

Communion in Diversity?
Exploring a Practical Theology of Reconciliation
Among Cuban Exiles

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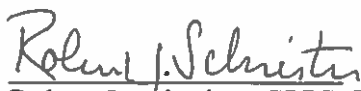
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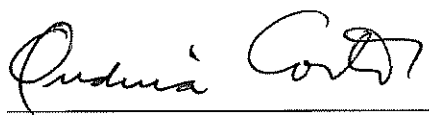


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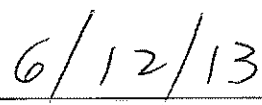
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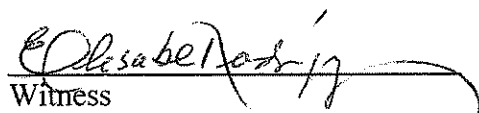
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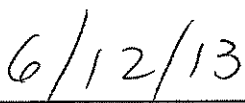
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Abstract

This dissertation articulates a practical theology of reconciliation for, with, and by Cuban Catholic exiles through the development of a faith-based structured process of reconciliation—the Circles of Reconciliation—that addresses personal reconciliation as the basis for social reconciliation. The Circles of Reconciliation draw on sources of the Christian tradition in dialogue with the empirical sciences and Cuban culture. The Circles provide the space to advance a praxis of reconciliation among Cuban exiles. The reflection that emanates from this process is the basis for the concluding insights on a theology and an ethics of reconciliation for this community.

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This work is the result of a four-year journey in which I have been blessed to be part of the School of Theology and Ministry at St. Thomas University. I acknowledge with gratitude the School's faculty and staff for the support and mentorship received: Dr. Mary Carter Waren, Dr. Theodore Whapham, Dr. Beth Stovell, Cynthia Rose, and Cary Trujillo.

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his other role as librarian has offered unwavering help and always made available the resources I needed. I also thank Dr. Beth Stovell and Grisel Domínguez for editing my final work with such dedication. My gratitude also goes to the members of ACHTUS (Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States) for their friendship and encouragement.

At the heart of this work are the people I interviewed and those that volunteered to participate in the Circles of Reconciliation. Their stories, their faith, and love for God and the *Virgen de la Caridad* confirmed my call to continue the work of reconciliation. They brought close the reality of the million-plus Cubans who live in exile, hoping, dreaming, and struggling to make sense of their past, to respond to their present, and imagine their future.

Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my religious community. I thank the sisters with whom I share in community and those far away who have constantly encouraged me to continue this journey. In a special way, I thank my mother and my sister with whom I share the love for Cuba that kindled my passion for this work. Our shared academic interest in reconciliation and in Cuba has brought my sister, Maria Eugenia, and I even closer. For this I am very grateful. I continue to learn from her. My two families have patiently allowed me to dedicate this time, patiently waiting as only love knows how to wait. *Gracias.*

Foreword

Two weeks before completing fifth grade, my life changed dramatically. The long awaited *salida*, or time to leave, came on a June afternoon. While the police officer ran an inventory of our house items, we scrambled to organize our bags, which, for the past six years, had been packed with appropriate clothing every summer and winter. In one hour, we exited the house and the door was sealed. I was not to cross that threshold again for thirty-five years. My departure from Cuba left me with a yearning, an uncontrollable nostalgia, nurtured by extraordinarily clear memories of my childhood. Like the nearly two million Cubans who have abandoned the island since 1959, I went through stages of denial, mourning, and adaptation, until finally asking myself what I could do for my people. On this journey, I acquired a lens of faith that has provided me with a new perspective and transformed this question into a mission.

At the heart of this faith is the belief that God has reconciled us in Christ Jesus through love; a love that was lived to its ultimate consequence by Jesus of Nazareth. This love is unconditional (without regard to our response) and impartial (for the just and unjust). This love began to erode my resentment towards those who created and maintained the conditions that led to such massive migration. I realized that allowing these events to turn us into angry and resentful individuals would only perpetuate what Hélder Câmara (1971) calls the “spiral of violence.” Having lived in South Florida for most of my life, I have seen how the scars left by these experiences divide the exile community and set us apart from those on the island. I understood the exile community’s claim for justice—a cry for freedom and democratic changes on the island, but also

punishment for the enemy. However, I also knew that the future of Cuba had to be built with a different strategy. Was there a way to be both Cuban and a disciple of Jesus Christ, to honor the suffering of so many and to embrace the message of reconciliation?

Another major step in my journey was my encounter with Cuban Catholic leaders, mostly lay men and women, whom I met on a yearly basis to exchange personal experiences as part of a bridge-building program sponsored by the Catholic Church in Cuba and the Archdiocese of Miami. As I learned about the work of members of the Catholic Church in Cuba, I was humbled by their courage, joy, commitment, and integrity. They do so much with so little! Learning about the struggles of so many Catholics who remain faithful in Cuba, in spite of pressure to the contrary, helped put my hurt in perspective. In these encounters, I began to “return to Cuba” and, with that, the “wound” of my exile began to heal. Even though I did not travel to Cuba until 2005, I began to experience the process of reconciliation. If I had known the way, it might not have taken me thirty years to begin the journey. I began to wonder about the most adequate method for intervention to promote reconciliation in the context of the Cuban exile. How could faith illumine and guide this process?

Even if I could not do anything to improve the situation in Cuba, maybe I could help Cubans in exile to be free—free from resentment, from the lingering hurt, from the power of these wounds that keep so many frozen in the past or unwilling to open themselves to diverse views. This work is limited to Cubans living in South Florida, but keeps all Cubans in mind. Our capacity for reconciliation within the exile community can be a measure to show that reconciliation with Cubans on the island, and among Cubans on the

island, can be viable. If members of the long-established exile community can be reconciled to Cubans who have just arrived, having lived their whole lives on the island, perhaps there is hope for ultimate reconciliation between all Cubans.

