we visit places to understand ourselves more. A visit to a place positions us as a visitor: someone who travels and stays for some time, then returns home. In the broadest of circumstances, a visit may simply be a moment where one occupies a place, which requires at the very least an acknowledgment of presence, of being there. However, in the ideal case, a visit may produce a genuinely cooperative instance whereby the visitor engages the place in meaningful and productive ways, accomplishing an expanded sense of self and the place. A visit may occur in both exceptional and everyday instances, but in both cases, its unifying quality is the inevitable result of the visit.

Visiting a place can enable a better sense of one's cultural identity and their history. We may want to visit our old elementary school, a place we used to work, a town we lived in, or a place where relatives were born. In other words, these visits are influenced when there is an existing connection to or familiarity with the place. In this sense, the performance of a visit
requires an awareness that the act animates what is gathered from it. The desire to visit a homeland is common in narratives of individuals who seek to identify themselves culturally, which is inextricable from the places it originated from. This type of visit is understood as an instance of person-place connection, a specific type of communicative act that accomplishes an identity for the visitor and produces the place as a marker of identity. By invoking a sense of belonging, a visit is a connection that yields two mutual outcomes. Just as the visitor gains a competency in their own performance of cultural identity, the place's meaning as a cultural site is bolstered as well. In this sense, a visit is an act of crossing a boundary into a space where one does not necessarily belong, it entails stepping across a threshold into a place where one will not stay, establishing the event as liminal. By bringing into a place a preconceived notion or pre-established connection to it, a conversation emerges in the space between the place and the individual. A visit means that the distance between the place and the person can be bridged, allowing for an epiphany or catharsis. A visit entails experiencing the place in terms of cultural memory and identity, which provides connectivity with the culture that established it. Visiting and pilgrimage both provide a sense of belonging, renewal, or catharsis; however, a visit is not defined by religious or spiritual overtones and does not necessitate the place be revered. A pilgrimage is associated with either an existing familiarity or a generational obligation to obtain familiarity, it is marked as an act of respect or deference that generates a preordained accomplishment. Some pilgrimages are defined more by the journey than the destination. Examples of this are the Camino de Santiago, the Hajj, or Kumano Kodō where the pilgrim traverses along a historical path, usually assumed to be arduous, tolling, or producing a sense of suffering. These journeys define the pilgrim as "the weary traveler" who seeks respite. Other pilgrimages focus on the site itself. The most popular of these are Mecca, Jerusalem, Knock
Shrine or the Vatican City. These pilgrimage sites are either locations of previously influential events, or shrines associated with divinity, and both call for an expression of devotion to the beliefs that bolster their meaningfulness. In other words, the pilgrims' journey or pilgrimage site exists because of its precedence and its perpetuation.

Visiting a place entails some similar notions regarding precedence and perpetuation, but a visit does not necessitate a sort of reinvigoration of faith, it is the secular version of pilgrimage. However, while visiting may be considered less rigorous or perhaps entails a reduced commitment to the meanings and meaningfulness of the place, it is similar to pilgrimage in the embodied sense of the practice. For example, when we visit graves, we might do so to reconnect with a lost soul, reliving the relationship we had with them. When we visit a commemorative site or memorial, we might do so with the intent of gaining insight, understanding a history, reliving a moment in time, or perhaps simply to say that we have "been there." Either way, there is a pre-established thought as to how the visit may or may not go. The reason for the visit is not inconsequential, but since intent is allusive, what matters is simply the presence of an expectation, even if simply having faith in arriving for the visit. What emerges through a visit illuminates how cultures establish places and how the various locations bolster the sense of self and culture for those who visit them.

**Visiting as Performance Ethnography of Place**

Visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí entails witnessing a confluence of narrative and place. In this instance, the park is an established physical site made up of the material and textual elements within it. Each part of the park and the place as a whole is imbued with meaning through its declaration and use. For the Parque Amigos de José Martí, as Cuban property and a symbol of the Tampa-Cuba relationship, it is a place to reconnect with Cuba. The park is a site
for Cubans to celebrate their history. When a Cuban visits the park, they brings forth the thrust of events that bolster what it means to identify as Cuban. For Cubans that visit, the park gives voice to a collective identity, one that fundamentally provides meaning and a sense of self to the visitor. Most notably for this project the Pargue Amigos de José Martí is a place for the exile community to visit Cuba, and the act of stepping foot in the park is a declaration of Cubanía.

A visit entails the momentum of existing narratives combined with the anticipation of performing Cubaness within the context of the Cuban cultures' relation towards Cuba. I argue that it is through this type of event that the meaning of a place emerges and/or is reified. A visit entails the momentum of existing narratives combined with the anticipation of the visitor to form a reiteration of the cultural identity that is written into both. For Cubans, a visit to Cuba is predicated on a sense of connectedness that unfurls as the visit is performed. In other words, taking into consideration the Parque Amigos de José Martí as a Cuban place, by entering the park with the purpose of gaining cultural knowledge, both the visitor and the park are impacted by the visit. The visitor gains a sense of self within the broader notions of Cubaness, and the park's meaning as a symbol of Cuban identity is reiterated by the visit.

Furthermore, I view a visit as an embodied gesture that responds to, and elaborates upon, the relationship between Cuban culture, the individual, and the place. For example, that the park was bestowed to the Cuban government evokes national authority and therefore a symbol of Cubanidad. However, the park is also a site where historically, Cubanéo is practiced. Additionally, and specifically for this research project, is the instance where the visitor visits the park to express their desire to be more Cuban; Cubania. Therefore, a visit is a heuristic method that considers performances of identities and how they are linked to the shared cultural identity of the visitor and the place. Since a visit is always situated within place and time, and within
social, historical and political structures, a visit as research method centers on how each
influences the other. Visits are generative, for the visitor, the content of research, and the place.
Therefore, considering the Parque Amigos de Jose Marti as a place that enables a diaspora to
connect to, and perform cultural identity, the emplaced performances that occur within it provide
valuable insight into how cultural identity is related to places of origin and how that relation is
manifest through the place-making practices that establish cultural sites.

Since our actions constitute our world and vice versa, I studied the performance of visits
to the Parque Amigos de Jose Marti to illustrate the intersections between identity and place. As
an ethnographic research method, a visit takes cues from mobile ethnographic methodologies
and considers “multiple contexts of social reality, ranging from bodies, physical and built
environments, personal biographies, historical processes, relationships and identities to political
and other structural contexts” (Kusenbach 1.1). Because a visit occurs in a specific site while
establishing or maintaining a cultural connection to another place, it entails the relationship
between visitor, others, the place and its history, the visitor’s own experiences. I used the visit to
expand upon the possibilities of simply interviewing people by participating with them through
performances of visiting and Cubaness.

I and others experienced the place as a narrative, activating it with our presence. The
embodiment of visiting is fundamentally sensorial and part of sensing a place entails
interrogating what it presents and how it performs through its aesthetic design. Considering my
and participant’s enactments of cultural identity, I turn to Performance Studies as the theoretical
foundation for this research. Identity performance is an aspect of visiting and is influenced by the
cultural constructs within which they occur as well as being staged within the cultural place.
Performance is a way "of comprehending how human beings fundamentally make culture, affect
power, and reinvent their ways of being in the world" (Madison and Hamera xii). In this case, I also consider the inverse, how culture is shaped by place. By interacting with a place that articulates a cultural identity, I witness and participate in the place-making practice and cultural performance of visiting a cultural place.

In sum, visiting the Parque Amigos de Jose Marti engages with how Cuban cultural identity is performed in relation to the cultural place within which the performance occurs, how being emplaced evokes situated practices, and how those situated practices have established the Cuban communities’ sense of Cubaness. In the following sections I provide details of the specific qualities of a visit; that visits are dialogic, situated, and constitutive, and why these qualities establish visiting as a method for doing emplaced ethnographies of identity performance.

**Visit as Dialogic**

According to Mikael Bahktin, dialogue comes from the relation between self and other (person, place, thing). Dialogue requires an utterance, a response and a relation, and this relation is both within the event and a priori to it as the words uttered are always in relation to some previous influence (Hynes). I find the interpenetration of dialogue helpful in describing how I read or listen to the park. The act of visiting itself is dialogic since it hinges on the relation between the visitor and the place and is informed by the relation between the place and other spaces. In this sense, the park is an utterance or word “Cuba” that calls upon previous iterations of Cuba, and so we can observe that in this case the park is harkening back to a pre-Castro Cuba. However, being that certain visitors enter the park with the intent of visiting Cuba, they are calling forth the present Cuba which shapes the park differently from what seems to be the intent of the stewards of the park (Casa Cuba). Since the park’s meaning is fluid it is therefore
permeable, as is the body and the identities with which it is marked, visiting a place is notably
dialogic as it impacts both the place and the visitor.

Discourse, encompasses forms of talk, text, and other “meaningful symbolic behavior” and
is therefore integral part of visiting a place and the interviewing process during visits. (Johnstone
2). Interviews, as well as historical narratives are structured in ways that denote particular roles
and identities necessary for the establishment of authority. In this sense, the narratives about the
park, Cuba’s histories, and the accounts from visitors are all aspects within a visit as dialogic. As
such, the emplaced interview reveals constructions of identity categories and membership
categories. During visits to the park, participants and I engaged the historical events and figures
within it, discussing what we observed and how it impacted us. Additionally, occasions of personal
experiences entered into discussion regarding the institutionalized history of Cuba and its
relationship with the United States. In other words, during the visits, participants were confronted
with both complimentary and competing accounts of Cuba and Cubaness. This presented occasions
where personal memory and the accompanying historical narratives occupied the same discursive
space, and this projects back onto notions of identity, membership and authority. As such the
interview process presented instances whereby the intersection of competing discourses was
observed and the influences of each on the other was revealed through the tensions that arose in
the negotiation of those accounts during a visit.

Sarangi argues that interviews do not produce raw data to be documented as a historical
report, rather what is being offered by in interviewee is a candidate version of history and how
that history impacts their identity (66). Furthermore, Baker and Johnson discuss the ways in
which an interview produces categories of how to talk about certain topics, and the generational
differences among Cuban-Americans illustrates this point (239). In this sense, a visit as dialogic
is not just an account of the visitor’s perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of the park, but also a material event that dictates how further discussions of Cubaness can be conducted and what they can potentially produce. As such, the interview process itself, not just the responses elicited becomes part of how the park is presented as a Cuban place and what it means to the Tampa-Cuban community.

Identities are created through discourse as I and participants presented candidate versions of ourselves. During the interviews, proposals about the self were presented through, “a variety of social identities, geared to the situations we find ourselves in and the ways we are socially positioned towards others” (Johnson 155). In terms of identity, Edwards discusses the ways in which, “social identity categories are handled in use” (15). Or what Johnson claims as the use of language “to construct and project a coherent, more durable personal identity” (155). Although Bamberg and Georgakopoulou discuss identity as a world with characters in it, and a world as context for self, emplaced interviews presented a blend of these orientations and focused on identity as being performed through the embodiment of a visit, as existing within the place already, and reproductive for the visitor and the place (381).

In addition to identity and membership categorizations, Sarangi discusses the ways in which the life-world frames of participants are introduced as institutional frames through the visit. Remembering the prevalence of Cubanidad in the park, we can confirm this phenomenon as Cuba was predominantly presented as a nation in the park. However, this is not only descriptive of the park but also indicative of the authority inherent in the interviewer role. I take into account how I impacted the visits to the park through my own framing of the visit. I purposefully established the visit in a Cuban place to evoke the life world frame of the exile. A visit is therefore a discursive production of the park as Cuba though a mutual adherence to
institutional narratives of the Blockade, which consists of institutional boundaries that lead to the inclusion or exclusion of certain versions of Cubaness. However, as Sarangi notes, the interaction inherent in the interview process is not a “transparent mechanism” available to identification or classification (66). In this sense, the visit as dialogic reveals through its doing how the various narratives and accounts interpenetrate each other denoting a hybridity of competing accounts of Cubaness. In framing a visit as dialogic, I turn to Hamera's distinction of how performance research focuses on the "basic communication and cultural infrastructure: bodies in/and dialogue" (12). For Performance research, culture is the enactment of rituals that distinguish and unite the particular group. Considering Cubanéo as a practice that facilitated settlement in Tampa for Cuban exiles and noting the perceptions that the Cuban cultural enclave of Ybor City was similar to cities in Cuba, I follow Hamera's suggestion to delve into the places and routines of Tampa Cubans. As such, visiting the park is considered here as a way for Cubans to have a dialogue with the place and therefore their collective and individual histories and identities. Since visiting a place is an enactment of a cultural identity, an argument must be made for the heuristic and educational properties of a visit.

Dworkin Y Mendez discusses the emplacement of cultural rituals to identify locations where cultural knowledge is performed, observed, and transferred (125). She notes four locations where the Cuban curriculum of culture is exercised, and the number of protests, demonstrations, celebrations, ceremonies, and conflicts that occurred in the park make it a fitting proposal as a fifth location where Cuban culture is be performed. Considering the park as a place to “stage” Cuban identity, the discursive practice of emplaced interviews framed visiting as a cultural task. While the Cubanidad present in the park invoked notions of visiting as paying respects, celebrating Cuban history, and honoring instrumental figures (perhaps even heroes). However, I
intended to frame visits as moments of Cubaneo that engaged in conversations about Cubania. How visitors perceived their own Cuban identity, and in what ways they practiced their Cubanéo were topics of discussion; therefore framing the park as a cultural site, focusing on participant’s perceptions of themselves and their cultural identity. Of course, a coffee or cigar shop would have been a suitable setting for places where Cubanéo is practiced; however, I also wanted to situate the conversation in a Cuban place (Cuban soil and property) to witness the effects of the blockade on how Cuban-Americans identify themselves with and through Cuba. Since the park has limited accessibility, it framed the visit as something that needed to be coordinated; therefore, highlighting some of the constraints that illustrate the relationship between Cuban emigres and Cuba, and symbolic of the travel restrictions and permission that need to be granted in order to visit Cuba.

A visit is dialogic in that it entails a situation where one is in contact with others or a place, and in this case I focus on the potentiality of dialogue with and within Cuban places. In this sense, the dialogic quality of a visit entails a co-presence in a place, a conscientious consideration of the setting and situation within which one visits. For instance, the Parque Amigos de José Martí has been shaped by visitors through rallies and ceremonies that constituted the visitor and the place, each of which are in certain aspects, reflections of the other. As stated in the chronology of the park, it is a site where for the past six decades, Cuban-Americans have organized demonstrations and protests about Cuba, and it is a place of pilgrimage for Cubans visiting Tampa. What emerged from the dialogue during the visit was an active interpretation of the site and a reflexive negotiation of the park's impact on our (my, theirs, and others) notions of Cuban identity. As a research method, visiting entailed "putting into conversation" the existing texts (objects, features, structures, sculptures, etc.) and the personal narratives (shared stories,
historical accounts, literature, archival documents, and lived experience). Taking into consideration the relationship between the place and the visitors accomplishes an understanding of a visit as dialogic. That in the end, walking into the Parque Amigos de José Martí begins a dialogue in some form or another. The visit is a dialogue between the person and the place, which includes being in dialogue with the previous historical events, cultural ceremonies, and institutional decrees. In other words, each visit is a dialogue about how a place demonstrates notions of cultural identity and how the visitor performs their own cultural identity within it. However, in being considered a dialogue with previous events, a visit is also situated by the place and time within which it occurs.

**Visit as Situated**

Visits occur in a specific place and time. This is a fundamental distinction of a visit, that one must travel to the place and stay temporarily. Visits are momentary encounters, and a defining feature of a visit is its temporality. It is a bracketed experience, constrained by the parameters of the act itself, specifically the time that passes during a visit. A visit means you come from somewhere else and requires that you will return to it. The visitor has a home, one which they leave, and the realization that they are not from where they are going presents a distinct orientation for their visit. The visitor is privileged by the temporary nature of the act and their own situatedness somewhere else. Also, within the visit there exists an unfamiliarity to the place being visited. Visitors are unacquainted, which increases their awareness of the place and themselves. We visit to connect, knowing that we will disconnect and return from whence we came.

Along with the parameters of space and time as defining characteristics of the situatedness of a visit are the contextual factors that occur as well. The context of a visit includes
the biography of the visitor, the particular social, political, economic, and cultural influences that may impact the visitor and the location, as well as the outcomes and consequences of previous visits and the current visit. In other words, a visit as situated identifies, accounts for, and responds to the conditions within which it occurs, enabling both insight into how visits are framed and experienced, and how the interactions of a visit produce further contextual factors as well. Therefore, the situational factors of a visit move beyond place and time to consider the ways in which visits are framed by the place and how visits also frame the place.

The spatial and temporal parameters of a visit situate it within a contextual frame. The spatial parameters of a visit means that it is “emplaced” (i.e. in a specific and relevant location). Visiting a place means that the visitor makes contact through spatial proximity, and gain a sense of the place by perceiving its various cues (sights, smells, textures, etc…) In this sense, a visit as situated entails both “material and sensorial components” (Pink 81). Sarah Pink offers a discussion of emplaced interviewing, which informed the unique characteristics for using the visit as a research method. “The talk of an interview is not simply performative and embodied, but… more fully situated in that it is an emplaced activity that engages not only the performative body but the sensing body in relation to its total environment” (Pink 83). Therefore a visit to a place, as an embodied engagement, entails experiencing the site as a “sensorium” (Pearson and Shanks 10). Places radiate sensory triggers: sights, smells, sounds, contact, and even taste; these are the defining characteristics of how we get a sense of place and emplaced interviews are a means of articulating what the senses are and how they impact the visitor.

Visiting invokes a focus on the material environment as a situation, to look at a place as a convergence of events and experiences, all of which must be discovered through the spatial arrangement, the objects, even the remains. The park is an amalgamation of different happenings
that lay below the surface like an unexcavated foundation of a long-demolished house. Due to the park’s development over time, and how these iterations have impacted the Cuban community, researching the Parque Amigos de José Martí was a way to experience the past. The park is symbolic of canonical narratives of Cubanidad and has shaped the Cuban community that established it; however, the way some Cubans have performed their respective identity within the park has been both a reaffirmation of Cubanéo and a reformation of the very Cubanidad the park represents. From the park's dedication in 1960, to the recent proposal for renovation in 2017, the articles showed an incredibly tumultuous past. In this sense, the park is a branch of contention from the roots of Cubanidad. However, identifying this requires activating "the interpretive practices of an archeological detective" (Pearson 10). Within Theater/Archeology, Michael Shanks positions archeology as an everyday practice of cultural introspection, similar to Felipe Gonçalves' description of Latin-American anthropology. However, the detective looks for the traces left behind from ceremonies and protests, the decay and ruin of the features of the park, to listen to what resonates from a site. Archeological interpretation works with “material traces, with evidence, in order to create something – a meaning, a narrative, an image – which stands for the past in the present (Pearson 11). This is how I came to understand a visit as an act, and the park as a site of cultural production.