The term “exile” used in this work refers to the experience of Cubans in the United States because, for me, and for most of the people with whom I spoke during the course of this study, exile speaks of having to abandon one’s country of origin unwillingly (Marill, 1998, 35). Those who think that exile only applies to “punctual cases” in the case of Cuba (Alonso 2010, 25) minimize the conditions that prompted people to leave, often while risking their own lives. For some, the experience of exile began when they were still on the island as part of an interior exile—an *insilio* (Illie 1980). However, I respect that some Cubans may consider themselves immigrants, not exiles.

I have chosen to use a practical theological method, because it responds to my practical understanding of Christian discipleship. This practical understanding is a key element of my religious charism¹ and the spirituality of Servant of God² María Antonia París, foundress of the Religious of Mary Immaculate Claretian Missionary Sisters (the community’s initials are: rmi). She founded this community in Cuba in 1855, but her inspiration dates back to 1842 while she was a novice in Spain. She lived in a difficult time when the Church in Spain was under attack by liberal governments who reacted to a long history of mutual influence between the monarchy and the Church. While praying for the situation of persecution and harassment that afflicted the church,

¹ By religious charism, I mean the charism of my religious community.

²“Servant of God” is the title given to those whose heroic virtues have been ratified in the process of canonization.

God speaks to her with the following words: “*I want a New Order, but not new in doctrine but new **in practice***’. And here at this moment our Lord gave me the traits of the whole order.” (París 1985, 7) This emphasis on newness in “practice” led her to understand that the greatest challenge the church was experiencing did not come from external attacks, but from its lack of fidelity to the gospel or the lack of gospel practice. Thus, my community was founded with a strong orientation towards the practice of the gospel.

Second, my choice of method has been influenced by my pastoral and academic trajectory, which led me to embrace a practical theological approach. In the early 1980s, while studying theology at the Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia, I was exposed to liberation theology. I came to see liberation theology mainly as a practical theological method, or a “new way of doing theology,” that “considers praxis as the fundamental locus of theology” (Boff 1987, xxi). During that time, we reflected on the Third General Conference of the CELAM—Latin American Bishops Conference—which had just taken place in Puebla, Mexico (1979). The conference, and the process that preceded it, were a clear example of the see, judge, act method—the precursor of the practical theological approach. Upon my return to the United States in 1983, I was assigned to work in a migrant mission in Palm Beach, Florida. There, my work focused on youth ministry, so I was sent to a program called Global Horizons. This program trained youth ministry leaders in the use of the pastoral circle as a method to infuse peace and justice education in youth ministry. This program was developed by the Center for Concern, then directed by Peter Henriot, SJ, and the Center for Youth Ministry Development, then directed by John Roberto. There, I was introduced for the first time to

the pastoral circle designed by Peter Henriot, SJ and Joe Holland. I adopted this method to infuse a dimension of social justice in my ministry, but found it well-suited for much more. Later, in my work directing the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Archdiocese of Miami, it became the pastoral tool to plan and implement Archdiocesan youth programs and teach others to do the same.

As a practical theological work, this dissertation does not simply seek to gain greater knowledge on reconciliation among the Cuban exile community. Rather, the purpose of the study is to propose actions that are transformative. I have learned that one cannot transform situations without first being transformed. This dissertation has changed me. Reconciliation has become the prism through which I now understand and try to respond to the daily challenges of life. I am grateful for the ways in which these four years of research and reflection have opened new horizons for me and taken me where I never thought I would go.

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Chapter One

CONSTRUCTING A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION FROM WITHIN THE CUBAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

The basic text practical theology begins with is the lived experience of the contemporary Christian community as it strives to live faithfully in and for the world.

—John Swinton (2003, 380)

The experience of South Florida's Cuban community manifests profound polarization on a variety of issues related to Cuba (FIU Cuba polls 1991-2011). This diversity of opinions often turns into passionate antagonism that creates deep divisions in the community. The recognized success of the Cuban diaspora in the professional, financial, and political arenas obscures the reality of suffering that remains unhealed. Lack of healing has major personal and social implications (Yoder 2005, 13); it leads to attitudes of avoidance and aggression that reveal a need for personal and social reconciliation (Herman 1997).

The Cuban exile experience offers an opportunity to articulate a practical theology of reconciliation for, with, and by Catholic Cuban exiles through the development of a structured process of reconciliation that addresses personal reconciliation as the basis for social reconciliation informed by the Christian faith. Personal reconciliation relates to the healing and restoration of the human person, while social reconciliation aims to build or reconstruct communities (Schreiter 2000, 111) through dialogue and mutual understanding, where the pluralism of ideas is seen as a source of richness, rather than a problem to be solved. The healing involved here deals with past losses and ways to work

together to build a new future (Schreiter 2010, 375-376). This work is aimed at personal reconciliation as a building block of social reconciliation, since “it is hard to imagine what a social reconciliation would look like without considerable individual reconciliation” (Schreiter 2000, 115).

This work incorporates both social scientific and theological foundations to identify an effective method for promoting reconciliation within the Cuban Catholic exile community. This includes identifying strategies that help exiles with contrasting experiences find common ground and transform potential conflict into mutual understanding and respect for diversity. Within the Catholic context, this also raises questions of how such reconciliation might be faith-based and, in particular, how the Christian tradition may contribute to the reconciliation process among Cuban Catholics in exile.

The burden of unresolved trauma contributes to deep divisions within this community and reveals the need for reconciliation on multiple levels. This work explores reconciliation within the exile Cuban community, rather than between the government on the island and those in exile. Furthermore, it focuses on an even narrower population within the Cuban exile community, those engaged in Catholic faith communities. Reconciliation practices and processes may later be extended from this subgroup to all Cubans in exile, but the focus here is on a specifically Catholic environment.

This work is organized into seven chapters. This first chapter begins by developing an understanding of practical theology and practical theological methodology that in turn informs the method for promoting reconciliation among the Cuban Catholic exile community proposed in this work. Second, it describes the process of data collection and

analysis. This is followed by descriptions of personal profiles, both of Cuban exiles who have successfully achieved some degree of reconciliation, and those who participated in a four-week process designed to promote reconciliation.