In the case of the Parque Amigos de José Martí, a visitor that identifies as Cuban encounters the site as an integral part of Tampa and Cuba’s mutual history, which situates the park as symbolic of their history as well. Due to the site being Cuban property and a symbol of Cuban culture, a visit to Parque Amigos de José Martí celebrates a collective unity, but also reflects some of the political divisions within the Cuban exile community. Taking the situational factors of a visit into account, the research for this project was conducted within the park as the
context for performances of Cuban cultural identity. The Parque Amigos de José Martí is a culturally symbolic place, yet that symbolism varies for different periods of exiles. Therefore, understanding what the park is and represents depends on who you ask and when they came over from Cuba. However, while the responses vary, a visit to the park and discussions about the meaning of the park are always situated within the context of the political conditions within Cuba and between Cuba and the United States. In one case the system of government in Cuba may have caused the exile, and in another “exile” is a claimed condition as a response to Cuban regimes. The mutual influence between the U.S. and Cuba have contextualized the park and the Cuban community since the fateful days when Martí stayed at Casa Pedroso. Most notably, the park has been the site for numerous gatherings (protests, rallies, and ceremonies) all of which have been situated within the park (as a location) and have situated the park as a place to practice Cubanéo, (on Cuban property, surrounded by symbols of Cubanidad).

Considering both the haptic and embodied nature of visiting a place while also aware of the limited bracket of time within which a visit occurs, visits are occasions entailing heightened senses or attunement. The sensorial, and temporal aspects within the situatedness of a visit conjure examples such as ceremonies, traditions, or other public gatherings which occur in specific and symbolic places. When places are declared as symbolic sites, a narrative is written prescribing what visits mean and how they should be conducted. When we interact with and through a place, we read that narrative to identify ourselves by the visit. However, visits also manifest narratives that combine the narrative of the site with the visitor’s biography to create a story of the visitor’s experience. In this sense, there is a correspondence between place and person through which both are shaped. However, more than just located, the emplacement of a visit entails circumstances that influence how a visit is performed, which in turn constitutes the
place in different ways depending on the visitor. Therefore, visits are not only emplaced, but also place-making.

**Visit as Constitutive**

If a visit is an occasion of contact, and is contextualized by the place in which it occurs, then a visit can be viewed as constitutive through its outcomes. From interactions stem results, and in the case of visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí, visits occur with the very purpose of constituting a Cuban identity for the visitor. Furthermore, by visiting to practice Cubanéo, or to sense or express Cubania, a visit reinforces the park as a Cuban place and cultural beacon. In the instance of Parque Amigos de José Martí, this type of visit is rather common, as Cuban Americans, and people from Cuba visit the park occasionally to pay respects, or to simply share in a moment. A visit is therefore, a merging of self-conceptions and the culturally identifiable characteristics present in the place.

Visiting a place one has never been before highlights the visitor's experience, impressions, and ultimately what they consider the place to be. This is especially important in places that are proposed as cultural markers, places through which a culture defines itself. In the instance of José Martí Park, the park's features reveal a shifting landscape of iterations of Cuban nationalism and cultural identity. D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera consider performance "as fundamental and inherent to life and culture when we are confronted with the ambiguities of different spaces and places that are foreign, contentious, and often under siege" (xii). In other words, a visit is a performance of exploration and negotiation, resulting in the formation of an impression of the experience. Upon visiting a never-before-seen site, the encounter is a matter of discovery that generates an affect. A visit is an act that seeks to absorb what is expressed by the place, and to imprint upon the space the visitor's interpretation of it. While the expression of the
feeling of visiting is at best ambiguous, the act of visiting is vital to understanding how we constitute our identity through visiting cultural sites. Considering the Parque Amigos de José Martí as Cuban space, the ethos of the Cuban exile community and the intense conflicts surrounding Cuban-American relations that occurred within the park, visiting the park is an act of confronting the competing histories and differing cultural values within Cubanidad. Ultimately, this project centers on how Cubanidad functions within Cuban spaces, and how it constructs Cuban places.

As a symbol of Cuban history, the park exists as a physical site of remembrance and offers the potential to articulate and augment the visitor's notions of self-identity. These real effects are in part comprised of "historical and political and material circumstances that organize embodied experiences" (Hamera 16). I focused on how, where, why, and for whom the park's meaning becomes material in everyday life. Within these constraints, and perhaps as a product of them is Hamera's third point regarding the "interanimating facets of production and consumption that in the light of everyday practices, removed from, even resistant to, 'officially sanctioned' public discourses" (18). This focus considers the park as a text that functions to project certain views of Cuban identity, but also reveals the ways in which it is received, confirmed, resisted, or altered by visitors. To view the park as a cultural artifact is to privilege its design and layout over how Cuban exiles have used the space. Remembering that the park is an accretion of different political conditions and differing ideological positions, there is an interrelationship between the park's overall design, its historical use, and how visitors envision its proposed renovations. In this section, I elaborate on how the park was established, the debates that carried on as to what the park symbolizes regarding Cuban identity, and the controversies that ensued as subsequent generations of Cuban emigres sought to use the park as a site of protest, and their hopes of
defining the site according to their political stances. In other words, the park was produced, both in "officially sanctioned" and organic ways, and is consumed according to, along with, or in opposition of its explicit layout. As such, understanding the park as constitutive of Cuban identity must take into account how the park has been and is produced and consumed by Cuban-American visitors; for it is through the park’s consumption and production that the complexity of Cuban identity is revealed.

The Practice of Visiting

Considering the dialogic, situated, and constitutive aspects of a visit, using a visit as a research method entailed specific processes. In this section, I detail how I enacted the visit through emplaced and embodied interviewing. I visited the park innumerable times both before and throughout this project. On occasion, I visited the park on my own or with family members and friends. I can recall visiting the park on two occasions as a tour guide or facilitator for class trips. I visited the park during early morning hours to see it opened and stayed until I was asked to leave by an individual there to lock the gates. I also visited the park late at night or on weekends when it was closed, intentionally, unintentionally, and because in certain cases that was the only opportunity for others to see it.

In addition to my other visits, for this project, I conducted 12 visits with participants to the Parque Amigos de José Martí during regular business hours (Monday-Friday 8:30 am to 1:30pm) during the summer months of 2018. Some I met while visiting the park, others I invited to visit the park with me. The visits lasted an hour, and I followed an interview script (Appendix 4) that focused on personal identity and asked the participant to guide me on a tour of the park. The meetings were split into two parts: the first dealt with the participant's notions of their Cuban identity and their individual relationship with Cuba, the second part focused on the participant's
presence in the park. There were additional openings for participants to discuss their experience in the park, or their interpretation of their visit. Visits with participants were audio recorded and later transcribed and accompanied by field notes that captured date, time, weather, the route through the park, certain sensory inputs such as unique smells, alterations or upkeep of the park, and other descriptions of the visits.

I found and recruited participants through word-of-mouth, and by researching the history of the park and contacting individuals who were previously documented to be stake-holders of the park. A focus of this project was to identify and describe the relationship between Cubaness and Cuban place; therefore, this study was limited only to people who self-identified as Cuban. Another distinction in selecting participants was to ensure representation of individuals who were deeply invested in the park such as Casa Cuba, or other individuals mentioned in newspaper articles about the park, as well as, people who identified as Cuban but were not aware of the park or its history. This differentiation among participants was intended to gather the meaning of the park from individuals who have or are attempting to shape the park’s image, such as the developer building the city block around the park, and from others who were visiting the park perhaps to shape themselves by reconnecting with what they knew to be a Cuban place. Accessing the various relationships with and intentions for the park was necessary to illustrate the multiplicity of meanings in the park and account for the differing perspectives towards the park and Cuba. I procured the potential visitor’s email address and sent them an invitation to participate in this research study (Appendix 2). Once they expressed interest I sent them a PDF of the informed consent form and arranged a time to meet at the park.
The interviews combined the three forms Soyini Madison outlines for ethnographic interviewing. The interviews encompassed (1) oral histories of family or personal connections to Cuba, (2) personal narratives of migration, and (3) topical since we discussed how they viewed the park and what the park meant to them (Madison 26). I asked the participants to answer questions about their experience in the place - to read it as a text, and to interpret it by identifying what features they noticed, related to, or that prompted them to consider what the park meant to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Participants</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;70</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>American 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of Migration (if born in Cuba)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1969</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1979</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990-1999</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2009</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10:** Table of Participant Demographics
them. I used the Patton Model to guide the formation of the interview questions, which focused on experience, opinion/value, and feeling questions (Madison 27). For instance, I asked about how visitors identified as Cuban, how that identity has been formed, and how they recognize it in others. These questions focused on behavior, action, and the “doing’ or “making” of their identity. I also asked opinion or value questions regarding U.S.-Cuba relations, the embargo, and the history of exile for Cubans. However, I used indirect questions here. Instead of asking specifically about the formal political arrangements between the two countries, I gathered how they perceived and thought about the history of the two countries by asking if they’ve ever been back to Cuba to visit. Remember, that the history of Cuba as a nation includes a history of exile; therefore, responses to questions about returning were accompanied by explanations as to why or why not. The participants tended to explain their justification for visiting or not and in doing so volunteered information regarding their opinions or values on the subject. I also asked feeling, knowledge and sensory questions during the tour of the park in the second half of the interview. By asking participants to describe their surroundings and their experience in the park, the interviews addressed the emotions, sentiments, and passions of participants. Additionally, participants revealed what they knew about the history of Cuba and the park. Finally, in touring the park, I asked the visitors to describe what they heard, felt, tasted, and smelled (Madison 27-8).

The questions within the interview script shaped the responses, and this is in addition to all the other projections of Cubaness within the park. The main reason for the script was to focus on "the lived realities of multiple dimensions of difference that affect response-abilities" (Hamera 14). I take what Judith Hamera calls multiple dimensions to mean the differing ideological positions found within Cuban culture. For example, those that welcome the
opportunity to visit as opposed to those who vowed never to return. These differing dimensions impact how individuals responded to visiting the park and why. The responses revealed the conflict and ambiguities towards the relational aspects of their identity regarding Cuba. In this sense, the questions asked, and the place within which the interviews were performed, staged the interaction. In other words, by interviewing the participants in a decidedly Cuban space about their Cubanía, I hoped to not only gain insight into how they related to Cuba, but also how they felt about visiting Cuba, and finally how they perceived the park as a Cuban place established through the practice of Cubanidad.

To understand the park as constitutive, I took into account the park’s history, how it was established, the additions and alterations over time, and the history of its use. I also considered the personal connections between the visitors and the park. I explored the participant's description of their Cuban identity and gathered a sense of how each participant viewed Cuba, and their relationship to the island nation. The specific questions asked during the interview regarding the visitor’s birthplace, cultural heritage, and practices elicited an understanding of how they construct their Cuban identity according to the levels of Cubaness previously detailed by Pérez-Firmat. The conversations at the park unearthed the individual experiences of leaving Cuba, or of being a descendant of a Cuban exile, and both experiences generated a sense of how the participants visualize Cuba today and their relationship to it. By using the park as a means of transposing Cuba and the U.S., narratives of immigration, exile, and visiting Cuba, were articulated through the visit, all of which provide a rich understanding of how cultural places and cultural identity influence each other. The park is more than just a collection of objects (texts), it is as an aggregate of cultural identity, and a place that enables or constrains Cubanéo and Cubanía through its projections of Cubanidad.
Not every visitor knew what Cubanidad, Cubanéo and Cubania meant, nor the difference between the terms, but by asking about where they were born and how they identified as Cuban, I deduced which type of Cubaness participants were referring to in their answers. At times during interviews with people who knew about the park's history, I was shocked by what occurred and enlightened by what those events meant regarding broader notions of Cuban cultural identity and the relationship between Cuba and Cuban-Americans. From my first visit to the park until I began researching its history and listening to stories about it, I gathered that the park was established to preserve the memory of José Martí. Through several symbolic objects, the site commemorates Martí as "the apostle of freedom" and honors his leadership in the fight for Cuban independence from Spanish colonial rule. In identifying the park through the aspects mentioned earlier, most of the iterations of the park's meaning offered by participants were firmly rooted in the park's decreed significance and intended uses (i.e., José Martí). However, the stories shared by those with insight into the park's history paints a different picture, one that reveals the controversial nature of its meaning and illustrates the ambivalence of Cuban identity.

In this sense, the park is a representation of the Cuban American relation, an integral aspect for understanding Cuba through its influence. A shared response of visitors were testaments to Cuban cultural transference. The park, Ybor City, Key West, Miami, New York were all shaped to a certain extent by Cuban influence, and can therefore operate as an interpretive medium to make sense of Cuban identity. For instance, the park is Cuban property, while it is not the island of Cuba, it is both representative of Cuban soil, and a satellite territory – a vassal state. Stepping in means stepping into a connection to Cuba. Why else would there be so much conflict regarding the park’s meaning? The park defines Cuban identity by framing a relation to Cuba for those who visit it. Walking into the park is communing through it with Cuba.
Similar places commemorating José Martí identify the Cuban cultural enclaves within the U.S. and the web of these memorials includes several throughout Cuba as well. Because Parque Amigos de José Martí is the only international memorial site owned by Cuba, it is a contested space. Since its establishment in 1956, the park's meaning has been in dispute through its evolving design, publicity, and operation.

Therefore, I used the performance of a visit as a method of inquiry and critique of how I and others maintain Cuban identity and perpetuate Cuban culture through visiting Parque Amigos de José Martí. Part of this process entails acknowledging my struggles in conversations about Cuban culture, as I have a limited understanding of practicing Cubanéo. My upbringing in places with very low demographic representation of Latins, or more specifically, Cuban-Americans meant that I had a slight language barrier, but more importantly, my narrative of being Cuban was rather general as it relied heavily on notions of Cubanidad, which as elaborated upon earlier was an impossibility. However, my personal experience and the experiences of others who shared the same distance from Cuba and Cubanidad expanded the notions of what Cuban identity entails and how it is performed and personal perceived. Additionally, due to the condition of inherited exile, the distance and separation felt, and the ambivalence or perhaps even reluctance to submerge oneself into the estranged culture, offer new perspectives that challenge the dominant exclusions inherent within a cultural identity composed solely of Cubanidad. The park, as it stands is a site that contextualizes Cuban identity, but the park’s establishment, history, and use textures Cuban identity in ways beyond the canonical narratives reliant on Cubanidad. Therefore, a visit enables me to understand how the park (and we) are shaped by notions of Cubanidad, how the park hosted numerous occasions of Cubanéo through gatherings, further reinforcing the relationship between Tampa and Cuba, and between national
ideology and cultural identity. Also, I can understand how the park invites me to embody my own Cubánia, and how the park encourages my curiosity of what it means to be Cuban by visiting it.

In conclusion, the Parque Amigos de José Martí is a location of the intersections between various notions of Cuban identity: Cubanidad, Cubanéo and Cubánia. The park also situates the Tampa-Cuban community’s experience through the struggles of exile, becoming a diaspora, and negotiating the restrictions of the American blockade and the tensions of political turmoil. As a cultural site, the park is a text, but through its materiality and use, it also textures notions of Cuban identity and how they are located and performed. Because the park is a site of performance, a stage upon which Cuban identity is proclaimed and produced, it offers a lasting record of the Tampa Cuban condition, one that can be experienced, sensed, and understood through a visit. Accounts of my and other’s visits articulate how cultural identity is constituted and expressed by places that represent a connection to a place of origin. Finally, while this project uses a visit to understand the mutual influences between cultural practices and cultural places, it also seeks to intervene in the ongoing process of proposed renovations to the park. Because the park has such a storied history, rife with conflict and tension, it is a dramatic representation of Cuban cultural identity, and the dispute over what the park represents and how it is used continues. Therefore, this project is certainly constrained by the time period within which it occurs, and it is a genuine hope that the descriptions of the visits to the park that follow in the next section contribute to the future renovation design and use of the park.
CHAPTER FOUR

In this chapter, I articulate how visits to the park operate as a heuristic for understanding various types of Cubaness, and how visitors perform them. I use the visits to offer descriptive accounts of the park, descriptive accounts of the embodied engagement with the park during my interviews, and verbatim accounts extracted from the twelve interviews. Using the logic of a visit as dialogic, situated, and constitutive I show how the park, and visitors, enact the three categories of Cubaness described by Pérez-Firmat to make sense of and accomplish their own Cuban identity. A visit operates as a means to understand the park and one’s own identity through the situatedness of visiting, which constitutes the park as Cuban place and the visitor as Cuban. The question here is how the notions of Cubaness were established in the park, how they are experienced, and how they impact each other within the individual visits to the park.

I take a descriptive approach in articulating the intricacies of visiting and Cubaness by first analyzing the symbolism within the park and then sharing how others experience visiting the park. While describing the visit as dialogic, situated, and constitutive and placing the interpretations of the park within the categories of Cubaness, it is important to note that I am participating in the very act that has created and maintained enormous fissures within the Cuban community. You only need to revisit the park’s history to understand that it a contested space. With a history of political struggle, social and economic turmoil, and the persistent flow of migration and exile, the entire notion of Cubaness is contested as well. Therefore, what the park means is dependent on who is searching for meaning, when, and where they are looking and how
they understand themselves within and through the visit. A visit is constitutive of the place and identity, and this analysis focuses on how the various notions of Cubaness are distinct from each other and how they blend. In this sense, the park and Cuban identity can be understood within Pérez-Firmat’s framework of Cubaness: Cubanidad, Cubanéo, and Cubanía.

This analysis acknowledges the overlap between the different types of visits (dialogic, situated, and constitutive) and the terms of Cubaness (Cubanidad, Cubanéo, and Cubanía). Therefore, the interpretation of the park, as representative and generative of Cuban identity and Cubaness, is determined by the distinctions, and contingent on their overlap. In identifying one aspect of the park as indicative of a form of Cubaness, the possibility to see it as other forms exists as well. The messiness within and between the terms of Cubaness is experienced in social situations within the park. For instance, Cubanéo, when Cubans gather, entails moments when inevitably performances of Cubanidad and senses of Cubanía emerge. During a visit to the park with Roberto, a native Tampanian with both Spanish and Cuban roots, he explained how Cubans recognize Cuban identity during gatherings or meetings.

I identify Cubans or Cubaness through talk, curiosity, politics. You know, with Cubans it’s very odd. To be able to talk to another Cuban, you first have to assess when they came over. In other words, “oh my grandfather came over in the 1800’s” is a different conversation than, “My family came over in 1961.” And it’s even a different conversation if it’s “my family came over in 1995” or “my dad was a Marielito.” It’s almost as if when two Cubans get together, you have to do this quick little dance to figure out where you are in Cuban heritage in America in order to have a conversation. And you know to either avoid pitfalls or to jump into them. (Roberto)
As an example of the overlap between Cubanéo and Cubanidad, the scenario described above demonstrates how migration, and the notion of exile, harkens back to the birthright of Cuban citizenship. It reveals how Cubanidad is constructed from the specific political makeup of different migration periods within Cuba and reveals individual senses of Cubanía within a moment of Cubanéo.

A visit to the park entails an interpretation of the objects within it. A visitor does a similar “dance” as Roberto illustrated above by spending time in the park. By experiencing the place, the immense amount of symbolism within it is activated. Therefore, this analysis looks specifically at moments when visitors engage with the park and their sense of self. The park’s composition, consisting of various objects symbolizing forms of Cubaness, means that each is already known to be representative of Cubaness, and when the visitor recognizes it as such, they are participating in the park’s construction as a Cuban place. This phenomenon is identified in the recordings of visitors touring the park, observing, and speaking about what they understand the park means and therefore symbolizes.

Roberto and I selected a bench in the southwest corner of the park. There are six benches in the back area, only two of which I felt safe sitting in. The others are combinations of bowing, rotted, or missing planks. Roberto takes up more than half of the bench as he sits down. I sit next to him with my hip pressed against the armrest. He tells me about how his grandfather came over in 1913 and established a local newspaper. Put simply, Roberto has a long history in Tampa and is well connected within the Tampa-Cuban community. He’s been to this park numerous times and to Cuba as well. I’m struck by the clarity of his thought. He’s not only certain in his beliefs but adamant about his certainty. I share my disapproval of President Obama’s rescindment of the United States classification of Cubans leaving Cuba as refugees. No longer will political asylum
be granted to Cuban migrants. I thought this would be a moment of connection, that we would agree that this was wrong. I was wrong.

I think it got us out of this awkward position where anybody who left Cuba, left because Castro beat them himself. And that wasn’t the case. The majority, the vast majority of Cubans that came over here as economic refugees. It wasn’t cause they needed to buy beans and rice, they wanted to buy jeans and have air-conditioning in every room. It was really cause they wanted to move to the next step. They were educated, smart, and healthy and they just wanted more than beans and rice. (Roberto Interview)

Roberto and I “danced” a bit more during our visit, and as we walked the space I got the sense of how rooted and connected he felt to the park, to Ybor, to Tampa, and to Cuba. His ability to speak as a participant with and contributor to the Cuban community of Tampa, stemmed from this attachment to both place and culture. He seemed firmly rooted in his Cubaness and his Americaness even commenting on how both identities were put into conflict during his visits to Cuba as an American tourist.

Working with Pérez-Firmat’s distinctions of Cubaness, I provide a series of interwoven visits with others, as well as instances where I alone am experiencing the park. Each object within the park and the documentation of previous events that occurred there are identified and analyzed by the terms Cubanidad, Cubanéo and Cubanía. My goal here is to show how the park and the visits within it are a heuristic for understanding Cuban-American experiences of exile, migration, resettlement (place-making), and the overall diasporic condition of sharing cultural meanings to maintain a sense of Cubaness. Additionally, I highlight how the visits as emplaced interviews generated notion of Cubaness and what emerged in our mutual reflections of how Cubanidad is deployed, how Cubanéo is experienced, and how Cubanía is sensed.
Park as Cubanidad

As I walk into the park, two main features signal the Parque Amigos de José Martí as a Cuban place: The Cuban coat of arms on the entrance archway and the Cuban flag next to the statue of José Martí. These features indicate the park as being part of Cuba, or in the more profound interpretation, that the park is Cuba. Since its inception, the park has been a symbol of Cuba and its people; however, what the park represents for its creators, managers, and visitors varies to the point of contention, hence the park’s history of conflicts.

Figure 11: Image of entry archway to Parque Amigos de José Martí.
Welcome to Cuba

The concrete archway at the entrance is constructed in neo-classical style. Large columns of masonry block rising to an arch with a prominent key stone frames the tall wrought iron gates, chain, and padlock that control entrance to the park. Above the arch, the words “Parque Amigos de José Martí” are engraved, and a bass relief of the Cuban coat of arms is located above. I’ve walked through this archway at least thirty times, I even took pictures of it on different occasions, but it wasn’t until I had to write about it that I noticed the crest and studied the intricacies of its’s design. The following description of the coat of arms was generated by the interest in and necessity to be able to describe its components and meanings. But what does this accomplish? Is it more than trivial knowledge, like knowing the official state bird or tree of New Jersey? Just because I understand the symbolism within the crest, does that make me more Cuban? I ask this because from the very entrance, the park presents itself as Cuban through its national symbols. The entrance suggests that in order to enter Cuba, you must be able to identify the park as Cuban.

The coat of arms includes a center shield on the sides of which are an oak branch and a laurel branch. Above the shield is a Phrygian cap with a single star atop fasces. The shield includes three panels, a central panel along the top and two panels on each side below it. Blue and white stripes of the Cuban flag are in the lower left panel, and a typical Cuban landscape with a royal palm and mountain ridge line behind it is in the lower right panel. In the center of the shield is a seascape with landmasses on each side, the right representing the United States (Florida) and the left representing the Yucatan. Between the shorelines above the water floats a key. Cuba is the key to traveling between the two peninsulas, marking its importance in expedition and trade. While Cuba is symbolized as the key of the Caribbean, I’m wondering if
the park can be a key to Cubaness. The key in the shield cannot open the padlock on the gates below it. Although these are playful metaphors, I wonder about how this key has been lost, found, and remade by exiles searching for access to their heritage and homeland. If I understand the exile community as defined by their search for the key, then why the lock?

**Borders and Restrictions**

An obvious response and a continuation of the metaphor would be to state that the lock is symbolic of the embargo/blockade - it is the reason for prohibited travel, limited communication, and perpetual division between the two nations. However, the reasoning behind the embargo is continually questioned by Cuban exiles and their descendants alike, and my visit to the park with Esteban illustrated this issue. Esteban is a retired political staffer. Having worked for years in Washington D.C., he started an organization with the explicit goal of challenging US-Cuban policy and helping individuals navigate the travel restrictions to visit Cuba. Esteban is an older gentleman, yet his passion for political action is still driven by his enduring Cuban spirit. Esteban was already sitting in the park when I arrived. Wearing a beige long sleeve guayabera, slacks, cowboy boots, and a Panama hat, he looks like he is peacefully enjoying the cool morning summer air. I introduce myself and he offers me a cortadito (Cuban coffee with steamed milk and sugar). Esteban is also well connected within the Tampa-Cuban community, perhaps even notorious to some. The accounts of his visits to Cuba and his previous involvement in conflicts and demonstrations in the park mark him as not only Cuban, but a champion for other Cubans. He recounted a conversation with then Cuban president, Fidel Castro during a visit to Cuba.

We were sitting around the table one day talking about the embargo and this, that, and the other, and I asked Fidel Castro, “Mr. President can I ask you a question? Just philosophy, it’s a school of thought, that exists in my country, maybe you’ve heard of it? It goes like
this… you like the embargo. The embargo keeps you in power. The embargo gives you a reason to explain to the Cuban people why we don’t have toilet paper, and we don’t have toothpaste.” And he looked at me and said, “well of course I’ve heard that argument, but I thought you were smarter than that.” (He just called me stupid in front of everybody.) “Do you realize what you’ve said? You’ve said that Fidel likes the embargo. That the embargo keeps Fidel in power! So, is that why the United States keeps the embargo in place? To keep me in power?” Right or wrong, good or bad, I said, “OK Mr. President, there’s another school of thought in my country and it goes like this. When the embargo, the blockade they call it, is lifted and a million Americans come in freely, and talk about private property and entrepreneurship, this government won’t last twelve months.” He looked at me and said, “well then I don’t understand what the problem is.” He said, “you lift it, I’ll take my chances.” (Esteban Interview)

So, what is the embargo for, why does it remain in place, and why is there a lock on the gate to the park?

Just as Cubanidad is sanctioned by documentation securing citizenship, the exile community that arose from the political revolution of 1959 desired an official designation of their plight. The embargo represents an official disavowal of the changes that caused them to leave their homes, their land, and their island. Up until the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, the embargo was a proclamation by President John F. Kennedy, but after President Bill Clinton signed the act, the embargo became the official US policy towards Cuba. The Helms-Burton Act was the official response to the loss of Cubanidad and provided a sense of legal and political belonging to the United States for the exile community. The lock on the gate represents the embargo as an official declaration of Cuba being exiled from the United States, as in, the United
States no longer has a relationship with Cuba. Because of this arrangement, the park now belongs to the Cuban exile community as a response to their loss of property and prosperity in Cuba. In other words, since they cannot and will not return to Cuba, the park is their token of what once was, and this is preserved by limiting access and controlling usage.

It was not long after I began visiting the park that I noticed it sought to preserve a pre-Castro image of Cuba. The park has been called, “the last free patch of Cuban soil” and this is a purposeful construction of the park as a purified version of Cuba. The ideals of the “original” Cuba are saved from Castro and stored in the park, waiting to be resurrected by visitors seeking to perform their Cubaness for nostalgic purposes. In this sense, visits to the park by those who lived in Cuba before Castro and before moving to the U.S., are present enactments of the past. They invoke a former place and a former time. Personal memory is imprinted on the site, framing it as a time capsule and the park is imprinted on the visitor as a location to remember what once was. In this sense, visiting meant transforming the place from a small park in Ybor City to La Isla de Cuba.

A Nation in Exile

The single star in a red triangle with blue and white stripes flutters in the wind from atop the western flagpole. Visible from outside of the park, the flag is a beacon, a symbol up on high claiming the site as Cuban territory. The flag, and the pole from which it waves, stakes the claim that the park belongs to Cuba. As a symbol of the nation of Cuba, the flag in the park extolls the nationalism inherent within the construct of Cubanidad. The park is representative of Cuba as an independent nation, including its revolution against Spanish colonial rule and U.S. imperialistic influence; therefore, embroiled within the national symbol of Cuba is its historical connection to the U.S. The flag of Cuba was designed by Miguel Teurbe Tolón, a Cuban poet and exile living
in New York (Rodriguez). From across the Florida straits and up the eastern seaboard the symbol of Cuba as a nation was designed and sewn. Although Cubanidad is predicated on citizenship within the coastal borders of Cuba, its symbol was brought from the U.S. and first raised in Cuba in 1906. The story of the flag illustrates the tenuousness of national sentiment, and yet markers such as birth certificates and passports carry enormous clout in distinguishing Cubans from exiles, immigrants, and foreigners.

While the Cuban flag extends from the pole to the west of Martí, the state flag of Florida is hung on the eastern flagpole, both at the same height. The two flags symbolize the connection between Cuba and Florida, and Tampa and Havana. The park was bestowed to the Cuban government to commemorate the Tampa-Cuba connection and the flags infer this relationship. The statue of Martí between the flags denotes his integral role as the original transnational Cuban. However, the relationship between Tampa and Cuba is confounded by the political tensions between Havana and Washington D.C. At times the Cuban and U.S. governments cooperated through shared interests, yet during other periods, they battled for control over the island until ties were severed and the relationship became one marked by an ideological divide. This is one of the chasms in which my Cubaness exists. During a visit to the park in September of 2019, I was surprised to see the State Flag of Florida replaced with the fall of the United States. The choice to change flags was meant to emphasizes the two nations as entities, perhaps adversaries or enemies, but this arrangement minimizes the bond between the people that span between the two different but interrelated places.

**Nationalism and Patriotism**

I contacted Alejandro through his office phone number. As a Ybor City real estate developer and construction manager for the project on the surrounding city block where the
Parque Amigos de Jose Marti is located, Alejandro is a primary stakeholder in the park. He’s also been involved in discussions about potentially refurbishing or redesigning the park. Similar to Roberto and Esteban, Ariel gains his sense of Cubaness by engaging, participating, and producing cultural artefacts. The three participants are responsible for Cuban media in Tampa, Cuban-American policy, and perhaps a revision of a Cuban place in Tampa. These expressions of Cubaness, while immeasurably impactful to the Tampa-Cuban community and beyond, occur within the frame of Cubanidad because they relate back to Cuba as a nation. While international policy obviously entails nations, media reports on the state, and a redesign of the park must inevitably contend with the fact it is Cuban property.

Cubanidad encompasses notions of nationalism and patriotism, and the Cuban exile community enacts both in complex and confusing ways. Maurizio Viroli provides insight into how nationalism and patriotism compliment and contradict each other. For instance, nationalist sentiment is often framed as a unifying force, or “Patria”. Viroli relies on the definition of Patria proposed by Mazzini, stating that a Patria “has to be a community sustained by bonds of fellowship and love, the patria must assure everyone the dignity that comes from citizenship” (148). Hence, Patria provides equal rights to the people, but Mazzini’s description of citizenship as a form of dignity presents the exile as “man’s worst fear” (149). This illustrates citizenship as vital, and its necessity presents the opportunity for Cubanidad to be considered the paramount form of Cubaness. This notion was integral to Marti’s expressions of the Cuban exile’s longing for a country to call their own and to eschew the horror of living with a void and ultimately dying on foreign soil. However, this fear is transformed through an enactment of what Viroli distinguishes as patriotism without nationalism. In other words, the exile community has maintained its patriotism through their aspirations of Cuba, while acknowledging its’ fragility.
through various political revolutions. During our visit, Alejandro explained how the Cuban exile must contend with losing the Cuba they knew and accepting their American identity while maintaining a connection to Cuba:

    When my parents fled Cuba with us we anticipated, at least they anticipated, that we would be back to Cuba in a year or two, never thinking that they would never return. I don’t think that anybody would have dreamt that the island would have been lost basically forever. I don’t think anyone would have dreamt that they would never be able to come back home and restart their life like they had it, but Cuba is forever changed. I’m not saying negative or positive, I’m just saying its forever changed. (Alejandro)

That Cuba is changed is only part of the equation, the other part depends on the acceptance that the exile, upon leaving Cuba, is also forever changed. The change is most often represented by the adoption of the hyphen, Cuban-American. The combination of nationalities presents opportunities to identify with both countries, as Barbara, an exile of the Mariel Boatlift explains:

    I identify as both Cuban and American. Your native land, in many ways, is the place where you realize your dreams, and I realized my dreams in the United States, so that’s why I feel that I am American because this is where my dreams came true. Clearly, I was born in Cuba, so I have both identities, and I don’t know if I can say one without the other, so both of them are part of me. (Barbara)

Barbara’s marriage of her Cuban and American identities stem from her traumatic departure and her ability to accept the trauma her and her family endured, so her statement is from a current assessment of her present identity.

    Barbara’s migration story affected me deeply. She’s told it more than once, she’s published a book recounting her childhood and her journey to Miami during the Mariel Boatlift.
The story still courses through her veins, and she’s harnessed it through countless retellings. I get the sense that Barbara mulled over how to compose her story, she crafted it into a text with multiple characters and settings and contexts. As she shares her story we both become emotional and I feel the violence, fear, and trauma that has driven so many exiles to sever ties with the island. It is the same fear that is instilled onto second and third generation Cuban-Americans. I recognize her story from countless other conversations denouncing what Castro did to Cuba or honoring the sacrifices of those who were forced to flee after the revolution. There is an undoubtable schism between the exile community and Cuba. Diana Taylor discusses visiting a former torture and concentration camp as a tourist and the ways in which trauma and performance are both experienced in the present and how memory is linked to place. Taylor concludes that trauma, while felt in the present keeps the past alive, “but the future is not an option [for the exile] as long as Terranova grips him in that place” (Taylor 278). I notice Barbara skating across the grass in high heels, she approaches one of the rocks and gently scrapes some dirt off it, “Oriente.” Although this was a moment where she contacted the soil, when Barbara left the park she grounded herself the same way she did years before when she left Cuba. She set foot on American soil.

During another visit, I met Juan, a middle-aged man of similar build to my own. He was well dressed in a crisply pressed dress shirt and slacks. Juan seemed quite comfortable and self-assured as he sat next to me on one of the park benches with three shirt buttons undone exposing several gold chains. He smelled of deodorant, aftershave, and cologne simultaneously. A mixture of dry musk, ocean breeze, rubbing alcohol, and mint maybe? His voice is calm with a hint of occasional enthusiasm as we share more progressive political views than any previous visits with others. Similar to Ariel and I, Juan also grew up in northeastern cities. Similar to Esteban, Juan
spent several years living in the Baltimore and D.C. area and the impact of the more liberal mindsets that exist in those areas showed during our visit. Juan recalled his departure from Cuba in 1971 at the age of eight to illustrate the initial difficulties in understanding and accepting what happened:

I left Cuba when I was eight years old, and the memories that I have are almost photographic. If you were to ask me, “what are the most vital moments, the most incredible moments that you could point to in your life?” I would name a few and in there would definitely be my departure from Cuba. I was only eight, but in my case, it was traumatic, it was exciting, it was sad, and there were so many other emotions packed in there. Knowing that I wasn’t going to see my uncles, my aunts, or my grandparents, and I remember that day as if I was seeing it right now. Leaving meant that we were exiles, and I put myself in that group because of my father and my mother, but as for myself, I was a kid so there’s a lot of things we can put into question regarding what I could have done. But I think that as I’m going through those times, I remember being in the plane and questioning to myself, why is this happening to us? (Juan Interview)

Taking into account the impactful moment of exile and the subsequent negotiation of identities that emerge from being a stranger in a strange land, visitors often spoke of both pride and concern for Cuba and its people.

Abraham also expressed the combination of acceptance of exile while still feeling connected to Cuba during our visit to the park. Abraham is a university professor in his late thirties. He left Cuba and moved to Spain with his family in 1996. Abraham has never been back to Cuba, but claims it is more from lack of time and ability, not because he rejects the idea altogether, but he admits there are other reservations and fears about returning. Most notably, he
fears that if he goes, he may not be allowed to leave again. Abraham is a self-proclaimed student of Cuba, and he is well versed in Cuban history and the biographies of many historical figures. His perspectives on the intersections between Cuban nationalist sentiments and Cuban cultural production were especially insightful regarding the overlap between Cubanidad and Cubanéo. In response to my question about what makes him feel Cuban, Abraham shared this.