Chapter Two explores the experience of the Cuban exile through the historical events that led to the mass migration that began in 1959 and continued in different waves. This staggered migration explains in part the diversity within the community, but other factors come into play, such as age at the time of migration and motives for migration. A reading of this experience through the lens of trauma theory offers additional understanding of the need for reconciliation and ways to develop an appropriate response.

The third chapter presents social science research on reconciliation, mainly understandings and models of reconciliation found in psychology and political ethics that help identify key components for a process of reconciliation. The fourth chapter explores the theological foundations for a practical theology of reconciliation for Cuban Catholics, and articulates this theology in correlation with the Cuban context.

The fifth chapter focuses on the design of the process of reconciliation developed in the course of this work and named “Circles of Reconciliation.” Chapter Six analyzes this process and thematically presents what was learned about the reconciliation process. The last chapter evaluates how the experience of the Circles contributed to the personal and social reconciliation of the participants. It assesses the Circles using results of the questionnaire administered at the beginning and end of the circle process. The work concludes by suggesting ways for Cuban Catholics to continue to deepen and share the process of reconciliation.

Toward a Practical Theology

Practical theology is “a dynamic process of reflective, critical enquiry into the praxis³ of the church in the world and God’s purposes for humanity, carried out in the light of Christian Scripture and tradition and in critical dialogue with other sources of knowledge” (Swinton 2003, 405). Others extend the reflection to praxis not confined to the church⁴ and clearly include public practice (Tracy 1981, 80). Following this understanding, Heitink sees practical theology as “theory of action in the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society” (1999, 6). In other words, “practical theology is no longer located within the boundaries of the church, but rather within the system of coordinates that make up society, Christianity and the church” (van der Ven, 1998, 38). This crucially distinguishes practical theology from pastoral theology, which is about the church’s work in and outside its boundaries.

Practical theology does not simply gain greater knowledge about a situation and the presence of God in the world. It is about changing situations in light of God’s transforming action in the world: “This practical thinking leads not to academic

³ *Praxis*, as meaningful action, is a term that has its roots in classical Greek philosophy. Aristotle distinguished it from *poiesis*, an “action that produces something” (Heitink 1999, 149). Later developments, emphasizing its primacy over theory and transformational dimension, appear “in Marxism, in the Frankfurt school (e.g., J. Habermas, A. Horheimer, T. Adorno), and in the educational philosophy of Pablo Freire” (Bevans 1993, 64). Contemporary use of the word in theology “shifts the overarching hermeneutical context from intellectual abstraction to active engagement with the world in light of the Gospel” (Swinton 2003, 396).

⁴ Swinton recognizes that practical theology is interested “in the churches’ interaction with ‘the practice of the world’ and not just their own internal praxis” (Swinton 2003, 406).

statements but to actions informed by knowledge. The object of the inquiry is studied from the perspective of the intention of change” (Heitink 1999, 164). In the words of Swinton and Mowat: “the primary task of practical theology is not simply to see differently, but to enable that revised vision to create changes in the way that Christians and Christian communities perform the faith” (2006, 255). Practical theology is thus always transformational: “Christian practical theology also believes that realities need to be transformed, transfigured, revolutionized, converted” (Forrester 2000, 27). Theology is concerned with “doing the truth” (Forrester 2000, 23). This work therefore contributes to the healing and reconciliation of Cuban exiles, and the transformation of this divided community into a reconciled people.

Practical theology has three tasks: the empirical task that explains human action, the hermeneutical task that interprets human action in light of the Christian tradition, and the practical or strategic task that undertakes action (Heitink 1999, 163-165). This is analogous to what Clodovis Boff calls the socio-analytic mediation, hermeneutic mediation, and the practical mediation (1987, xxv). Browning (1991, 72-74) identifies four sub-movements in fundamental practical theology: descriptive (analysis of situation), historical (correlation with normative texts), systematic (fusion of the two previous movements to generate new meaning), and practical strategic (which analyzes, reflects, and designs strategies of action).

Critical Concepts

Practical theology is grounded on the critical importance of practice—especially in discipleship, the recognition of God’s action in history, and the regard for the human

person. These critical concepts underlie the methodology and methods of this approach to theology.

Biblical Understanding of Practice

The centrality of practice is profoundly rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Reversing a common human logic, the Book of Exodus suggests that it is “through our doing that we are led to deeper understanding” (Veling 2005, 94): “We will do, and we will be obedient” (Ex 24:7). The word “obey” in Hebrew refers to listening (Veling 2005, 77). Thus, doing precedes listening and life precedes reflection, even though action itself involves reflection. The New Testament also emphasizes the importance of practice in the sense of acting on one’s beliefs. Christianity is not a doctrine, but a way of life. Kinship with Jesus is about doing what he did: “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it” (Lk 8:21). When someone praises Mary for being his mother, Jesus replies saying that she is blessed not so much because she is his mother, but because she heard the word and put it into practice (Lk 11:27-28). In the parable of the house built on rock or sand (Mt 7:24-27), Jesus illustrates that hearing or knowing is not enough if it does not translate into practice. It is not a matter of saying “Lord, Lord,” but of doing God’s will (Mt 7:21).

The parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30) can be considered as the *magna carta* of the object of practical theology (Heitink 1999, 92). This parable invites the believers to use their talents in the service of the *basileia*.⁵ Otherwise, as Jesus explains in the parable of

⁵ Using the original Greek word *basileia* avoids the negative connotations of the translated term “Kingdom of God” which has monarchic references (Van der ven 1998, 69). According to Van der ven, Jesus “preached the *basileia* in works and deeds;”

the tenants in the vineyard, he will give the *basileia* to those who can respond: “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom” (Mt 21:43). The first disciples were sent to preach about “this new life” (Acts 5:20). The Acts of the Apostles or *Praxeis Apostolon* (Heitink, 1999, 90) relates how the early church, under the guidance of the Spirit, extended God’s action. The action of following Jesus requires that the disciple stay in constant motion or activity, as not to fall behind and lose sight of the one being followed. For van der Ven, “Jesus’ preaching and praxis of God’s *basileia* were not aimed at passing on a religious doctrine,” but the symbol is intended to awaken a practical response and commitment (1998, 69).