I have a sense of belonging to Cuba because I want to see Cuba progressing and improving one day. I care about how Cuba is doing, how the people are doing. The reality of Cuba is what you see happening there. Now we have Cuba going through very difficult situation from all point of views: economic, political. I see people very desperate, people living there that have no hope for Cuba, and so that’s what the reality of Cuba is, the way I see it. I see people struggling constantly. That’s what I see. There are other points of view that you could look at, because the economic and political aren’t all. You could look at Cuba from a cultural point of view but I don’t have much information about it. Cultural reality, how is the culture progressing or how is it… what is the cultural life of Cuba. (Abraham)

The hope for a better future for Cuba is not only rooted in a sense of nationalism or patriotism but also, as Abraham pointed out, a sense of cultural identity with the Cuban people. This is an expression of Cubanidad and Cubanéo because the expression of a cultural connection is influenced by the national identity. While Pérez-Firmat draws boundaries between Cubanidad and Cubanéo, there is undoubtedly also overlap.

The Border Between the Nation and the Individual

Cubanidad bleeds into Cubanéo through statements made by visitors on how they navigate their transnational identity. The overlap occurs through the difficulty in separating the
country from its people. Similarly, the establishment, arrangement, use, and meaning of the Parque Amigos de José Martí depends on either the overlap or separation of the Cubanidad and Cubanéo identities. Consider that the park’s designers intended for it to symbolize the connection between Tampa and Cuba, but this connection was not born of governmental partnership. Instead this connection emerged through exile, migration, and the desire to maintain membership in the Cuban community even when displaced from Cuba. As such, the nationalist symbols imply the park to be representative of the nation of Cuba, but the dedication and bestowment of the park to the Cuba was due to the exile communities desire to maintain their cultural and historical connection to the island and its people. The park was selected because of its integral role in saving Martí from an assignation attempt; therefore, saving his effort to build support for Cuban independence throughout Tampa. José Martí’s vision of the exile as an influential voice regarding what Cuba would become once free and independent, further illustrates this overlap and perhaps even the inextricable relationship between Cubanidad and Cubanéo. When the boarding house was demolished, an effort to symbolize its import, and Martí’s and Pedroso’s influence, amounted to establishing the site as a park for Cuban exiles to visit. However, the proposal to bestow the park to the Cuban government illustrates how Cubanidad and Cubanéo overlap. Looking beyond the flag and crest into what comprises Cuba’s “national character” means viewing the park as Cubanéo.

Park as Cubanéo

Behind the statue of José Martí, the back mural depicts the island of Cuba in colorful mosaic tiles. The various colors represent the original provinces of Cuba, each of which is also identified by small painted stones scattered around the park. Above the map are the words “Isla de Cuba” (The Island of Cuba). The mural names Cuba as a land mass and marks the park as an
island as well – separated from Cuba geographically but connected by the same strings that tether Cubans to their sense of Cubaness. By creating a place for Tampa Cubans to visit and convene as social performances of Cubanéo, the park was envisioned as a site where visitors can locate themselves with others and within Cuba. Juan, recalled his first visit to the park during a trip to Tampa. “As I was standing in front of the gates I thought to myself, this is the place I had read about and I was really taken aback. When I walked in and saw Camaguey and Oriente, and the map, and José Martí, I thought, ‘wow, am I this close to Cuba?’” (Juan Interview)

Although there were events at the park that established a government in exile and therefore positioned the park as a site for official political dealings, the park is not operated by the nation of Cuba, nor is it managed by the United States or Florida. The park is an autonomous island, sans governing body, and therefore a place for collective, social interaction. The mural proclaims the park as a Cuban place, a space where Cubanéo exists and can be expressed. As Pérez-Firmat notes, Cubanéo is manifest through a “national character” and is responsible for one’s desire to socially express Cubaness as an identifying characteristic (7). Not to be confused with Cubanidad, Cubanéo stems from the aspects of identity that are related to the national identity of Cuba. In other words, the sense of shared belonging across the island. Benedict Anderson discusses the necessity of focusing on nationalism as a “cultural system,” one that promotes a perceived affinity with others which unites them across space and time (Anderson, 12). Andersons focus on both symbolic interaction as a way of producing perceived identities and the impact of discursive practices in materializing the nation as a cultural artefact.

During a visit to the park, Barbara expressed a familiarity with the map of Cuba. “It’s good that we still have the original provinces on the map instead of the later divisions. The park preserves the original Cuba that I knew and is one piece that ties me to the island” (Barbara
interview). While Barbara focuses on her memories of Cuba, others like Alex, a Latin-American scholar, activist and poet, expressed their sentiments of the map as representing the differences in national character depending on the generations of exiles. “These provinces here in the rocks and on the map are a moment in time, and that’s the way the people who run the park want it. People don’t acknowledge that a country is an organic thing, and things change. 7 provinces, 20 provinces. Cuba isn’t just what it was, it also is what it is” (Alex Interview). The generational differences that create such divergent views on what it means to be Cuban or how one identifies with Cuba complicate how the park is understood as Cuban space and therefore what Cuba means to its exile community. The generational divides coincide with differing reasons for exile, different relationships with Cuba, and although not necessarily by design, but certainly through interpretations, the park symbolizes these differences in its layout.

National Characteristics

The national character of Cuba is influenced by the characteristics of its heroes or forefathers. The statues of José Martí, Antonio Maceo and the relief of Paulina Pedroso guide the visitors’ attention to their historical impact, but in describing their integral roles in the establishment of Cuba, their personal characteristics become representative of the national character. For instance, the statue of José Martí elicited praise from visitors, and during certain visits I witnessed flowers or other trinkets left behind as offering for Martí. I visited the park with Aurelia, a woman in her mid-twenties who spent her entire childhood in Cuba before moving to the United States when she was thirteen. This means that at the time of our visit, Aurelia’s lifespan was split evenly between Cuba and the United States. Aurelia comes from a family that was very involved with the Castro revolution. Her grandfather was the personal medic of Ernesto “Che” Guevara and died with him in Bolivia in 1967. As a descendant of a
revolutionary hero Aurelia lived an especially patriotic life in Cuba. She shared stories of how she was always marching or participating in demonstrations and speeches. She was aware of how her environment and family position impacted her performances of Cubaness both in Cuba and still today in Tampa. She shared how my invitation to visit the park made her want to perhaps bring an offering to Martí, even though she later chose not to.

The idea of bringing something is indoctrinated very early. Every 28th of January we would, um I lived in old Havana so we would always go to Martí’s house. We’d go with the school and all the students would bring a white rose on the day of his birth to the house. The same with Camilo Cienfuegos, on the day of this death we would take flowers to El Malecón, to the ocean and then send them out to sea. So, it’s those things, and I know my mom, my mom was into these things, because she was into that tradition. For me, it occurred to me when I walked through the gate into the park, to associate Martí with the white rose. That’s kind of one of the things that sticks out, the immediate association of Martí and white rose. (Aurelia Interview)

Another visitor expressed intent to bring an offering. “I wanted to bring some flower, rose, to put to here, but I was in a rush when I was leaving home. It’s a way to express my admiration and my gratitude to what he symbolizes to Cuba” (Abraham Interview). Visitors also expressed various pieces of information about José Martí and all were in admiration:

José Martí is a person that I really admire very deeply. He was such an important figure in the history of Cuba. A man that gave everything, absolutely everything for the cause of Cuban freedom and progress. I’m very glad to there is a place here in Tampa where he is still remembered. And Tampa was really a place where he stayed many times and where the Cuban community here felt great pride in being next to him. (Abraham Interview)
Several other instances stood out regarding the influence of the personal characteristics of the national figures on the national character of Cuba. Maricarmen, the daughter of a prominent figure in Tampa and within Castro’s 26th of July movement, was brought to tears seeing the statue. Maricarmen lived in New York City around the time I did, and we identified with each other through our lived experiences of 9/11. Maricarmen defined her Cubaness through her family heritage. Like Alex, who has written articles about Tampeños, and the Tampa-Cuban connection, Maricarmen also plays an active role in creating senses of Cubaness for others through her writing and reporting on her father’s biography and the Parque Amigos de Jose Marti. She shared this insight regarding how the park invokes family memories that are embroiled with cultural memories. “Coming here and seeing the statue, just on a person level, I see part of my dad. You know, because of his involvement in the group that was responsible for bringing the statue, for having the statue erected. With my dad’s story, the park has had more of a personal impact on me in the sense of tying my dad’s history to the sense of history in the park” (Maricarmen interview). The same rings true for the bust of Antonio Maceo:

The Maceo bust came later only because there was this one woman who lived in Tampa, her name was, she dies recently… Remember Maceo was her name, but she’s in the exile community so they honor her and respect her, and I think she pushed for a Maceo bust. It was recent, like in the 2000s. If it weren’t for her, it wouldn’t be here. It was just one of those things. I brought this afro-Cuban filmmaker to Tampa to the park. She wanted to do a film about afro-Cubans in Tampa, and when she got to that statue, she started crying. It’s powerful for people to see the figures, I mean she was just amazed, there’s all this Cuba stuff here. (Alex Interview)
Along with the prominent Cuban figures, the park has been the site of numerous events and visits throughout its existence. From the days of the onlooker passing by to get a glimpse of Martí during his visits to Tampa, to the dedication ceremony and subsequent anniversary celebrations, to rallies, protests, demonstrations, hunger strikes, and to the current usage of visitors touring Tampa’s history, the park is a site of Cubanéo. Alex recalled several previous visits to the park:

Oh yes, I’ve been to this park. You know my grandmother brought me here when I was five. There was a dedication or some ceremony regarding José Martí. White dresses, white roses, white sunshine, and a white marble head. I didn’t know what it was, and my grandmother explained it was José Martí, the father of our nation. It may have been for the dedication of the statue, but it’s just a flash in my memory… In 1992 USF had a hundred-year anniversary conference for academics on José Martí in Tampa. A professor gave the whole group a tour of Ybor City, and when we got to the park, the gates were locked. Across the street, right over there was a line of Cuban exiles screaming at us, calling us communists… Another time, we had formed a group called “Cuba Vive of Tampa Bay, and we worked with Pastors for Peace to send aid to Cuba, medical aid. This particular year, we had a bus, and we packed the bus full of stuff. It was parked right there, and you know, we tended to meet here for these kinds of public things. On that occasion, the Cuban exiles had a bullhorn, and they were really scary. They got this bullhorn and they called us “Puta! Communista!” It just got so ugly, it was just so UGLY. We called the police. But there was a whole struggle about the gate, and the key, and the lock! At some point, a man in our group went downtown and said, “I want a key!
Why do they get the key?” He was active in the democratic party, so they knew him, so he got a key! But, I see it’s back. The key and the lock. (Alex Interview)

Alex’s visits to the park spanned its existence, and while she remembered several contentious visits, other visits to the park were not marked by conflict. She summarized what the park has meant to her while commenting on how little is understood about it. “For me the park symbolizes a continuity of identity in Tampa, which is a really important part of our local history. So, I’m grateful that this is here for that reason, but most of the tourists who come down here haven’t got a clue, you know… who’s this Marty guy?” (Alex Interview)

While the average fifth grader on a field trip, or cruise ship passenger may not practice their Cubaness with other Cubans in the park, their presence resulted in a sense of Cuba, its influential figures, and its entangled history with Tampa:

What I find quite interesting is that so many people visit the park. Especially so many kids here today, they like to bring them here. I wonder how much they know about him. Perhaps they know very little or have perhaps never heard of him unless they are kids of Cuban parents. He’s a very interesting man to study, to read him. You are amazed when you hear his speeches, and his children’s’ literature. They are truly remarkable, truly beautiful. One day I want my kids to meet him, because he was definitely inspiring. (Abraham Interview)

Abraham touches on how the park enables a connection to Cuba, and how Cubaness is transferred generationally. In wishing for his kids to come to the park one day, he reveals the necessity of visiting a place for the Cuban diaspora to reconnect with and express Cubaness.

The park as a location of Cubanéo calls Cubans to visit, audible enough to draw several a week by my estimation. On most trips to the park that were not scheduled interviews, I found
several other visitors, most of which were second or third generation Cuban-American, and shared in similar stories of how their parents or grandparents encouraged them to visit the park as a pilgrimage and affirmation of their heritage. For example, I arrived early for a scheduled visit with another participant one Friday and saw two adult siblings meandering around the park. Aleja was born in Cuba and Fernando was born in Georgia, but both identified as Cuban. They shared their reasons for visiting the park that day:

This is our first time in the park, like I mentioned our dad made us come here. I had no idea… we actually came to Busch Gardens, and we leave today back to West Palm. And our dad was like, “No, no, no, you can’t leave until you go to Ybor Square.” I asked him what it was, and he explained that it was the first Cuban Community way before Miami got the Cuban hype. And he said there’s a park for José Martí and I remember reading his books in Cuba, so I said, “ok, we’ll go.” (Aleja and Fernando Interview)

Whether visiting on one’s own accord, being directed to visit by others, or brought to the park, the visitor encounters a place that represents Cuban identity. This means the park is both a space for Cubans to visit Cuba and a place to learn what it means to be Cuban. The question of what kind of Cuba and Cuban is being represented in the park or through the visit emerges. In other words, since the visitor already accepts the park as a Cuban place, what does the visit tell the visitor about themselves and Cuba?

A Park Divided

The national symbols of Cuba: the crest, flag, and the statues of prominent Cuban figures José Martí and Antonio Maceo, make up the first 2/3 of the park. When you enter, you must pass through this section in order to reach the back third where tree shade covers the older brick paved area with benches around the back-mural wall. In this sense, the back area is separated
from the front. “Sitting in the back of the park, to me this seems almost like a closed off part of the park. It’s almost a divided park” (Alejandro Interview). In contrast to the symbols of Cubanidad in the front of the park, the back plaza area is populated by symbols of Cubanéo such as the map and poem by Martí. The mural represents the role of Paulina Pedroso as the savior of the apostle, perhaps even the mother of the Cuba. The back area is also where all of the interviews were situated and is where I and the participants spoke about our Cubaness. This is where we dialogically constituted our Cuban identities while discussing what influences it and how it impacts us. Whether from Havana in the west or Santiago de Cuba in the east, Cubanéo is predicated on the imagination of what Cuba represents for those who identify as Cuban. This “character” is based on traditional (i.e. historical) notions of what people perceive as symbols of Cuba and often those symbols of Cuba become inspirations for how to live life as a Cuban.

Figure 12: Image of author’s field notes depicting layout of Parque Amigos de José Martí.
I asked Esteban if he had ever been to the park before, and if so could her share that experience. He responded that he’d been to the park many times before, but on one occasion he organized a visit to the park with Cuban ambassadors and other prominent political figures during their trip to Tampa:

I brought Cuban officials to this park. This is where I’ve formed some of my beliefs about the seriousness of… The first time a Cuban official came here, I brought the Cuban ambassador from D.C. Three people came down here, and I was just so shocked to see how moved they were. The people of the Cuban government, the people in Cuba, they know more about this park, than the people of Tampa Florida. I just found that puzzling, how could that be? The ambassador said that one of his dreams in life was to come visit this park, and he stood there and he got emotional. So I’ve brought three ambassadors down here, high officials of the Cuban government, the deputy minister, and they all get emotional when they come here.

When you take a tour, you know the walking tours of Ybor City, when you come here, the tour guides say, “you are now entering Cuba.” That’s not just a narrative, that’s a fact. It’s not property, it’s territory, it’s sovereign land, so this belongs to Cuba. And like I said, everybody in Cuba knows about this park. It’s so amazing, and that surprised the hell out of me. And for reasons that I still don’t fully understand, why does it mean so much to them? They say it’s because Martí was here, and Fidel was here. Maybe that’s true, maybe that’s not true, but I can tell you that the Cuban officials that have come here and private Cuban citizens that come here as visitors, they come here, and you can tell by their demeanor, their body language, that this is a special moment for them. (Esteban Interview)
Esteban details the emotional impact of visiting the park for people who identify as Cuban, commenting on both their expectations and the ways in which the park is framed as a place for pilgrimage. As he shared this story, I thought about how his visits with Cuban figures, our visit together, and my visits with others are all occasions where we perform the role of tour guide. Esteban knows the physical, mental, and emotional impacts on visitors who come to the park to celebrate, honor, or affirm their cultural heritage. This is a common feature throughout several responses regarding visitor’s first impressions of the site, or why family members encouraged them to visit the park. As a place where one can convene with others and express their Cubanéo, the park offers opportunities for visitors to enact their Cubaness by guiding others through the park. In this sense, I asked others to guide me through the park so that they could perform their Cubaness, and I also offered my grounded knowledge about the park and shared with others how I experienced or interpreted the park. I and my accompanying visitors would co-construct the park through our shared talk and our embodied movements through the place. Ultimately, I and other visitors gave tours to each other as we sat in and walked around the park. While our shared identities constituted the park as Cuban and therefore each other as possessing Cubaness, the question of how do Cubans recognize other Cubans, and what are some of the ways in which they co-perform their Cubaness to carry on these less formal idiosyncrasies remains?

**Identifying (as) Cuban**

Cubanéo stems from a familiarity with the island, its traditions, and its people. Moments of Cubanéo were illustrated for me by Maricarmen during her visit to the park:

One of the things that I think is so cute, is when Cubans are like “Aye mijo, mi Corazon,” you know they’re language, they’re very embracing and warm. That’s one of the things, I can be anywhere and I can hear someone speak and I can tell they’re Cuban, versus from
some other Latin American country. Some of these mannerisms that I’ve found, these sorts of traits are very Cuban. (Maricarmen)

Although Maricarmen sought to identify a unique aspect of Cuban language or mannerisms, whether they are readily observable is not the point here. The point here is that Maricarmen, and Cubans can and do identify each other. Cubanéo is not only the social interactions between Cubans but the belief that being Cuban facilitates these interactions and distinguishes them from interactions with non-Cubans. Another visitor, Aurelia, mentioned how her family members would seek out other Cubans:

I feel like Cubans tend to be very passionate people. Like you walk into a room and you can see a group of Hispanics, and I can pick out who’s Cuban. It’s just something that clicks, I don’t know if it’s a certain look, or if it’s on a different level, but I can always tell when someone is Cuban. And it’s one of those things that when we came here, we were living in Tarpon Springs and they’re weren’t a lot of Hispanics, much less any Cubans. So, my mom had this thing that she missed Cuba so much, and she missed her mom and everything over there. So, every time she would spot a Cuban, or hear someone talking with a Cuban accent, she would chase them around and try to talk to them. Because she needed that part of her Cuban identity that she was missing. Her interactions with other Cubans… I came here at a young age, so I became more Americanized, so I’ve gotten both cultures. But my parents felt like I was missing that part of my Cuban identity, and they wanted to make sure that I had it, so they’ve been kind of over the top Cuban. Like Cubans here I feel are more Cuban than Cubans in Cuba, because they try to preserve that, and in order to do that, they tend to over exaggerate things. (Aurelia Interview)
If acting “extra” is part of identifying as Cuban when out of Cuba, how else do Cubans compensate for their lack of connection with the island and its people? Some initial answers come from visiting restaurants, bars, cigar shops, and other places operated by Cubans and specializing in Cuban food, drinks, and culture. For those that miss Cuba, these places may suffice to reenergize their Cubaness, but while Cuban places filled with Cuban people can be a beacon for some, they can also work to distance those who don’t necessarily “feel” Cuban.

As Aurelia shared her impressions of overemphasized Cubaness, I reflected back on my own past performances with family members or in Cuban places. I remember times we visited Miami when my father spoke more Spanish in the first day of vacation than they had all the year prior. He actively sought to perform his Cubaness on arrival, shouting greetings and addressing others as “compadre” (compatriot) or “comandante” (commander). The expression of these monikers boisterously celebrated their reunion. My father recalled his Cubaness to match that of our family members and their performances instructed us as visitors on how to perform Cubaness. The phenomenon of Cubanéo, expressed here as a moment of connection and instruction between Cubans, when witnessed by those who sense a lack of Cubaness in themselves can be a deterrent. In other words, some may opt to not participate in convening with other Cubans because of a lack of cultural competency. This brings about the notion of Cubanía and the desire to reconnect.

**Park as Cubanía**

Visiting the park entails stepping foot on Cuban soil. This assertion has driven many who identify as Cuban descendants to visit the park as a replacement or stand-in for traveling to Cuba. As stated prior, there are significant obstacles to visiting Cuba, political, financial, social, and familial. For my entire childhood and most my adult life, I knew of the embargo as an economic
sanction against Cuba and as a blockade on American travel. American tourism to Cuba was inexistent to me, and while I heard of people traveling to visit families or to bring relief efforts and supplies to a nation stricken by poverty and political oppression, I have no family to visit, nor considered the various legal forms, and permission slips as something I’d want to engage with. Therefore, I am exiled by the United States from visiting Cuba, or to put it another way, Cuba is exiled from my identity through the embargo. Cuba is a forbidden place. Besides, the Cuba that I want to visit, no longer exists, it is a place of ruin, the remains of Cuba are strewn across the island and any evidence of my family being there is most likely lost. Being able to drive a few miles to Ybor City and step foot on Cuban soil is a welcome substitute for navigating restrictions and chasing legal permission. All I have to do was make sure to go when the gates are open.

My father escaped Cuba to avoid being drafted into the military - he had already served in the youth army known as “pioneros.” After my grandfather died of cancer, and with the impending conscription, my grandmother decided to leave Cuba with her two children. Their departure from Cuba entailed leaving behind almost all their possessions, taking just one suitcase each of personal items. Abandoning a home, a business, and a Cadillac, they landed in Miami two days later and were granted asylum at the Freedom Tower. After a brief stay, they moved to Puerto Rico to be reunited with other family members that had made their exit earlier.

My father stepped foot into the park on December 23rd, 2015 almost 50 years after leaving Cuba. I followed, letting him lead the way, holding my three-year-old son’s hand as we entered behind him. This is how I imagined going back to Cuba, with him as my guide, my translator, my personal historian, but I have yet to persuade him to return. We stood just within the park, on the other side of the archway. Having crossed the threshold I quipped, “bienvenido a
Cuba.” He smiled and chuckled, confirming the proclamation and offering to “play along.” I sensed a quiver in his voice as he thanked me for my welcome. The adoption of the belief that he was returning unexpectedly affected him. We turned towards Martí, as my son let go of my hand and ran towards the statue. We followed him along the terracotta tiled walkway, looking left and right at the palm trees and bougainvillea plants flanking each side.

I let my father explore the space and quietly observed from a distance. He systematically went from one plaque to another, gazed at each statue, read every word, and let his eyes dance around the park. My father paid little regard to the walkway and brick plaza behind the statue, sauntering in the grass and around the planters containing soil from each of the provinces. Being the son of a Cuban migrant, the offspring of a man who at the time of leaving Cuba was a fourteen-year-old boy and who had recently lost his father, I realized then that we were both seeing Cuba from the eyes of a child. My father remembers Cuba as a place of childhood innocence that was stripped from him too early. There is unresolved trauma within my father, and a sense that he desires to maintain the last remnants of purity within his memory. The stories he’s shared about Cuba frame his childhood as free. He has expressed on numerous occasions, mostly in response to my requests of joining me in traveling to Cuba, that he has no desire to return. Perhaps witnessing Cuba in a state of disrepair would render the remains of his happy childhood lost, perhaps even altering his memories, stealing away the joyful moments of his past. I could sense that my father agreed to visit the park with me in support of this project, but also in support of my personal journey towards understanding my own Cubaness.

Stepping foot into the park offers at the very least the possibility of acting upon my desire to visit, under whatever pretense or circumstance, it is more than doing nothing, and it is an alternative to continuing to accept the restrictions of the embargo. Visiting the park is an
enactment of Cubánía. Predicated on the expression of a desire to be Cuban and an
acknowledgement of one’s lack of Cubaness, Cubánía is performed with each visit to the park.
To an extent, visiting is a convergence of one’s own admission to not being Cuban enough, in a
place that is not exactly Cuban. Just as the site is an alternative to Cuba, Cubánía is an alternative
to the consequences of assimilation.

Stepping Foot on Cuban Soil

You may be thinking; how does this make sense? The park is not Cuba, but considering
the park’s ownership (Estado Cubano) and the story of soil being imported from Cuba to the
park, the park is Cuban soil. This soil was not only imported from Cuba, but the soil that was
already in the park was transferred to Cuba. While the debate marches on as to whether the park
is Cuban property or territory, visitors expressed their beliefs as to what the park and its soil
accomplishes for them. One indication of the power in believing the park is Cuban soil is the
analogy of Cuban migration and the establishment of exiles as refugees. The wet foot/dry foot
legislation of 1995 stated that any Cuban migrant that set foot on American soil would be
granted citizenship (Bruno). Aurelia expressed this belief during her migration story. “In 2001,
when we left Cuba, we flew on a plane to the Bahamas and as soon as we landed, they took us
into a little office, and they gave us our American papers. All we had to do as children of an
American citizen was step foot on American soil (Aurelia Interview). Stepping foot in soil is
such a profound notion in Cubans that it transcends generations and the distance apart from
Cuba. “Most times I pass by the park, it’s been closed, so I would just hold onto the railing there
and sneak my foot in to “be in Cuba.” (Joséfina) Joséfina’s desire to toe touch Cuban soil
indicates the need to reaffirm Cuban identity while also acknowledging the insufficiencies in
doing so as a recourse for second and third generation Cuban-Americans. However, this does not
deter people from taking on these small acts. Conversely, a performance of Cubanía depends on these smaller acts considering the massive restrictions and regulations in visiting Cuba.

However, an alternate to this is illustrated by Joséfina in recalling her visit to Cuba:

When I went to Cuba I was struck by how little I belonged there, you know to the actual land. This is not my home, and it was weird, to look back on it now. Like I was so naïve to even think it could be, but of course! I’ve never been there, I never actually set foot there so why would I expect to feel like a return? I think we all do this weird romantic thing where we’re like, that’s our homeland. Then when I got there I was like, no it’s not. No matter where I would’ve gone, none of my family is there anymore. As hospitable as everyone was, I mean really nice, like way nicer than anybody I’ve ever experienced, still, I was an outsider. I realized my outsider status at that moment, and here I’m an outsider because we’re sort of immigrants here, but I’m also white skinned, so even among Hispanic people, they’re like, “oh you’re a gringa.” So, I just always feel like I never belong. (Joséfina Interview)

The sense of not belonging to a particular cultural identity is a driving force in trying to belong to/in a specific place. In other words, visitors identify themselves as Cuban and with Cuba through their sense of place, “the interpretive perspective and emotional reaction to an environment” (Hummon 262). This is why Joséfina sneaks her foot in when the park is closed and it is also why I have been so interested in the connection between Cubaness and Cuban place. In this sense both are lenses, but lenses require one to actually look through them, or in this case, Cubaness exists through its enactment and place exists when it is contacted. The simple act of stepping foot reaffirms her desire to be Cuban, not that she “is” Cuban, but that she feels a calling to be Cuban. Accepting that she doesn’t belong in either place (not from Cuba, not totally
American either), in the park there’s a bit of confirmation, a bit of reassurance even if its predicated on a story about soil, or an exaggeration of what property ownership means.

The act of stepping foot on Cuban soil is understood as a mean for reconnection. While believing that being in the park accomplishes something for the visitor, visitors also expressed the need for them to suspend the disbelief, to avoid thinking that the soil as just dirt.

We’re now sitting inside of Cuba. The other side of the gate is the Unites States. Martí stayed in a house here, and it’s a little piece of Cuba that you can’t find anywhere else. I mean not even a Cuban embassy somewhere else cause you can’t just walk into an embassy. I mean when the gates open here you can walk into Cuba. I feel that this park is a little piece of Cuba, even if you’re not Cuban. I realize it’s not really Cuban soil, but I mean right now, you are very connected to Cuba, you’re standing under its flag, on its soil. I mean it’s a small piece, but you are in Cuba. (Juan Interview)

Even when admitting that the claim of Cuban soil is suspect, Juan called upon the other symbols of Cubanidad and Cubanéo to help me gain the sense of being in Cuba. Taking cues from the national symbols, the locked gate, and the historical narrative about the park being bestowed to Cuba, Juan compares the park to an embassy. The difference being that an embassy entails a security apparatus to control entry, but the similarity for Juan and others is that the park and embassies are located on satellite territory – a part of Cuba, so that once you step inside, you are no longer subject to the surrounding territories laws or customs. Stepping foot into an embassy is akin to being in the representative country. In the case of the Parque Amigos de José Martí, visiting the park is the same as visiting Cuba. However, there are limits to this belief, one that a visitor attempting to express their Cubanía must contend with. Maricarmen talked about the limits of the belief in the park being Cuban soil.
I mean, yeah, it’s kind of hard to fathom, you know… that we’re actually standing on
Cuban soil. You’re here, and you see it. You’re observing it, but it’s kind of hard to
believe, you know? Just because the soil was brought here, makes it a symbolic
experience. The soil could’ve been blown away in hurricane for all we know. The fact
that imported soil from Cuba is what the park is known for, it’s one of the characteristics
of the park. The soil could be all gone to the wind, or scattered around by the chickens,
but just the knowledge that at least at one time, even if there’s a very minimal amount
that’s left now. (Maricarmen)

Alejandro also offered his suspicions about the claim of Cuban soil but made sure to remind me
that regardless of the truth to the claim, the park is still known as Cuban soil and used by visitors
in way that continually reestablishes it as such.

The park is Cuban soil, and if you notice, you have the seven original provinces here.
History states, and I don’t know the validity of the claim that dirt from the seven
provinces were brought here and planted, so I like that. I kind of like that whether it’s the
reality or not. But I think it’s so important for us to identify that this is our little piece of
the rock in the United States that’s owned by Cuba. So, when you come here you have
that sense of home knowing that it’s a park that is part of Cuba. (Alejandro Interview)

The sense of home Alejandro alludes to brings up again the connective emotions of being in a
place, but he also expressed the park as “original” and therefore more a reminder of what was
and not a part of what is Cuba.

The notion of the park being Cuban soil presents a novel way to view the cultural
division in the Cuban exile community. While some second and third generation Cuban-
Americans seek to reconnect with Cuba, others who left and vowed never to return struggle with the idea of visiting the park:

I’ve never been to this park before, but I know that it’s Cuban territory, and I know that it has soil from every region on Cuba, I think. So, for Cubans that come here it’s not just about the fact that it’s Cuban territory, it’s that it has Cuban soil, so that’s why it’s such a big deal because they’re actually stepping on the earth, the country or region that they lived in. I think the park is cathartic. For someone who hasn’t been to Cuba or hasn’t gone back to Cuba, this is like stepping into part of it. It’s not just that it’s Cuban property, it’s Cuban soil, so you’re in the place, in the earth of the country where you’re from. Especially for people that can’t go back, I think coming here would give them some kind of relief. However, I know that a few years ago my mom came here, and they did the tours, like the trolley tours. They got down and it was very emotional for her because she refuses to step foot in Cuba, so long as the Castros were in power. That was her thing, she was not going to go back and be giving money to the government. She would always try and talk my grandmother into coming when she came and try to like tell her all these things, so I know they came to this park when they did that tour. It was very emotional for her because she can’t physically go back. She can’t make herself go back to Cuba because of everything she went through, so with this she kind of like had a little bit of Cuban soil. (Aurelia Interview)

How Cuban-Americans respond to exile differs. Both the desire to return, or to never return can be expressed in the park. For those that left and chose to never return, the park operates as a sanctuary where one can “be” in Cuba without the emotional toll. Additionally, for those who have never been to Cuba, the park acts as a useful replacement and an effective alternative. The
The park is a substitution for Cuba, but this is accomplished through synecdoche and metonymy. Instead of the entire island, the park is just the soil, but this is sufficient in encapsulating what it means to be Cuban. Additionally, by encouraging visitors to interpret the park as Cuba, visiting accomplishes a sense of belonging from afar.

Finally, in regard to the park enabling or encouraging visitors to reconnect with Cuba and therefore representing Cubania, Maricarmen offered her insights on visiting the park:

The park symbolizes to me… When I found out that it was physically land from Cuba, I thought wow, that’s pretty cool. The soil from different provinces in Cuba. So, you know, A Cuban that’s visiting, or a Cuban-American can feel at least making a pilgrimage here. If you can’t make it to your home country, you at least have something here. You touch the soil and it’s from your homeland, and I think that’s incredible. Frankly, I was surprised to learn that it is still Cuban property. But I think it a place where people can come and just feel that connection that they probably can’t feel anywhere else to the same degree. You know Tampa has a lot of Cuban history and influence throughout. Tampa was built by the Cubans, Sicilians, and Spaniards, but there’s not a place where you actually know that where you are stepping in land from your home country.

(Maricarmen)

Maricarmen presents an understanding of what the park symbolizes and how that symbolism is used by visitors. While she voices some disbelief as to what the soil as a material can provide for the visitor, she notes how the park is considered linked to Cuba. She focuses on how interpreting the park as part of Cuba enables Cuban-Americans to stay connected despite the political turmoil in Cuba, between Cuba and the U.S., and the pressures of previous generations to not visit Cuba. The extent to which the belief that the park is Cuban territory and contains Cuban soil serves
both those who desire to visit Cuba but can’t, and those who vow never to return but still visit the park, it operates as a connection to Cuba.

**R**ecollecting **D**ispatched **M**emories

Considering the possibilities of stepping onto Cuban soil in the United States, there were times when visitors recalled their lives in Cuba. The memories of living in Cuba that where shared by visitors to the park mentioned specific places which contributed to the formation of the park as a uniquely Cuban space. Communal spaces, in this case a public park in Cuba, symbolize a sense of belonging; this is how a conceptual space, a sort of environmental intuition, stems from being in a specific place. One simple material object or an organization of features within the park can provoke a recollection of other similar places. The two places are connected through similarities in design, layout, and existing features, so that when a visitor steps into the park, they are prompted to recollect other places they have visited:

I remember the parks in Cuba, the entrances to the parks look like this. It’s the same architecture. They don’t have gates, they’re open, like Plazas. They do have fences around the monuments so people don’t get on them. But they made this park like every single plaza that’s in Cuba. Even the brick construction, they all look the same. This park is very similar to parks in Cuba. In Ciego de Avila they have a park dedicated to José Martí. This is how a park looks in Cuba. I mean in Cuba, they’re not going to fix up a park, they don’t even fix up houses. So, this is what it looks like, the landscape, everything. You walk in here and it’s as if you are walking into a plaza in Cuba. (Aleja and Fernando Interview)

The similarities between Parque Amigos de José Martí and other parks in Cuba was not by grand design. The history of the park illustrates its organic, communal, and emergent features
as being generated from differing and sometimes competing interests. However, as the visitors mentioned, the park does resemble other parks in Cuba, and passing of time has created further similarities. Since its establishment in 1956, the Parque Amigos de José Martí has been symbolic of Cuba during that time. Ever since, the park has tracked the changing perceptions of what it means to be an exile, a Cuban-American, and/or second or third generation. To visitors, the two places (Parque Amigos de José Martí and Cuba) are so similar that they expressed a sense of authenticity of the park, one that emerged through its synchronized deterioration with that of Cuba. In other words, the park is both a mnemonic device for what life was like in Cuba, and a symbol of living as a Cuban-American.