God’s Action in the World

A second critical concept for practical theology is that God is present and acting in the world. God is not coterminus with the world (pantheism), but rather calls it to reach its fullness in Christ. Thus, Tracy (1981, 49) realizes that the world is a profoundly ambiguous reality, but nonetheless affirms that “trust in and loyalty to God and to Jesus Christ demands a fundamental trust in and loyalty to the world in all its ambiguity” (49-50). God is actively engaged with humanity; the *basileia* of God “symbolizes that God is active in partnership with human agency to effect these universal intentions” (Groom 1991, 16). In a similar fashion, the Second Vatican Council affirms the universality of grace (*Lumen Gentium*, 16), which supports the claim that God’s presence permeates all

basileia can be explained through its normative principles: freedom, equality, universality, and solidarity (1998, 71-74).

of reality; therefore the “signs of time” are to be found in social and historical situations (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1).

The *basileia*, then, extends far beyond the church (Haight 2004, 31). It represents both the divine gift and the mandate to work with others and in partnership with God to bring forth God’s universal intentions. Groome expands on this:

In the social/political realm, the reign of God means that Christians and their faith communities should publicly reflect its realization in their lives and ecclesial structures and participate as a ‘public church’ in society that helps effect its eminently social values of life for all. (1991, 17)

As a result, “practical theology does not have the church, but rather society as its horizon” (Heitink 1999, 9).

Regard for the Human Person

A third critical concept for practical theology is the regard for the human person. As Veling asserts, “the human person is the very site of transcendence” (2005, 108), because God chose to create human beings in God’s image and likeness. Following this, in theological reflection, “not God himself, but the human experience of God, takes the central stage as the object of inquiry” (Heitink 1999, 110). The starting point and goal of practical theology are the real situations in which people find themselves (Browning 1991, 5). The praxis of God in history, as it is co-constituted through human praxis, is the primary text and context for doing theology (Groome 1991; Swinton 2003, 391). Practical theology seeks “to explore and contribute to immediate contexts, situations and practices” (Pattison and Woodward 1999, 14).

Three Binaries that Characterize Practical Theology

Practical theologians do not agree on all aspects of methodology and related epistemologies, but they all see the dialectical relationship between theory and action—praxis—as defining for the field. Besides the relationship between theory and praxis, two other binaries characterize practical theology: the correlation between context and the Christian tradition, on the one hand, and the interaction between theology and other fields of knowledge, on the other. These three binaries synthesize the theoretical framework out of which this work operates.

Dialectical Relationship between Theory and Action

The first binary relates to Clodovis Boff's assertion that the dialectic between theory and practice "presupposes a mutual inclusion (*perichoresis*) as well as difference (*chorismos*)" (1987, 231-232). Dialectic consists "in a permanent effort to transcend what has already been acquired" (Boff 1987, 232); it is "a style of thinking marked by the will to shatter all static rigidity, to burst the conceptual frames that imprison the mind" (206). A dialectical relationship implies a counterpoint, dynamism from action to theory which elicits new action (Osmer 2008, 121). The relationship between theory and practice or action is best defined in a dialectical form, understood as praxis, "purposeful human activity that holds in dialectical unity of theory and practice, critical reflection and historical engagement" (Groome 1991, 136). Veling points out that right action needs to be accompanied by *kavanah*, a Hebrew concept that means attentiveness or acting purposefully (2005, 94). Praxis cannot be equated with "practice," as Swinton says, since "practice implies the simple non-reflective performance of a task in a dispassionate, value-free manner, [whereas] praxis denotes an action that is profoundly saturated with

meaning, value-directed and value laden” (2003, 395). To counter an overly abstract, deductive, action-distanced theological stance, practical theology has sometimes overemphasized practice. Metz argues for the “primacy of praxis” (1980, 52), a key concept of his theological method, as an intentional response to the distorting privatization of faith common in late modernity. Heitink rejects the primacy of action or theory, as presented by some social theorists or philosophers. That is, he concedes that “practical theology starts from the situation, the praxis” (1999, 153), but rejects the idea of theory as totally defined by practice, which would be a form of determinism (1999, 152). Boff also rejects praxis as the criterion of (theological) truth because they respond to different orders and have different criteriologies, one theological (theoretical practice of the theologian) and the other one pistis (concrete practice of the believer) (1987, 198-199).

Correlation between Context and Christian Tradition

The correlation between context and the Christian tradition is key in the elaboration of local and contextual theologies (Schreier 1993; Bevans 1992). Contextual theology takes into consideration “cultural identity, social change, and popular religiosity” (Bevans 1992, 21). Bevans’ synthetic model emphasizes the dialogical⁶ complementarity of culture and gospel, of change and tradition (1992, 81-88), while recognizing the ambivalence of culture, which contains both the seeds of the gospel and the need for transformation. The mutually critical interaction between contemporary culture and faith characterizes the understanding of practical theology advanced by Browning (1991) and

⁶In dialogical relationships there is a “collaborative give-and-take” characterized not by opposition (dialectical), but by “arriving at a closer approximation of the truth by reasoning together” (Osmer 2008, 121).

Tracy: “practical theology is the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and the praxis of the Christian fact and the interpreted theory and practice of the contemporary situation” (Tracy 1981, 76). Theological reflection in ministry also involves the dialogue between the experience of the community of faith, the Christian tradition, and the resources of culture (Whitehead and Whitehead 1991, 6).