However similar the park is to other Cuban places; the main connection is created through the visitors’ presence in the park, their active interpretation of what the park signifies to them, and the emotional experience of being there. Although the creation of Cuban space hinges on the people within it, and how they shape its environment, a complimentary theory emerges from visiting the park. In visiting the park, the visitor performs their visit in a way that coincides with the suggestion that the park is Cuban space. In other words, one walks into the park not necessarily aware of its relation to Cuba, but with the existing knowledge of Cuba, and the identifiable “Cuban” characteristics of the park itself, the visitor bridges the two spaces, therefore making the park a little piece of Cuba. Regardless of the park’s ownership. Whether it is Cuban property or territory, these issues are not present in visiting the place itself. Rather it is the individual features and the park as a whole that portrays itself as Cuban. Indications of such are present in the Cuban flag, the Spanish text, the map of Cuba. Therefore, the park is declared, and it declares itself, as Cuban space, and the perceivable cues influence the visitor to perform in a manner that solidifies this declaration.
Visiting as Native

Being a part of Cuba means the park is a satellite territory, but it also means that to speak about the park without linking it to Cuba ranges from difficult to impossible. Visitor responses varied from the park reminding them of Cuba to the park being Cuba, and the act of visiting Cuba was a main topic of the interview script. This was purposeful for several reasons: I wanted to gauge from visitors their sense of connectedness to Cuba and whether they visited Cuba illustrated this connection. Also, I sought to extend the suggestion of the park as Cuba by asking participants to compare visiting the park to visiting Cuba. By highlighting Cuba and the park as places to perform Cubaness and places that affect the sense of Cubaness, the assumptions of what comprises Cubaness are moved to the forefront. In other words, visitors must contend with their past exile, their current conditions, and their previous choices in response to the departure from Cuba. Several visitors reminisced on their visits and why they considered it important to go. Maricarmen shared thoughts on growing up with Cuban culture but how witnessing life in Cuba gave her a greater appreciation in identifying as Cuban:

I’ve gone to Cuba three times and each time I came back feeling so proud to have Cuban blood because what I saw over there, and how their attitude, despite what they are living through, is so positive, and they will give you the shirt off their back. And I just, particularly, I guess what I’m saying is that incrementally, maybe I didn’t feel the “Cubaness” in me so much, until I made these trips to Cuba. I pretty much grew up, you know I had the Cuban heritage, but I pretty much grew up American. Culturally speaking, I felt like I grew up more in the American culture. But certainly, as I got older, I started to appreciate my Cuban heritage and it made me more and more proud to have that heritage in me because I think the Cuban people are a beautiful people, a resilient
people, a strong people, a resourceful people, a creative people that come up ways to make things work over there just to get by and live each day. (Maricarmen Interview)

The stories of compassion, resiliency and ingenuity are hallmark adjectives for Cuban culture and while they attribute these qualities to the people of Cuba, they also critique the conditions within which they live. Resiliency suggests oppression, it indicates a negative that must be endured. This is a common theme in descriptions of Cubans, and it is difficult to know more beyond it unless you feel a need to. The story of Cuba suffering has been a part of its identity since Martí lead the fight for its independence. Maricarmen’s view of Cuba is consistent with the narrative of how Cubans respond to suffering. In addition to Maricarmen’s journey in discovering her Cuban identity by visiting the island, Alejandro discussed his feeling of not knowing about his culture:

I’ve had a yearning to reconnect with Cuba all my life, but for a lot of us it was unreachable. I mean for how many years, you wouldn’t know much about Cuba. You wouldn’t hear news about Cuba, you wouldn’t watch a program about Cuba, you wouldn’t see a show about Cuba on TV, so I grew up not knowing Cuba, and always I wanted to. So, once I had the opportunity to go to Cuba, it just opened a can of emotions that I’ve never been able to reclose. I recommend every Cuban to visit. I recommend every person to go to Cuba, to see it, and to have their own opinion. Visiting is important. And when you go there, you’re not there to judge. You’re not there to compare, you’re there to share, and that’s what I think is most important. I’ve never felt like a tourist in Cuba. I go there and I feel like “this is mine, this is my land.” (Alejandro Interview)

Alejandro describes the ideal visit, one where questions are answered, meaning is found, and catharsis is achieved. Hearing his words, I try to envision what his visit was like considering how
easily he moved between feeling Cuban and being American. This is somewhat opposite of Roberto’s experience visiting Cuba where he expressed melancholy knowing that he represented the systems of oppression for Cuban people by traveling as an American. Perhaps Alejandro has the key though. It’s not about collapsing the space between Cuba and Tampa, it’s about keeping them separate so that there is space to navigate between them. In other words, I must contend with the responsibility to bridge the places. Claiming and performing Cubaness is not a means of merging the two places. Instead performing Cubaness as an American means feeling at home in both places, even if they are unrecognizable. While some visit Cuba (or the park) to feel Cuban, what Alejandro above, and Juan below accomplish in their visits is a confirmation not of their Cubaness but of their hybridity, of their Cuban-Americanness.

I’ve traveled to Cuba a few times since leaving. I had good experiences. I did both, I visited family and I also did the whole tourist thing. And I realized how American I am, but I held onto my Cubaness like you wouldn’t believe. I thought that I had to maybe borrow some Cubaness while there, but I realized I still had some in me so that’s what I hold on to. After the second or third day, I felt more Cuban. You know that flag there (Cuban flag), I felt that it was as much mine as it is theirs with one difference, I have another flag too. (Juan Interview)

Juan points towards both flags and I got the sense that he was describing the park as a hybrid place as well. This was moments before his comment about the park being Cuba and the rest of Ybor City being the United States.

All the park’s defining characteristics indicate an entanglement between the U.S. and Cuba and it is difficult to think of one without the other. While Cuban-Americans celebrate this
combination, and use it as justification for not needing to visit Cuba, others voiced their confusion as to how one could understand Cuban identity without visiting Cuba.

You can’t do this project without going to Cuba. The project is about Cuba, and there’s such a gap between the perception of Cuba and the reality of Cuba, that you need to understand both better. The only way to do that is to go there and see because you can interview all the people you want, and we all have our own agenda, we all have our own meaning, and we all have our own understanding. It could be wrong. So, this sounds to me like this is extremely serious, but it defies logic to go study a project that’s about Cuba, about Cubans, about a park that has soil from Cuba and yet you haven’t gone to Cuba. To me those things are inconsistent. (Esteban Interview).

What Estaban and others were doing with these statements is reinforcing the idea that Cuban identity can only be understood through the lens of Cuba. The “I’ve been there” statement is a coveted claim whereby crossing over the salt water surrounding the island enables the visitor to infiltrate the boundary of never having been. This occasions the construction of another boundary, one between them and those that have never been. Of the twelve participants, only two have not returned to Cuba (Abraham and Barbara), and I was the only person who has yet to visit Cuba. In other words, throughout this dissertation, I’ve claimed Cubaness, or spoken of Cubans and Cuban-Americans as groups I belong to, but I don’t share the seemingly fundamental prerequisite to claiming you belong to a certain place, having been there. A punching of a ticket, a stamping of the passport, the displaying of a souvenir, all are confirmations of the boundary; I’ve been there, you haven’t. This boundary works to state an accomplishment of “insider knowledge” for the visitor, but it also operates as a boundary for those who left and vowed never to return. The statement, “I have no interest in returning,” or the even more assertive, “you
shouldn’t go,” is predicated on, “I’ve been there, I know, you don’t.” This boundary between those who’ve experienced life on the island and those who haven’t entails further division depending on the kind of visit one embarks on.

Conclusion

Over the course of two years, and a few prior to this project, I visited the park on average once a month. Not including the field trips and walking tours, the people I invited to the park or witnessed visiting the park where there because they identified as Cuban. While these identifications differed, visiting the park resulted in a confirmation of their Cubaness. Visitors read the park as a Cuban space, they identified the more formal aspects of Cubanidad and how the layout of the park was influenced by these institutional symbols. People identified with the national heroes, admiring their personal qualities and celebrating the spirit of Cuba. Visitors also recollected previous visits to the park and having participated in some of the tumultuous events and gatherings. I witnessed individuals exploring the space and locating themselves with the stones and map, finding the places where they lived or their family is from. Finally, visitors commented on their trips to Cuba, and the way going made them feel.

Considering a visit to the park as a heuristic for understanding Cuban identity, the accounts illustrate the various ways in which Cubaness is understood and performed by both visitors and the park. A visit entails dialogue between visitors (I and the participants) as well as between the visitor and the park. Visitors identified the park as a Cuban place, and came to the park identifying as Cuban. This negotiation stemmed from the situatedness of a visit. In other words, being in the Cuban place presented an opportunity for dialogue, and there was a negotiation that occurred between how the park and the visitor constituted Cubaness. The notions of Cubaness that were established in the park have both changed and endured. Over the last sixty
years and with periodic additions and alterations, the park represents a Cuba of the past, but when people who identify as Cuban visit the park it brings this representation of Cuba into question. In dividing the different instances of Cuban identity performances into the categories of Cubanidad, Cubanéo, and Cubanía, I analyzed the notion of Cubaness according to the various influences of each. In other words, what kind of Cuban identity does the park perform, and what kind was performed by visitors in the park indicates how the park and the visitor impacted each other and how each category of Cubaness affected others.

The quotes in this chapter and the subsequent analysis of each show a complex web of interrelated influences. For instance, the Cuban flag (Cubanidad) marks the park as Cuban space and I as a visitor should feel connected to Cuba because of this symbolism (a satisfaction of Cubanía). In other instances, I heard stories of Cuba and was pressured into reconsidering how I approached this project on Cuban identity. These are conversations, which hint at the import of Cubanéo, of being with other Cubans to realize my own sense of Cubaness. However, encouraging me to visit Cuba is predicated on the Cubanía that motivated me to do this project, and being left with the lingering sense that because I haven’t visited Cuba, then I haven’t really experienced, and can’t possibly know what it means to be Cuban is the boundary I’ve struggled to breach.

Although there is a pervasive sense of inadequacy in visiting the park to accomplish being Cuban, I’d like to close this chapter by reiterating the slight distinction offered by visitors in response to visiting the park. While some considered the park Cuban space and a reminder of their own Cubaness, others commented on how the park is a symbol of the relationship between the United States and Cuba and focused on their own mediation between their Cuban and American identities. Comments such as feeling American in the US and Cuban in Cuba is an
indication that the park is both Cuba and the US, and perhaps also neither or something else entirely. Again, I return to the overlaps between Cubanidad, Cubanéo, and Cubanía and discover how the park is an overlap between the US and Cuba. The fence around the park certainly operates as a boundary, but the proximity of the two spaces must also be considered. Numerous scholars have expressed the interwoven histories of the United States and Cuba, stating that it is difficult to articulate what it means to be Cuban without noting the influence of its northern neighbor. Conversely, describing the cities of Tampa or Miami is nearly impossible without mentioning the influence of their Cuban exile communities.

Therefore, in addition to viewing the park as a Cuban place, I also consider that visitors in the park contend with their own (families) exile from Cuba, Cuba’s exile from the U.S. (embargo) and the park’s exile from Tampa (locked gate). Visiting the park entails a balance between reconnecting with a Cubaness while maintaining the exile identity by acknowledging the deeply interwoven history of the two countries. Visitors found their sense of Cubaness in the park, but their lack of Cubaness was also revealed as several expressed their worries or questions about visiting Cuba. Overall, the visitors expressed their Cubaness with confidence and assurance, as if to say to me, “I’ve figured out how to stay Cuban in America,” yet this statement was usually accompanied by an acknowledgement that they are not as Cuban as Cubans. Of course, this is an impossibility, but any declaration of identity yearns for a sense of authenticity.

In sum, the question regarding how the experience of visiting the park constitutes Cuban identity, cannot be answered through platitudes of Cubanidad, co-performances of Cubaneo, or with expressions of Cubanía. Instead, I have taken a descriptive approach in articulating the intricacies Cubaness in its various forms and how they influence each other. The symbolism within the park promotes the nationalist notions of Cubanidad and constitutes the park as
commemorative of Cuba’s history. For visitors, this is a source of pride, but also a reminder of their new identity as Cuban exiles or Cuban-American. For second or third generation Cubans the institutional aspects of the park belie the national character of Cuba. In other words, there is little connection for those who identify as Cuban with the national symbols and their want to establish a cultural connection with their past is simply not satisfied by visiting the park alone. It was through the interviews and conversations between me and other visitors that we constituted our shared Cuban identity. In this sense, the park is a site for the “curriculum of culture” whereby I and other visitors looked beyond the fence and gate or salt water and shorelines that divide the United States and Cuba. We shared what it means to be Cuban and therefore constituted our identities through dialogue and personal performances of Cubanéo. Finally, there are the ways in which the park and visitors performed Cubanía, and the perspective of the park as being Cuban soil. While I and others shared reservations about what stepping on Cuban soil can accomplish, there was a consensus that the belief in the park as Cuban territory enabled a renewal of a sense of Cubaness for visitors.
CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

Walking into the park has never felt like being in Cuba for me, but how would I know? I've never been, so I have no frame of reference, any memories to relate with, and no experiences to compare. Walking into the park has made me feel more Cuban, but this affirmation is self-granted. In other words, I have a sense of accomplishment from being in the Cuban space that is the park, looking up at the statue of Martí, studying the map on the back wall, and seeing the Cuban flag wave above. However, being locked out of the park is the most impactful reminder of my Cubaness. Again, the lock to me symbolizes the aggregate of the Embargo, the disapproval of family members towards visiting, and the acceptance that I will most likely feel less Cuban visiting Cuba than walking into the park. Through this project, I've discovered a sense of Cubaness previously unknown. I've long accepted the impossibility of Cubanidad without replicating the massive upheaval of exodus, and the Cubanía I feel continues to grow in urgency. However, I have performed my Cubaness with others, and have witnessed and felt the Cubanéo Pérez-Firmat identified.

In this chapter, I provide reflections of embarking on, conducting, and completing this project. While I want to summarize my findings, offer insights into the performance and observations of Cubaness, and reflect on the practice of this research, this chapter is meant to open up more than close down. In this chapter, I intend to lift the restrictions and difficulties in understanding and becoming Cuban, instead of providing a definitive statement on what it means
to be Cuban. This chapter first offers my reflections on conducting visits to the park with others. What did visiting the park with others who identify as Cuban entail for me and how it affected my sense of Cubaness. In this section, I also attempt to turn back on my communication with others. How did I frame the visit, the park, and Cuba? In what ways did my perceptions or constructions of them impact the participant and the interviews overall? How I frame Cuban identity is contrast with the way the park represents Cuba and Cuban identity for the visitors. In other words, the previous notions I had about Cuba influenced how I understood the park's projection of what Cuba is, and how I performed my Cubaness impacted how others performed there's and vice versa. These overlapping, competing, or complementary notions present intricacies not only in Cuban identity but in doing performance ethnographic research. I offer future directions for this specific research program as well as suggestions for how to improve my approach to performance and ethnographic research. Finally, I present the future direction of the park and the Cuban-American community in Tampa. To accomplish this, I provide detailed responses to my closing question in the interviews, "if anything, what would you change (add/delete/modify) about this park? I asked this question for two reasons: different people have shaped the park at different times, and there are proposals for restoring or altering the park with the surrounding redevelopment of Ybor City. Therefore, there is an opportunity for this project to provide a collective design for the park. Most people I interviewed showed interest in contributing to the park’s overall composition in hopes that it may represent their Cuban identity and the Cuban national character in more familiar ways.

**Revisiting**

Turning back to the arranged visits with others to the park, I face my performances of Cubaness. I've described my claims to Cubaness and how they relegate me to the struggles in
moments of Cubanéo and my enduring desire to visit Cuba as representative of Cubania. My outward expression, appearance, and overall performative choices when visiting the park were both proactive and reactive. I genuinely engaged with others as Cuban or possessing a level of Cubaness, while simultaneously adjusting my enactments according to what the park projects as Cubaness, how the participant’s received and responded to my Cubaness and the park’s projection, and finally how we mutually impacted and expanded the basic criteria of Cubaness.

Navigating the Territory

Can I speak Spanish? Yes. Am I fluent? No. In other words, my vocabulary and verb conjugation are very basic, if not humorously incoherent. During interviews, I stumbled through some questions or responses. My lack of Spanish savviness never infringed upon the conversations, and the participants facilitated my questions by either rephrasing in Spanish or appropriate translations into English. I would say that while I felt uncomfortable when my lack of Cubaness was exposed, my fellow visitors gave reassurance and encouraged me. I state this point because although somewhat risky, I made specific apparel and grooming choices that could potentially disrupt conversations. What I'm getting at here is my large beard and cadet hat.

There are several quintessential images of Cuba, both for the place and its people. El Malecon, the seaside road in Havana, is undoubtedly one of them, and so is the Spanish colonial architecture painted in colorful pastels throughout the island. Also, the classic nineteen fifties cars still cruising the streets. The images of the people, especially the traditional men's garments and hairstyles, include fedora hats, guayabera shirts, and thin mustaches also represent the Cuban national character. In documenting the park, I took photographs of the individual objects and various spaces, and within each instance are traces of attempts to recreate the punctum I felt when seeing pictures of Cuba (Barthes). Roland Barthes theorized studium and punctum as the
content of the photograph and the emotional sense the viewer gets from seeing the picture. The pictures I took of the park were more than documentation as I tried to reproduce a sense of Cuba within the park. Of course, the park also enabled this through the various symbols of Cuba (The crest, flag, map, mural, statues, tropical plants, etc.). Therefore, what I considered to be productive of a sense of Cubaness relied heavily on the symbols of Cubanidad. While the park is considered a time capsule of a pre-Castro Cuba, the nationalist symbols are still present throughout Castro’s Cuba. As detailed in Chapter 2, Jose Marti was a prominent figure during the Cuban revolution and the various factions of Cuban-Americans claim to represent the principles of Marti and vie for authority over what Marti symbolizes. Along with Marti and the various other national symbols of Cuba, in the nineteen fifties, a new style came marching west from the Sierra Maestras; drab olive-green fatigues, unkempt beards, and cadet hats - this was the look of the revolution. Che Guevara, with his black beret adorned with a single red star or Fidel with a cigar squeezed between his teeth, became symbols of the new revolution.

It was risky to show up to interviews with exiles wearing army green, having a large beard, and sometimes enjoying a cigarillo on my walk to or from the park. Some visitors, especially those who invest in the image of communism as a deterrence to visiting, commented on my attire. There was a calm curiosity behind the question, "porque te pones ese gorrito" (why do you wear that hat)? However, on another occasion, the inquiry was posed differently, "Y ese gorro de comemierda comunista" (What's up with that shit-eating communist hat)? My responses usually sought to explain that while I was aware of the iconicity behind my chosen attire and grooming, I was not attempting to align myself with one faction of Cubans over another. However, I also found myself apologizing if my appearance stirred up any negative or traumatic memories.
My look was a topic of conversation on several occasions and I want to use this admission as an explanation of some of the tensions, constraints and limits to this project overall. Wearing an iconic hat and having a large beard is part of my performance of identity overall and while I could say “I’m not a Marxist-Leninist Communist, I just like the shape of a cadet hat and the beard is just a product of laziness,” it would not be accurate. Part of my resemblance to Castro or my choice to present myself with a look that indexes revolutionary iconicity is because they are representative of the constraints placed on me from the reaction to the revolution and Cuba’s transition to socialism. From what I gathered throughout my experience being Cuban in places where few Cubans lived, visiting Miami, living in Miami, and interviewing Tampa
Cubans, most Cubans I’ve met are white performing and affluent. In other words, Cubans that left Cuba after the Castro revolution, left because they could. They were educated, skilled middle to upper class people who most likely had the means and connections necessary to immigrate to and succeed in the United States. In fact, they succeeded as a cultural group to the point where they could influence congress to enact the Helms Burton Act which wrote the Embargo into law. This is a cultural group I belong to, these are my relatives, but I do not identify with them. Instead I align myself with the social and economic equality that Castro’s revolution championed.

A limitation to this project exists within the racial and economic makeup of those I interviewed. I was unable to connect with an Afro-Cuban, so this project is missing an important demographic of Cuban identity. Furthermore, regarding social economic status, the group of participants I gathered all currently have the means to travel to Cuba. Whether they visited Cuba or not was a matter of choice as they were not limited by economic ability or political exile. When I see Paulina Pedroso, the Afro-Cuban woman who ran the boarding house, saved Martí from death and fought tirelessly for civil and worker rights, represented in the park behind Martí or Maceo I see the limits of this project in not interviewing an Afro-Cuban. Although the park contains symbols of the Afro-Cuban contributions to Cuba, this project failed at including current Afro-Cuban voices regarding Cubaness and Cuban identity. Therefore, this project is an incomplete representation of Cubaness at best, and a white-washing at worst.

Finally, I acknowledge the difficulty in speaking Spanish and my appearance as to how they affected the interviews overall. Although almost all the conversations during visits were in English, the requirement to quickly code switch and then sometimes respond in kind were times that dialogically constituted me as an outsider – the not quite Cuban. However, this was merely a
confirmation of my limited claim to being Cuban: the blood of my ancestors and my aspiration for a connection to Cuba. In other words, when I spoke Spanish, it was my participation in the practice of Cubaness. The participants may have thought, "he's trying." Since I arranged the visits and asked questions, I expressed my Cubanía and performed Cubanéo (to whatever degree of competency) to compliment theirs.

Secondly, my appearance constituted me in a certain way for others. While some thought nothing of my choices, others made overt statements about it. Overall, they were mainly comments about how my appearance hinted towards Fidel or slightly reminded them of Fidel, but this did impact the interview. Whether I was identified as the kind of Cuban that aligns with the ruling government of Cuba, the ideology of communism, or even the atrocities of a dictatorship, my dress was part of the situation within which we (the participant and I) visited the park. In addition to how others perceived me, are my impressions of how they presented their Cubaness.

**Meeting the People**

The older women I interviewed (Alex, Barbara, and Maricarmen) all presented themselves as family-oriented, extremely compassionate, and assertive in their positions regarding Cuba. While Maricarmen and Alex have traveled to, and advocate for a normalization of relations with Cuba, Barbara was staunchly opposed to any notion of visiting Cuba. Interviewing Barbara was difficult. Not only did she call me out on my hat and beard, but the way she described Cuba in the present was so disparaging, which made me question how she knew of the conditions. Her responses certainly expanded the variety of Cuban identity for this project, but they also made me want to visit Cuba even more, to see it for myself. Alex and Maricarmen's responses about Cuba focused on their family history and relatives that still live
there, the comradery they felt there, and the religious connections and experiences they had while visiting.

The older men I interviewed (Roberto, Juan, Alejandro, and Esteban) embodied a certain level of machismo confidence in their statements and demeanor. Alejandro and Juan focused on the cultural pride that stems from identifying as Cuban and stated their appreciation in me doing this project. Juan was exceptionally friendly and outgoing, and I found myself connecting with both his and Alejandro's stories of growing up in places in the United States where few if any other Cubans lived. Alejandro stayed standing for the duration of the interview, a sign that he spends most of his day on his feet for work. Both Esteban and Roberto toed the line about human rights abuses existing in countries other than Cuba, and how the United States maintains ties with them. I mention this to admit an inequity within the group of participants I invited to the park. I tried for several months to arrange a visit to the park with someone from Casa Cuba, the

Figure 14: Image of operating hours and contact info sign at Parque Amigos de José Martí.
organization that claims to maintain the park. Casa Cuba is the Cuban Historical and Cultural Society, and its disconnected number is listed on the gates of the park. I tried emailing and calling members of Casa Cuba, and all either did not respond or declined to visit the park. I am disappointed that they chose not to engage my project or provide their position on what the park means to Cuban-Americans. Then again, they don't have to; they have the key.

Although no one from Casa Cuba participated in this study, I attempted to fairly represent how they view the history of the park, the contextual factors of Cuban American relations, their specific position on Cuba, the Embargo, and Cuban-American identity within this dissertation. There is also the acknowledgment that this dissertation can't possibly be complete, only as comprehensive as the limited number of participants and the time allotted to visit would allow. Although unfortunately excluded from this study, Casa Cuba's position on Cuban American relations is not unique, and it tends to complicate and even at times deny the cultural exchange between Cubans, Cuban-Americans, or Americans in general. This position will not die off with the older generation of Cuban-Americans as the trauma of exile is not only inherited but learned. However, the younger participants to this study focused more on the cultural connection and less on the political conflicts of the past.

Aleja, Daniel, Aurelia, and Abraham all shared a deep connection with Cuba. While most have traveled back to Cuba since leaving, only Abraham has yet to. However, Abraham expressed that he wants to visit, just not yet. Joséfina was the only younger participant that was not born in Cuba, so her visit was a reminder of her lack of Cubaness, rather than an affirmation of it – although both are possible. The main reason why I categorized the participants here is to point out that the younger generation that identifies as Cuban tends to accept the political turmoil
of the past but rarely focus on it as part of their identity. In other words, they do not make the
same assumptive connections that if you want to visit Cuba, then you are communist, or if you
don't want to visit, then you are a champion of human rights.

Furthermore, the responses provided by younger visitors stressed the importance of
exploring one's Cubaness, expressing it, and affirming it. They not only saw the park as a
meaningful cultural site but continually broadened their lens to relate to how the park framed
Cuban-American relations. Although I began asking for suggestions of what to change in the
park because of the construction around it, due to the younger participants' desire to reframe
Cuban American relations beyond politics, I found their responses more intuitive of what the
original intent of the park was. Without follow-up interviews it was impossible to delve deeper
into how they perceived the park this way or why, but this is an area for future investigation. I
consider this an important aspect of continuing this research because the park will be inherited
by the proceeding generations of Cuban-Americans. While I take pride in doing this project and
exploring Cubaness, I am but a small contribution to understanding how Cubaness is performed
and shapes what the park means, but as with all places, this park will be left to the next
generation of Cuban-Americans. In this next section, I detail how the park has evolved as a
cultural site through tourism. I offer exerts of visitor responses regarding the park's resemblance
to Cuba, how it invokes memories of the past, and what will become of the park in the face of
surrounding construction and through proposed renovations.

**What's to Come of the Park?**

In 1965, the city announced it would begin a program of walking tours to historical sites
throughout the city - the José Martí park was one of those locations (Gorham). The tours capture
the struggles of the Cuban community and consider the park to be a unique place, suggesting its
metonymic powers. Still, the tour guides also attempt to bring closure to the matter of property ownership, and permanence to the idea that Tampa Cubans are defined by their political stance against Fidel Castro. However, that matter is far from settled considering the historical precedence of strong relational ties to Cuba. With declining investment in labor unions and a diminished economy of "Cuban" goods made in Tampa that coincided with the new wave of Cuban immigrants, the relationship between Tampa and Cuba remains an integral aspect of the Tampa Cuban community's identity. However, the long and storied battle over who owns the park, or is allowed in the park, has subsided. Newspaper articles about the usual wreath-laying ceremonies on Martí's birthday are rare, and perhaps the services are discontinued. Of the few articles written since the turn of the millennium, most returned to the idea that the park symbolized the Tampa Cuban relation more than Martí's vision of a free Cuba, which coincides with President Obama's declaration of a path to normalized relations with Cuba. Some of the staunch Anti-Castro leaders of the Cuban Historical and Cultural Club had a change of heart and adopted a more global perspective on diplomacy. With the changing winds of Cuban American relations came the suggestion that the park needed renovation, but the reasons for this were far more economic than political. A developer purchased the city block where the Parque Amigos de José Martí is located, and the area surrounding the park is being turned into commercial and residential buildings. The new construction casts a shadow upon the park, both physically and symbolically. The park looks old and ill-kept next to the rigid lines, large windows, and colorful patterns of the condominiums behind it.

The developer of the property proposed renovating the park, including a large donation from them to cover the costs. The original plan was ambitious, calling for the back mural wall and plaza area to be demolished, the statue of Martí to be moved forward and more central in the
park, and the other figures and features to be transferred to the corners, and the walkway leading from the gates to the statue be replaced with one that circles the property. The proposal gained mix responses. While some commended the more classic park design resembling traditional parks in Cuba, others opposed the idea altogether, claiming that such extensive renovation would erase the history of the park. Yet others challenged the developer's intentions, stating that the reason for the proposal was to increase the property value of the condominiums behind the park. To satisfy the concerns, a second proposal to repair the back-mural wall, which is currently leaning precariously into the alleyway between the park and the condominiums was submitted. Within the conversation about the proposed renovations are the arguments as to what will be included in the park. In other words, what will the park represent as a Cuban place? This brings up the complexities of the park being Cuban property, which influences how a visit to the park is performed. However, even with this far more modest proposal, there are still objections to doing anything to the park without approval from the Tampa Cuban community at large. In other words, the blessing of one faction of Tampa-Cubans isn't enough, not considering the history of conflict in the park.

Voices in the Park

With the construction around the park and the redevelopment of Ybor City, proposals for a redesign of the park have circulated. Alejandro, the real estate developer I interviewed, is currently constructing the building directly south of the park within the same city block. The three-story building sits across the alleyway from the back mural of the park. The top two floors of the building are condominiums, so his interest in the condition of the park stems from more than just a personal sense of pride in his Cuban heritage. He is most likely also concerned with property value and the possibility of a more open park amounting to an amenity for residents.
Alejandro offered his construction services in addition to $60,000 of funding for improvements. He submitted plans for a complete redesign of the park and offered to pay for the construction, but reception was mixed, and without approval from the park steward's, he can't do anything to improve the park.

While Alejandro maintains that the park will focus on the life and contributions of José Martí, the Tampa Cuban community cannot agree on what should be done. The only thing they agreed on was their mutual rejection of the original proposal. The project was altered to only include some structural reinforcing of the back wall, which is in desperate need of repair, but even this modest proposal has been met with contention. Several of the participants knew of the proposal and had their own reservations of the developer’s intent. The very act of suggesting changes to the park brings up the questions, what does it mean and for whom? The answers change depending on who you ask, so there is no clear consensus, leaving the park in limbo.

My Cuba

Considering the current proposals to update or change the park, adding to this the documented struggles over who the park is for and what it represents, and combining it with what this project argues regarding the complexity of Cuban identity, what the park will become depends entirely on how visitors experience it. Therefore, each interview visit to the park ended with a question regarding the park's future. I asked, "what would you change, add, delete, alter, modify or leave as is?" I tried to ask this question without implying that something needed to be changed, and some even responded by saying they wouldn't change anything about the park. Still, others shared their thoughts on how a few changes to the park could represent their Cubaness better.
Just aesthetically, I wish they would make it a little happier. It's little drab right now. Except for this back part, that seems more representative of the Cuban landscape and its cooler. If there's something that can be done to make the austerity of that, like make it more welcoming, I guess. But I don't know, maybe that'll mess with the whole dichotomy thing, the national thing and then the little grove back here. Maybe if it were less austere, people would want to come here more. (Joséfina Interview)

While Joséfina focused on the differences between the Cubanidad and Cubanéo of the park by highlighting what Alejandro had observed about the dividedness of the park, these are two different but related interpretations. Alejandro was speaking more about the various factions of Cubans and how they've quarreled for access to the park. However, Joséfina wants to minimize the nationalist aspects of Cuba within the park and make it more of a social space rather than a monument to its heroes.

It's sort of a mixture of a ramble style park, and the more formal, like official architecture. And maybe that's one of the reasons why I never hung out here in the shade, was cause I never made it past the statue, it's kind of an intimidation thing. Maybe that's why people, I don't see people hanging out here very often. Most people do what they did, and that's always what I did. They came in, did a little walk around, and then left. I mean, there's a weird thing about sitting back here. I like it now more that I've done it, but it feels strange (Joséfina Interview).

Admittedly, it's almost reassuring to know that the arranged visits brought about new experiences for visitors, especially those who had previously been to the park. While it was not part of any initial plan, having visitors sit with me in the back of the park for the first half of the
interview meant that we would occupy the park in a less usual spot and for a more extended period than the average visit.

However, to visit, you must first have access to the park. Alex offered her thoughts on visiting Cuba and the park over the last few decades, and the one enduring reminder of being an exile.

The one feature that sticks out to me the most in this park is the lock. I'd leave the gate, but not the lock. I think it should be open. I don't see the point. We have a lot of public parks; I grew up next to a public park. There are no locks on our parks! What's the deal? I know they made an excuse that there had been vandalism, but I just don't buy it. He's standing in every park in Cuba, and I don't know. I don't think there's any danger, and that was just an excuse to claim this territory as belonging to the exile community. (Alex interview)

Figure 14: Image of padlock and chain on entry gate to Parque Amigos de José Martí.
Others noticed and even fixated on the lock as well, and most described it as an obstacle that kept them from visiting the park. There are some infamous cases of individuals who went so far as to use bolt cutters to remove the locks and gain access, but none were verifiable. However, Joséfina had a different approach to the lock.

I kind of like that it's locked. It feels like a secret garden. I always kind of liked putting my hand on the gate and putting my foot in. The boundary is important. I think not being allowed in the park makes it more real and more accurate too. Especially because it's technically Cuban soil, if it didn't have a boundary, it wouldn't make sense. I guess most people don't like gates, but I think it's cool that you can't get in all the time. And that you have to follow the rules to get in here.

The opposing views demonstrate the struggle in identifying as Cuban or Cuban-American. On the one hand, there is a sense of pride in being Cuban that stems from the mutual influence between Cuba and certain U.S. cities (Tampa, Key West, New York, and Miami) and the global contributions of the Cuban community. For example, in response to the recent Novel Coronavirus epidemic, Cuba sent doctors to some of the most affected areas such as northern Italy. This is related to Abraham's discussion about the exportation of culture.

The Cuban government exports doctors, and it was a way to make Cuba more present in the exterior. Investment in cultural markers should be credited to the Cuban government, but what I see is that they use this progress to produce a certain vision of Cuban progress that was convenient to have in the exterior. But the vision in many respects is not an accurate portrait of Cuba. The state of medical or healthcare in Cuba is a disaster. People are having many shortages of medicine, going through very difficult situations.
you explain that when you know that Cuba has exported so many doctors overseas, and medicines that they have created? It's a bit contradictory.

Abraham is commenting on the governmental interest in supporting international humanitarian efforts but at the expense of national healthcare. However, the contradiction goes beyond Cuba, and many Cuban-Americans must deal with the incompatibilities of wanting to maintain their Cubaness while also assimilating to America. There is, as an ambivalence that stems from these difficult negotiations. Cooper, Edsall, Riviera, Chaitin, and J.P. Linstroth discuss how the generational differences between Cuban-Americans lead to intricate, nuanced, and at times contradictory forms of Cuban identity (Cooper et al.) An example of how the variation of identities create contested and conflicting notions of Cubaness, Barbara offered her thoughts on how the park could better represent the Cuban-American community.

I think that the park should include a tribute to people who lost their lives trying to come here. The rafters. I think it stands for the freedom that José Martí envisioned. And I think it would be a good idea to erect something that pays tribute to that immigrant that came here and risked their lives to be free. What the people who leave Cuba on a raft go through and feel is important. What a testament to freedom to hear about how those people live and what they do to come here, they risk it all, and so I think that would be an amazing testament to José Martí. (Barbara Interview)

While the conditions in Cuba that Barbara escaped were dire, her suggestion negates the Cubanidad present in the park. Instead of praising the heroes of Cuba's past, Barbara prefers the park to represent the struggle and sacrifice of Cuban exiles trying to leave. In this sense, she wants the park to be a symbol of the departure from Cuba, marking specifically those who lost their lives trying to escape. Would this detract from the park honoring Cuban heroes or
representing the nostalgic paradise the island once was? How would this addition to the park affect the symbolism already within it?

Barbara was not the only person to offer a contemporary view of Cuba. Several others commented on how the map is stuck in time and does not correctly reflect the Cuba of today. While Barbara wants the park to represent the severing of the Cuban-American connection, Joséfina suggested the park serving the current iterations of that connection.

I noticed that different pieces of the park came at different times, and I think we should add something about now, about the Cuban-American relationship now, but then the question becomes, what is that? I do think that adding is part of the tradition of this place, but what do you add is going to be a point of contention for people. I feel like we ignore the Cubans that are still there. Like there's a hierarchy of Cubans and people that came later and seen as below the people who came earlier, and there's also a racial hierarchy in Cubans. If there's something, we could do to be more inclusive, like the variety of Cubans. Not just race/class, it's the time period here is kind of flat. Bring in second-generation people, like something that represents what Cuba has become under Castro. I don't think you can just ignore Castro's influence on Cuba because the people are still there. Whether you agree or disagree with the government, the people are not represented here. This should be a memorial to them too, they're still there, and fighting, or not fighting, but they're still there (Joséfina Interview).

Where one suggestion seeks to mark the separation between Cuba and the United States, another proposal aims to honor the enduring connection between the two places (Tampa and Cuba). Tampa Cubans have remained connected to Cuba as evidence of numerous recent visits suggests, but the park does not express this. Instead it is both physically and temporally cut off. Not only
has Cuba been exiled from the U.S. through the blockade, but Cubans have been exiled from Cuba, whether by governmental force, a lack of economic opportunity, or access to a livelihood. Additionally, the park has been exiled from Tampa with the implementation of the lock on the gate. Finally, the park has been exiled from Cuba through the concerted effort to have it remain a symbol of Cuba's past rather than present. Maricarmen offered these thoughts about how the park represents the history of Cuba and Tampa

All history has it's good, it's bad, and it's ugly. If somebody didn't write down about the atrocities that occurred, if it's not told, it's forgotten. So perhaps this park should include some of the more recent history and events that have made this park so contentious. How it could be portrayed or displayed, I don't know, but what this park has engendered or provoked in regard to emotions would give more completeness to the story. It may be a symbol of the relationship with Cuba or the lack thereof, and both parts should be included in regard to history (Maricarmen Interview).

Although Maricarmen couldn't offer a vision of what the park would look like or how the new arrangement would encapsulate her suggestion, it is a prescient critique of how the park has ceased to represent the present state of Cuba and the current values of the Tampa Cuban culture.

Alternatively, Aleja and Daniel offered this response to the proposal to renovate the park

The thing about this park is that this is how a park looks in Cuba. So, if this park is redeveloped and made into a fancy park, then Cubans won't identify with it. I mean in Cuba, they're not going to fix up a park, they don't even fix up houses. So, this is what it looks like, the landscape, everything. I'm sure the developer has a good heart in making it prettier, but it's like what Daniel said, you walk in here, and it's as if you are walking into a plaza in Cuba. (Aleja and Daniel Interview)
Whether to renovate the park or not, the desire for it to represent Cuba exists in all suggestions or proposals and reflects why it was initially established. However, in formulating how the park represents Cuba, the park also reflects how Tampa views Cuba.