Interaction between Theology and Other Disciplines

The final binary relates theology to other disciplines. As Osmer claims, “practical theology as an academic field...is inherently cross-disciplinary” (2008, 163). This dialogue between disciplines may be articulated in a variety of distinctive ways: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and intradisciplinarity (Osmer 2008). Multidisciplinary dialogue responds to the need to address the multidimensional aspects of a problem (Osmer 2008, 164). Van der Ven is critical of multidisciplinary as a two-phase approach composed of empirical research followed by normative, theological evaluation (van der Ven 1998, 93). Here the two disciplines remain separate and the first is subordinate to the second. The interdisciplinary approach “stresses interaction and reciprocity between theology and the social sciences” (97). This requires that the theologian develop an expertise in other fields or interacts with other scholars (98-99). A final model is that of intradisciplinarity, which for Osmer is about “conversation between various perspectives within a single field” (2008, 163), while van der Ven contemplates the possibility “that theology itself [may] become empirical, that is, that it expands its traditional range of instruments” (1998, 101). Osmer describes three models of cross-disciplinary dialogue between theology and other disciplines: correlational (highlights mutual influence), transformational (appropriation and transformation of insights of other

fields in the service of theology), and transversal (intersection and divergence of a variety of disciplines), which he advocates (Osmer 2008, 164-172). In so far as this work on reconciliation engages multiple disciplines, it can be considered multidisciplinary in Osmer's conception (2008), but it is also intradisciplinary in van der Ven's sense (1998), in that it adopts empirical instruments for the theological task. Finally, these disciplines intersect in different moments of the work, constituting what Osmer considers a transversal cross-disciplinary approach (2008, 172).

Social sciences should be used cautiously in theological work, and their use is particularly problematic when they dominate the theological discourse or uncritically borrow already outdated theories (Pattison 2007, 253-259). This especially applies to the use of disciplines that do not have an understanding of the human person that is fully compatible with that of theology, or when the limitations and assumptions of other intellectual traditions are not taken into consideration. An example of this is the uncritical use of Marxism in some theologies of liberation. For this reason, Boff distinguishes between the "*hypothetico-scientific*" aspect of Marxism (historical materialism) and the "*philosophic-metaphysical*" aspect (dialectical materialism), arguing in favor of the use of the first as an instrument for social analysis, or "socio-analytical mediation," but rejecting the second one for its "reductionist, dictatorial character" (1987, 55, 224). Analogously, Heitink highlights the limitations of empirical research tools, particularly quantitative methods:

One may set out in percentages which groups share particular convictions, or which beliefs are held by certain groups of people. In this case, one is dealing with cognitive things. One may even take one further step and categorize

emotions and attitudes of people, and make them score on these aspects. But that seems to be the limit of quantitative research. The concepts and theories utilized in this type of research are not suitable if one wants to penetrate to deeper levels of consciousness. (Heitink 1999, 232)

Qualitative methods provide such in-depth understanding (Mertens 2005, 233).

Many researchers use mixed measure procedures that integrate quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings, and to gain perspective based on different types of data (Creswell 2003, 208-227). Practical theology must take this into account and, therefore, engage reality through a diversity of methods.

Role of the Theologian/Researcher

The work of practical theology is vocational work (Veling 2005, 12). Practical theology requires a way of life “living it, testing it, seeking it, treasuring it” (Veling 2005, 244). As Tracy argues, while fundamental theology does not require a faith commitment, systematic and practical theology cannot be done without personal involvement or commitment (Tracy 1981, 69). While theologians’ personal commitment is critical for any theological work, European theologians often object on the grounds that a scientific approach requires distance—rather than involvement—in order to preserve objectivity (Wijsen 2005, 113). Theologians in the global South reflect a greater affinity toward a practical theological approach.

The practical theology of reconciliation articulated in this work is constructed from within, with, and by the Cuban exile community. The theologian and the community

interact in this process. The theologian does not assume to have all the answers, but on the contrary, affirms answers that are already present in the people and found *in* community. The theologian walks with the community, allowing practical wisdom, *phronesis*, to emerge, under a pneumatological understanding. This approach corresponds to the methodology of participatory action research⁷ (Herr and Anderson 2005, 3). The researcher's position is that of an insider collaborating with other insiders to contribute to the understanding and practice of reconciliation among Cuban exiles (Herr and Anderson 2005, 31).

Metatheoretical Assumptions

Osmer uses the term “metatheoretical assumptions” to express the “assumptions about reality, knowledge, and science that transcend particular research projects” (2008, 58). This corresponds to methodology, which, within theological work refers to principles underlying the method, including the rationale and philosophical presuppositions that support the work. The philosophical assumptions that guide and direct this work follow a constructivist paradigm (Mertens 2005, 9), whereby reality is seen as multiple, socially constructed realities (12). Such a constructivist approach is critical to this work given the diversity of the Cuban exile population and diverse interpretations of experience. Therefore, the first goal of the researcher is to understand the multiple meanings of reconciliation within the exile. As such, the constructivist paradigm builds from an epistemology that interacts between researcher and participants, together they create knowledge (14). Its methodology can be “described as hermeneutical and dialectical in

⁷A major source of inspiration for participatory action research is Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1970] 1993).

that efforts are made to obtain multiple perspectives that yield better interpretations of meaning” (15).

Strategy of Inquiry

The mixed methods approach adopted in this work corresponds to a “concurrent nested strategy” (Creswell 2003, 218) that consists of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, while allowing one method to predominate and guide the project. Qualitative methods are central in both the first interview phase and the second phase utilizing the Circles of Reconciliation. The quantitative method is nested or embedded within the overarching method to “address a different question...or seek information from different levels” (Creswell 2003, 218). Participatory action research, which integrates the epistemology of the constructivist paradigm, is the mode of research utilized in this work. This form of research develops knowledge through the collaboration between researcher and participants. It is “oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation” (Herr and Anderson 2005, 3). These actions or cycles of activities form a spiral that progresses towards greater understanding and further action. This approach to research is articulated in the practical theological spiral method.

Practical Theological Spiral Method

This work contributes both a practical process of reconciliation and a theology of reconciliation for Cuban Catholics using quantitative and qualitative methods. It adopts

the method of the practical theological spiral⁸ offered by Frans Wijsen (2005). This method seems most adequate because it aligns with the on-going nature of the praxis of reconciliation (spiral) and strikes a balance between pastoral engagement and academic rigor (2005, 110).