**My Tampa**

The connection between Cuba and Tampa is most readily identifiable by the flags of the two countries waving in the park. However, the relationship expressed by visitors falls more within the category of Cubano and Cubanía than Cubaniad. In other words, it is the socialization with other Cubans, and the desire to visit Cuba or to reconnect with Cubaness that ties the park to Cuba. Not just the flags, crests, and maps. Considering this, Maricarmen offered thoughts on why the park (the Pedroso boarding house) is vital to both Tampa and Cuba, and how the park can symbolize this better.

One thing I would add to the park would be some kind of image of the original structure that was here. Because one of the ideas was for that structure to be made into a museum in honor of José Martí, but since the building was in such disrepair, it couldn't be salvaged. Yes, there's a marker there, but we are visual people, so I think it would be a nice thing to have, like an enclosed replica, or at minimum a photograph of it, and whatever images of the Pedrosos. That would be one thing that could be added. It was because of them that Martí felt so comfortable coming to Tampa, and of course, they helped him recuperate from the attack. She was like a second mother to him. I think Martí made like twenty-two visits to Tampa, and wrote the main tenets of the revolution, "El Partido Revolucion Cubano." So, you wonder, if that connection hadn't been made, would the park still be here? I think, a little bit more of that history, and a little bit more history of his visits here. The fact that he gave two of his most famous speeches here in
Ybor City. Maybe even have copies of those speeches, something that would tie in more what this actual, original space was, and the connection and reason why Martí came to this city so often (Maricarmen Interview).

I share in Maricarmen's vision of the park symbolizing Pedroso's contributions towards Cuban independence and imagine a park that honors the past by representing what was there (the boarding house). Consider the proposal of a partial structure resembling the boarding house. This would allow for placement of Martí within it rather than on a pedestal like every other memorial. The plaque reads that "Martí's room remained lighted until late at night, and at times, in the silence, the scratching of his pen could be heard" (Plaque). I imagine a partial structure within which a sculpture of Martí would be sitting at a desk to represent the toll and work of fighting for independence. Several visitors had expressed how tragic or even ridiculous Martí’s death was on the battlefield. He was a poet, writer, and speaker, not a soldier. While the traditional pose of Marti honors his stature as a forefather of Cuba, it celebrates his contributions to Cuba, but not Cuban contributions to Tampa.

Considering the park's establishment and bestowal to the Cuban government as a token of the Tampa Cuban connection, the park resembles a Cuban nationalist monument more than an international partnership. The blockade formally severed this connection. Still, the radii of damage stretch out to include such notions as the park belonging to only the small faction of Cubans that identify as anti-Castro and pro-Embargo. But regardless of political affiliation or ideological orientation, since the park is Cuban property in American territory, there is a desire for the park to more clearly express the social connection between Tampa and Cuba rather than the political division. Juan offered this insight into what he considers the park and other aspects of Hispanic or Latin American life in the United States.
It's important for other people to know how important Cubans are to Tampa. I mean, I don't want anything to be erased. I realize it's not really Cuban soil, so if it has to move, I'm ok with that, but it should be bigger. We should expand the park, we owe that to Cuba and its people. I'd like to see any renovation to the park to make an effort to let people know that the Cuban contribution is bigger than what you think. I mean I want to say this about all Latin American countries. Our contributions are greater than we get credit for.

(Juan Interview)

Juan here speaks of both the lack of acknowledgment of Latin American contributions to the United States and the world, but also sees the park as an opportunity to work towards rectifying this inadequacy. While he admits to some of the artifices about the park's material makeup, his point about paying greater tribute is not only a claim about the park but a claim about Cuban identity as a whole. Considering the history of Cuban identity as originating from beyond its borders, and the large Cuban-American populations and rich Cuban culture that exist in places like Tampa, Miami, and New York, Juan's desire for greater representation is a response to the level of assimilation that has occurred over the last sixty years. For Barbara and other exiles that left and vowed never to return, there is perhaps a pall for them regarding their Cuban identity. Identifying as Cuban relates one to the abhorrent conditions from which they escaped. No wonder they are so willing to claim their Americanness, but this comes at a price. One that Juan is warning against. Assimilation can mean erasure.

My Cuban

As stated in the conclusion of Chapter four, while the park was initially designed to represent the connection between Tampa and Cuba, several visitors saw it as representative of their Cuban-Americanness, or to put it another way, their transnational Cubaness. The question
Here is, how is this represented in the park or enacted by the visitors? Maricarmen gleaned at this in the following passage during our visit.

I think the park is the blood of the Cuban people, in many ways. Not only the blood that was shed in the revolutionary movements but even the most recent. It's a mixture of that memory, and a reminder of the history of Cuba, the unrest, and the unstable governments, and revolutions. I think the park symbolizes, maybe not in obvious ways, that blood that runs through all parts of Cuba. (Maricarmen Interview)

Maricarmen acknowledges the same sacrifice Barbara spoke of in honoring those who lost their lives escaping Cuba, but she speaks of breath and blood from a broader timeline. To look back on the history of Cuba is to trace conflicts, both external and internal. From the struggle towards independence to the unfortunate, even exploitative economic conditions with the United States, to the hardship of the last sixty years under Fidel Castro, the history of Cuba is without exaggeration, written in blood. But what Maricarmen shares is not sanguinary. Instead, she views blood as an inheritance. Once Cuban exiles trace their identity back to Cuba, even if not to claim themselves Cuban but instead simply to know about their heritage, they are claiming a blood relation. Maricarmen here invokes the belief that trauma, pain, glory, and pride are passed down through DNA. Regardless of one's current place, or their mixed ethnicity, to be Cuban means to have some sort of essence within them, or, more specifically, their blood. I too rely on and have leveraged this blood relation in conducting this project, and as stated before, this is my main claim to identifying as Cuban-American, but there is more.

I arrived at this project because blood wasn’t enough. There were questions left unanswered. Jose Esteban Muñoz in his analysis of Carmelita Tropicana’s performance of Pingalito points out that “second and third generation Cuban-Americans who have never seen the
island have to depend on hyperbolic renditions of their homeland…[they] have to juggle, decipher, and translate propaganda and anecdotal evidence in order to “know” their native land (Muñoz 133). I walk into the park to do the work of unearthing remains, tracing roots, and excavating meaning. I’ve heard the stories and accepted the excuses or reasons to not travel; I’ve even accepted that since going may not accomplish the catharsis I would hope for, that perhaps going isn’t that important. If visiting Cuba still doesn’t guarantee access to understanding, embodying and performing Cubaness, then it starts to resemble a vacation to any other Latin-American or Caribbean country. Although this project started with the desire to visit Cuba as my performance of Cubaness, it unintentionally privileged place over person. In other words, I envisioned my sense of Cubaness as something I would receive from the place, rather than something I needed to co-construct with it.

The co-constitutive aspects of identity performances mean that they are both projections and reflections. For example, I walk into a Cuban restaurant in Tampa to order a meal.

Server: Hola, como estas?

Me: Hi I’d like to order a Cuban sandwich please.

Server: Regular o especial?

Me: What’s the special?

Server: Es mas grande.

Me: Special then.

Server: Para aquí o se lo va a llevar?

Me: To go please.

The server can tell I speak Spanish because I am responding appropriately, and my refusal to respond in Spanish indicates my lack of interest in sharing a moment of Cubaneo with her, rather
than an inability to do so. It’s difficult to admit this after sharing how profoundly important its been for me to gain access to Cubaness. However, the realization that Cubaness cannot be possessed, only expressed moved me to reconsider my responses to other Cubans and my responsibility to Cubaness. In other words, I arrived at an understanding that my embodiment of Cubaness requires it be performed. Therefore, in order to gain access to Cuba, the park, and other Cubans, I needed to start proclaiming my Cubaness.

When I say, I am Cuban, I am first and foremost speaking of the past. I am attempting to place myself within the cultural identity that has endured over a century of political turmoil, both domestic and international. Remember that much of what influenced Cuba's independence came from Tampa, Key West, and New York, and Miami is the center of influence on the Cuban blockade. Being Cuban means that part of my identity is rooted in the U.S., making the claim Cuban-American not just a combination of places and heritages, but mitigation of the damages inflicted by the conflict between them.

When I say, I am Cuban, I am bringing forth these notions of resiliency, ingenuity, and compassion that Maricarmen listed. I attempt to associate myself with the influential figures of Cuba's past. I state my admiration for the passion of Martí, the boldness of Maceo and the bravery of Pedroso, and in turn, want to be associated with those qualities. I am also declaring a competency in relating to other Cubans, that I can effortlessly enact the mannerisms and idiosyncrasies. That I participate in, contribute to, and enjoy the traditions or rituals that define Cuban culture wherever they happen to occur.

When I say, I am Cuban, I am revealing my desire to maintain a connection with the place of my past. This connection is genetic, so in part a claim to familial ties, but also an instinctual bond. Second and third-generation Cubans want to visit Cuba for more reason that
just forbidden curiosity. Claiming to be Cuban reaffirms one's own identity as well as admits, through the hyphen of exile and migration, that Cubaness requires proclamation. The fragility of claims to Cubaness for those outside of Cuba is matched by the veracity of the Cuban exile community to make such claims. In a sense, this is more than ambivalence; it is intense duality.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this project, I have used a visit to the park to articulate how Cubaness is conceived, understood, and performed by visitors, and how it is reflected in the places that symbolize Cuba and Cuban identity. Through descriptive accounts of my and others visits to the Parque Amigos de José Martí, the varying levels of Cubaness were identified, and the ways in which they overlap and impact each other were explored. The undertows of nationalism and patriotism, and the history of exile and assimilation, have been considered here as factors within the formulation of Cuban identity. The places that Cuban-Americans occupy and move through provide a sense of grounding, but so too does the perception of Cuba as a place they came from.

For those that left, whether they returned to visit or not, their experiences in Cuba and the memories of their time there facilitate their understanding of who they were and who they have become. The transition, whether troubling or traumatic enabled Cuban exiles to reimagine who they are and how they identify as Cuban. In contrast, their children or grandchildren where born into a previously established combination of the old and new. Identity and Cubaness is a different kind of negotiation for second and third generation Cuban-Americans that need to discover or explore the past rather than remember it. For those, like me, Cubania becomes the hallmark of Cubaness and the desire to belong is a unique challenge. The exile or migrant labels and the hyphenated identity of Cuban-American are not suited for those born in the new location. Consider the boundary drawn by Cuban exiles and migrants in stating that their offspring are not
Cuban at all, instead the labels Hispanic or Latine are more accurate. However, this does little to satisfy Cubanía since it erases rather than claims the specific tie to a place. The impact of the terms Hispanic or Latine compresses several Caribbean, Central and South American nationalities into one aggregate lump, an enormous yet amorphous territory. Therefore, in addition to the rejection of Cuba by their ancestors and the restriction of travel to Cuba by U.S. authorities, the label Cuban-American is replaced by the generalization of cultural identities throughout Latin American countries.

My point here is the claim to Hispanic or Latine identity is both readily achieved and rarely questioned, and the claim to being Cuban is reserved for those currently living on the island. However, a claim to Cubaness varies in definition and is confounded by the thrust of history, political and ideological struggles, migration and assimilation, and lastly the personal desire or lack thereof to endeavor in making such claims. In other words, of all the possible labels, Cubaness requires an effort towards purposeful development; therefore, it is a performance. Cuban-Americans that define themselves through their Cubanidad are simultaneously claiming and rejecting their Cubaness, knowing full well that their proclamation is of the past and the present. To claim Cubanidad as a Cuban-American is to admit that one was but no longer is Cuban. However, the practice of Cubanéo and the sense of Cubanía compel the individual to repeatedly proclaim their Cubaness through interactions with others or expressions of their desire to reconnect with their past. In comparison, for Cuban-Americans, Cubanidad is a performance of burying the past, but for Hispanic or Latine Americans (i.e. descendants of Cubans) the performance of Cubanía is an uprooting of the past.

Exploring, discovering, and reconnecting are aspects of Cubanía. Performances of Cubanéo facilitate the search for belonging, but visiting the place where one’s family came from
or the spaces established in the places they moved to are quintessential ways in which the sense of Cubanía is satisfied. In other words, a visit is an enactment of the desire to belong, and a purposeful action to fulfill a sense of Cubaness. The cultural places established in migrant communities, especially the Cuban enclaves of Miami or Tampa, are the only recourse for second and third generation Cuban-Americans who can’t travel to Cuba. Since Parque Amigos de José Martí is considered Cuban territory in the United States, it presents a unique opportunity for those seeking to satiate their desire to reconnect.

Although Cuban exile, Cuban migrant, American citizen, Hispanic and Latine, were analyzed through this project, there remains the challenge of traversing the boundaries that come with them. For those that still wonder why I chose to do this project without going to Cuba, I’m not done yet, and a trip is certainly in the future. However, the main reason for doing this project from afar was because of the transnational Cuban identity José Martí created in his "With All, and for the Good of All." I wanted to highlight how the separation from a place of origin presents challenges in formulating and maintaining a sense of belonging. By either traveling back, setting up new places elsewhere, or finding others who similarly identify with a culture, the need to reconnect or stay connected is an enduring human trait. The Parque Amigos de José Martí should continue to symbolize the relationship between the United States and Cuba, but there is an opportunity for an emphasis to be placed within the park regarding its ability to traverse the gap between the two nations and provide a sense of belonging to those who search for meaning within their Cubaness.
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APPENDICES
Appendix 1: IRB Letter of Approval

April 26, 2018

Adolfo Lagomasino
Communication
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00032098
Title: A Visit to Cuba

Study Approval Period: 4/25/2018 to 4/25/2019

Dear Mr. Lagomasino:

On 4/25/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
Pro00032098_Version1_041818.docx

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Adult Consent_Version1_042318.pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:
(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board
Appendix 2: Sample Recruitment Email

Dear,

My name is Adolfo Lagomasino and I am a doctoral candidate in the Communication department at the University of South Florida. I am conducting a research study (Pro00032098) on Cuban cultural identity and the relationship between Cuban-Americans and Cuba. I am writing to ask for your voluntary participation in this study. I would like to invite you to visit the Parque Amigos de José Martí (1303 E 8TH AVE, TAMPA, FL.) with me. This visit will entail a recorded interview where I will ask you a few questions regarding your Cuban identity and your relationship to Cuba. You will also have an opportunity to share your understanding of the Parque Amigos de José Martí with me. Your input as someone with ties to Cuba would greatly benefit this project and help contribute to the existing scholarship regarding Cuban diasporic experience, and cultural place and practices. The interview will be no more than an hour long.

The Parque Amigos de José Martí is open from 8:30am-1:30pm, Monday-Friday, so our visit will need to be during these times. Please let me if you would like to participate in this study and when you would be able to visit the park. My contact information is:

Email: Lagomasino@mail.usf.edu
Phone/Text: 305-801-5535

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Adolfo Lagomasino
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Communication
University of South Florida
Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro # 00032098

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. [We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study]. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:
A Visit to Cuba
The person who is in charge of this research study is Adolfo Lagomasino. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. [He is being guided in this research by Christopher McRae, Ph.D.].

The research will be conducted at Parque Amigos de José Martí - 1303 E 8TH AVE, TAMP

Purpose of the study
This project provides insight into Cuban cultural identity and the relationship between Cuban-Americans and Cuba.

Why are you being asked to take part?
We are asking you to take part in this research study because you either identify as Cuban, or have been identified as a stakeholder of the Parque Amigos de José Martí.

Study Procedures:
If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- Answer questions regarding how you identify as Cuban and what your relationship to Cuba is.
- Describe your visit to the park, what you notice, what the park means to you, and how you perceive it regarding Cuban cultural identity.
- Have your responses to the interview questions recorded on an audio recording device.
• Be asked to identify what features of the park you notice most so that I may take pictures of it. These pictures may be included in the final report as illustrations of your description of the visit to the park.

**Total Number of Participants**

12 individuals will take part in this study.

**Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**

You do not have to participate in this research study.

**Benefits**

The benefit to participation in this study may include an increased understanding of your lived experience and the lived experience of the Cuban diasporic population as a whole. Additionally, you may also gain an increased understanding of how the relationship to culturally significant places plays a role in your daily life.

**Risks or Discomfort**

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. Some questions entail describing your personal experience in, or leaving Cuba. You are not required to share any traumatic details and if you feel uncomfortable telling your story, then you can stop at any time.

**Compensation**

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

**Costs**

It will not cost you anything to take part in this study.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, research nurses, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.
We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Adolfo Lagomasino at 305-801-5535

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.
Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

____________________________________
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

_______________________________________________________________
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent

Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
Appendix 4: Interview Script

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study (Pro00032098). My name is Adolfo Lagomasino, today’s date is ______, and I am visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí today with (interview states full name). I’ll be asking you a few questions today regarding your Cuban identity, and your relationship to Cuba. I’d also like to invite you to experience the Parque Amigos de José Martí and guide me through your visit today. The entire interview should take no more than one hour.

Cuban Identity / Relation to Cuba
• Do you identify as Cuban? Describe your Cuban identity, what makes you Cuban, how do you identify others that are Cuban, or what indicates to you a certain Cubaness about something or someone?
• Were you born in Cuba?
• If yes, describe your life in Cuba before leaving.
• The following questions entail describing your experience leaving Cuba, please understand that you are not required to share any traumatic details and if you feel uncomfortable telling your story, then you can stop at any time.
  o What do you remember most about Cuba?
  o When and how did you come to the United States?
  o Why did you leave Cuba?
  o Is there anything you miss about Cuba?
• If no, are you a descendent of a Cuban migrant?
  o When and how did they come to the United States?
  o Why did they leave Cuba?
  o Describe Cuba to me, what do you know about it?
• Have you been (back) to Cuba?
  o If yes, please describe your experience visiting Cuba.
  o If not, what are your reasons why not?

Visiting the Parque Amigos de José Martí.
• Have you ever been to this park before? If so, describe your previous visit(s).
• What do you know about this park?
• What does the park symbolize for you?
I invite you to walk around the park and share your observations.
• What do you notice about the park?
• Describe each feature of the park (plaques, signage, statues, plants, decorations, murals)
• Describe your visit to the park today, what did you experience? What feelings did you have while visiting? What did you learn from your visit?
• Is there anything missing from the park, what would you like to see included in the park?

Thank you for your participation in the study today. Here is my contact info (hand participant business card) if you have any additional questions or would like to contribute further to this study.