Practical-theological spiral is best seen as a grounded theory approach to theology, based on a real dialectic relation between data sources (qualitative or quantitative empirical facts gathered through fieldwork) and knowledge sources (existing insights and theories developed previously by others that can be studied through secondary research). (Wijsen 2005, 114)

This practical theological method may be traced to the hermeneutic or pastoral circle. The roots of the hermeneutical or pastoral circle may be found in the Young Christian Workers Movement and the method of “see, judge, act” attributed to Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn (Holland 2005, 9).⁹ Latin American liberation theology embraces this method from the Catholic Action movement, incorporating a prophetic and contextual dimension.

This practical theological method offers a means to access, interpret, reflect theologically, and respond to the experience of Catholic Cuban exiles. The stages in the method do not take place in an orderly, linear manner, but in a spiral dynamism that includes insertion-listening, analyzing-understanding, correlating-contrasting, and

⁸ Others also use the spiral metaphor to represent practical theological method (See Forrester 2000, 28).

⁹ Holland also notes that recent research by Stefan Gignacz claims that it “was a continuation of the work of the French lay Catholic democratic movement known as *Le Sillon* (the furrow), founded by Marc Sagnier” or even further back to lay leader Frédéric Ozanam or Lamennais (2005, 9).

planning-acting. This work implements the action (Circles of Reconciliation), tests it, and, in so doing, advances a deep understanding of a practical theology of reconciliation.

Insertion and Listening Stage

The first stage of the practical theological spiral seeks to “acquire the knowledge about the practice under investigation” (Wijsen 2005, 114), or the situation or reality being studied. This stage focuses on current praxis (Swinton 2003, 401) and has also been called descriptive-empirical (Osmer 2008, 31-78). It entails a focusing activity (Groome 1991, 146-148), corresponding to what Groome calls “first movement: Naming/expressing present action” (175). The researcher’s experience is not excluded, since “researchers may be insiders or outsiders-insiders, but are always in some way participant observers inserted into a situation and a context” (Froehle, forthcoming). The question this stage seeks to answer is: What is the experience of the Cuban exile and how does it reflect a need for reconciliation? This is the focus of the second chapter.

The first source behind the understanding of the reality of reconciliation in the Cuban exile stems from the researcher’s own experience as a Cuban exile on a personal journey of reconciliation. The second source is the Cuban exile community in South Florida as a whole: the joy of new arrivals, mourning those lost at sea, and those who die in exile far from home, and the constantly changing, yet unchanging situation in Cuba. The third source is the specific group of Cuban exiles interviewed to identify what constitutes reconciliation and what determinants contribute to Cuban reconciliation. These persons were selected based on their interest in reconciliation and their trajectory of reconciling practice, including their attitudes of openness to all groups of Cubans, and commitment to the Church and Cuba. Interviewing them revealed what inspired,

motivated, and helped them in their journey of reconciliation, and what their experience suggests about the path to reconciliation for Cuban exiles. Lastly, the Circles' sessions provided a rich understanding of the exile from the perspective of different waves.

This exploratory stage corresponds to the first session of the Circles of Reconciliation, when the participants share their story of exile. The sharing that takes place in the succeeding sessions builds on this initial in-depth narrative.

Analyzing and Understanding Stage

The second stage of the practical theological method used in this work seeks to analyze and understand the situation using tools of the social sciences (Holland and Henriot 1991). This stage is also called interpretative (Osmer 79-128). Groome's second movement, or "critical reflection on present action" (1991, 187), has the same purpose. This second stage involves analyzing the experience of exile through the lens of trauma theory (offered initially at the end of Chapter Two), not only to understand how trauma is present in the exile experience, but also the road to interpret healing that includes psychological dimensions. Chapter Three offers theories of forgiveness and conflict transformation that provide conceptual clarity and tools for intervention to facilitate the practice of forgiveness. The questions posed in this stage are two-fold: What do the social sciences contribute to an understanding of reconciliation? What do they suggest for a process of reconciliation?

The second session of the Circles corresponds to this stage, whereby participants, after sharing their understanding of forgiveness, explore understandings and practices of

forgiveness. This builds on psychological insight and offers symbolic means to retrieve cultural elements that enhance the experience of forgiveness.

Correlating and Confronting Stage

The third stage of the practical theological spiral involves correlating and confronting the experience that has been explored and analyzed with the Christian tradition in a mutually critical way. The experience of faith within the Christian and Cuban community provide the foundations for this theological reflection. This stage corresponds to the normative phase identified by Osmer (2008, 129-174). Groome (1991) identifies this as taking place in the third and fourth movements: “Making accessible the Christian story and vision” (1991, 215-246) and dialectical hermeneutics, whereby participants appropriate the Christian story/vision in their lives (249-263). The questions in this stage are again two-fold: In light of the Christian tradition, what should reconciliation look like for Catholic Cuban exiles? How do the gospel and the church tradition inform and challenge the present practice: attitudes and behaviors within the exile community and beyond? This discussion comprises the fourth chapter, which articulates a practical theology of reconciliation.

The third session of the Circles invites participants to reflect theologically on the relationship between justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Such theological reflection permeates the whole process of the Circles. The first session begins with the correlation of Abraham’s call to leave his homeland for a land unknown, analogous to the experience of exiles. Every session begins with Scripture readings that refer back to the previous session. Group sharing contributes to further understanding of what reconciliation means for Catholic Cuban exiles.

The critical correlation with the Christian tradition provides the theologian and the community with a point of reference capable of challenging established views and popular wisdom. The point is not to accept at face value the notions on forgiveness and reconciliation held by this community as most conducive to human flourishing, but rather to offer a firm ground to critically revise such views.

Planning and Action Stage

The fourth stage focuses on planning and carrying out innovative practice. This stage leads to the design of the Circles of Reconciliation as a result of the exploration of the Cuban reality, the analysis using social sciences tools, and the proposed practical theology of reconciliation. Chapter Five includes the design of the Circles and Chapter Six focuses on the themes that emerged in this practice. Chapter Seven evaluates the experience of the Circles of Reconciliation and suggests ways for Cuban exiles continue practicing reconciliation. The questions at this stage are two: What needs to be done to respond to this situation in light of the Christian tradition? What practices need to be implemented?

This stage corresponds to the last session of the Circles, which is oriented to awakening a sense of mission in the reconciled exile. If the process has been successful, participants will be motivated to reproduce the Circles. This is the pragmatic (Osmer 2008, 175-218), or the decision-response stage (Groome 1991, 266-278).

The four week process flows naturally to the question of what participants can do to extend this opportunity to others. In the spiral approach, this is not the end of the process, but rather the beginning of a new phase. Once implemented, the Circles serve to test their

validity and generate new theological reflection. Wijsen places the start of action research at the planning stage (2005, 121); this work uses participatory action at all stages. The insertion in the situation is through the participation of others, by listening to others. Analysis is done with others, as is theological reflection, and the planning of new action. The planning stage is not where action and life begin, but rather where initial action or situation is evaluated and new action planned with the participation of the community.

Data Collection

This research collected data in three ways. First, through open ended interviews of five selected Cuban Catholics. The interviews were semi-structured (Mertler, 2006), giving flexibility to ask clarifying questions using techniques described by Seidman (2006). The interviews, mostly consisting of questions related to the experience of reconciliation, used an appropriate interview protocol (See Appendix) approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB).¹⁰

The main data collection took place in the Circles, and followed a mixed methods approach. A close-ended questionnaire measured the effect of the Circles, following established criteria of reconciliation. This questionnaire was administered at the beginning and at the end of the four week process. It also included questions on the demographics of the group and factors that condition the experience of reconciliation in the Cuban context. The assumption is that more traumatic departure situations may condition reconciliation in a negative way.

¹⁰ The interviews and the Circles' sessions were digitally recorded, codified, and analyzed using ATLAS:ti software.

Participant's Background

Expert Interviews¹¹

Five people were interviewed to learn from their trajectory of reconciliation and provide wisdom in the design of the Circles. Those selected have demonstrated some degree of reconciliation in terms of personal, interpersonal, and social reconciliation. They are able to dialogue with people with different views on Cuba and want to contribute to Cuba's future. They reflect a diversity of gender, waves of exiles, and experiences. Out of the five, two were women, two arrived before 1980, two had been in prison, and two had returned to Cuba. Here are their stories.

Eduardo Mesa

Eduardo left Cuba in the year 2000 as a young adult and lived in Spain for some time, where he married Hilda, whom he knew in Cuba. He was an active Catholic and worked as a journalist for the Archdiocese of Havana. He founded the magazine *Espacio Laical*, a periodical published by the Archdiocese of Havana that promotes dialogue on social situations in the light of faith. He left under political pressure after his collaboration in a Polish film festival critical of totalitarian regimes. He considers himself an exile and perceives a need for earlier waves of exiles to reconcile with those from newer waves, like himself. He says that two things can help reconciliation: the creation of spaces where people can share their stories in mutual respect and the example of those who live by values of reconciliation.

¹¹ According to Bogner, Littig, and Menz (2009) "expert" is the actual person who will be able to provide the best information for a particular research topic.

Lorenzo Ferrer

Ferrer left Cuba in 1979 with his wife and small children, and had a long history of struggle with the Cuban government. He reports that at age 15, he was unfairly accused of counterrevolution and jailed briefly. He was jailed again for a week when he was 18. He studied in Cuban seminaries for six years, until he was sent by the Cuban government to work camps. He remains active in the church and works as a Senior Financial Analyst. He returned to Cuba with his wife Noelia in 1998 to cover the Papal visit for Radio Paz, the radio station of the Archdiocese of Miami. This trip helped him reconnect with his past. He realized he was an exile when he came to Miami and could no longer return to Cuba as he pleased. He sees the need for reconciliation in the exile community because of the lack of tolerance for different opinions resulting from people thinking that they own the truth. He says that what has helped him grow in reconciliation is the example of Jesus.

Rosario Bergouignan

Rosario left in the early 1960s by herself as an older adolescent. She went to live in New York. She was soon reunited with her family, but never felt strongly connected to Cuba until she returned in 1998 to participate in the papal mass. Her reconciliation began at that point. She now travels every year to take medicines and other necessary items to the people of Cuba. She is very active in the church and has worked for many years in the Archdiocese of Miami as an advocate in the Tribunal. She continues to help in different church programs.

Pedro Pablo Alvarez

Pedro Pablo was a very active member of the Catholic Church in Cuba, and reports that this led to his being sent to work camps for three years. In 2003, he was arrested, along with 74 other dissidents, journalists, and *opositores* (leaders of the opposition) during Cuba's "Black Spring." His oppositional work was mainly through his involvement as an independent unionist and other projects in favor of democratization. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Through international and church efforts, he was released in 2008. He now lives in Miami. In spite of poor health, he continues to work for human rights in Cuba, especially the rights of workers. He says that his experiences have taught him that Jesus shows a road of love and compassion and people need to be open to the goodness found in all people regardless of ideology.

Iliana Laucirica

Ileana came from Cuba in 2000 with her daughter, who needed treatment for a rare case of arteriovenous malformation that left her paraplegic. She was very active in the church in Cuba and continues to be very involved in Miami as well. Her two other children and husband arrived at a later time. She is an architect. She considers herself an exile and sees the need for understanding among different groups. According to her, reconciliation is about understanding others and respecting diversity. She has listened to the stories of members of earlier waves and is able to understand their opposition to any measures that seem favorable to the Cuban government. She strongly feels that people have the right to express their views, as long as they do not hurt others, and Cubans should not get offended when others disagree with them on certain issues.

Participants of the Circles of Reconciliation

The Circles were conducted at San Lazaro Church in Hialeah. The Hispanic population in Hialeah is 95 percent, out of which 73 percent are Cuban (United States Census 2010), giving it the highest proportion of Cubans of any city in the United States.¹² After a call for study participants, 26 people came forward. This number allowed for the formation of two groups. Most of the church leaders were assigned to Group A. Most of the professionals were concentrated in Group B (doctors, teachers, nurses, and dentists). This data were accessed through personal knowledge of some of the individuals and information provided by the pastor. This distribution provided a very different make-up for the two groups, even within the same parish.

Gender representation in groups was fairly balanced. In total there were 15 women and 11 men. The representation within groups was as follows: 8 women and 6 men in Group A, and 7 women and 5 men in group B. A male and a female participant from Group A did not come after the first session, so both groups had 12 participants.

The major waves were represented (See Table 1, Departure from Cuba). Group A had no one from the 1990-1995 wave, and the person from this wave in Group B was not part of the rafter exodus of 1994. Group B did not have representation from 1981-1989. During this period, immigration was very low. Six of the participants left as minors; the majority left as young adults. According to the questionnaire, only one person (from Group A) left without family, and two from Group B left alone.

¹² According to the 2010 U.S. census, the Cuban population of Hialeah is 164,717, which makes it the seventh city with more Cuban population in the world after Cuban cities of Havana, Santiago, Camagüey, Holguín, Guantánamo, and Santa Clara (Censo 2010, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, República de Cuba).

Table 1. Departure from Cuba

	1959- 1964	1965- 1973	1974- 1979	1980	1981- 1989	1990- 1995	1996 present
Group A	3	4		1	2		4
Group B	1	2	1	4		1	3

Nine people from group A had immediate family members who were political prisoners; in group B, the number was seven. Two of the participants actually spent over a decade in prison for their political views. Only two participants from group A, and one from group B had been sympathetic to the revolution. In group A, ten of the fourteen have not returned to Cuba, while in group B this number was seven out of twelve.

Church participation in Cuba and in the United States was higher in Group A than in B. Thirteen of the participants in Group A are very active now and one is somewhat active; while in Group B, only nine were active and three somewhat active. This empirical data may be correlated with the questionnaire responses to explore relationships in multiple combinations of factors.

The understanding of the individual stories of Cuban exiles requires an overview of the historical events that precipitated the massive exodus from the island and how those events have contributed to the exile's attitudes and behaviors. The next chapter presents a brief historical background of the Cuban exodus experience.

Chapter Two

THE CHALLENGE OF RECONCILIATION WITHIN THE CUBAN EXILE COMMUNITY

Union in diversity and respect for others is indispensable; we need to search for convergence...sometimes it seems that everyone is against everyone, when we should be a united front.

—Bishop Agustín Román (2012, 398)¹³

In December 2011, Pope Benedict XVI announced that he would visit Cuba in March 2012. On the island, the news was received with joy by government authorities (*Granma* 2012)¹⁴ and, especially, the Catholic Church, then commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the finding of the image of Our Lady of Charity, patroness of Cuba, in the waters off Cuba's northeastern shore. However, the exile community in Southeast Florida was divided over the meaning of the visit. Thomas Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, clearly defended the purpose of the visit, noting:

The purpose of his visit to Cuba is pastoral: that is, to reaffirm the faith of Catholics on the island and, in turn, to highlight the importance of spiritual values to all Cubans... It is true that Cubans—here and there—want a more political change, but

¹³ Román was a well recognized spiritual leader of the exile. He was Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Miami (1979-2003) and first bishop of the United States of Cuban origin. He was responsible for building the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami where he died on April 11, 2012. Translation of all original sources in Spanish is done by the author.

¹⁴ “Nuestro país se sentirá honrado en acoger a Su Santidad con hospitalidad y mostrarle el patriotismo, cultura y vocación solidaria y humanista de los cubanos, en que se sustentan la historia y la unidad de la Nación.” (Our country will be honored to welcome with hospitality His Holiness and to show him the patriotism, culture, and vocation to solidarity and humanism of the Cuban people, on which our Nation's history and unity is founded).

Benedict XVI's visit to Cuba is not expected to have political overtones but rather pastoral ones. Despite a climate of suspicion and mistrust that is often the result of life under totalitarian regimes, the church in Cuba wants to help the Cuban people to overcome their lack of mutual trust and build unity on the basis of forgiveness and reconciliation. (Wenski 2012)

What some saw as an expression of support for the work and struggles of the Catholic Church in Cuba, others saw as an endorsement of Cuba's government, or an opportunity for the government to appear benevolent towards religion and the Catholic Church in particular. Some exiles criticized the Pope for what he said and did not say, for who he met and did not meet. In an article published by *Diario de las Americas* entitled "Lo que no dijo el Papa" (What the Pope Did Not Say), Guillermo Cabrera Leiva¹⁵ expresses his disappointment that Benedict XVI did not say "severe words against the tyranny that oppresses Cubans [because]...in Cuba soft words about reconciliation among brothers is not enough" (Cabrera Leiva 2012). In a letter published in *Diario de las Americas*, Sylvia G. Iriondo⁴ vehemently criticized the Pope for not meeting with the *Damas de Blanco* (Ladies in White),¹⁶ but meeting with Raúl and Fidel Castro instead. In her view, the image of the Pope shaking the "bloody hands of dictators and assassins," was simply "Vatican shame!" (Iriondo 2012). Such profoundly opposing

¹⁵ Guillermo Cabrera Leiva is a Presbyterian lawyer, writer, and journalist who resides in Miami.

¹⁶ *Damas de Blanco* is an organization of women that has been publically advocating for human rights in Cuba since 2003. The original group was composed of the wives, daughters, and mothers of the 75 political dissidents imprisoned in 2003. After their release over the last few years, new women have joined the struggle and continue to advocate for civil and human rights.

views on the Pope's visit led to passionate attacks by people on both sides of the debate, during and after the papal visit.

These examples illustrate the deep divide within the Cuban exile community and the urgent need for reconciliation, including among those members of the Cuban exile community who are affiliated with the Catholic Church. Such a strong, painful division within the community may only be understood through an exploration of the Cuban exile experience itself. This includes the suffering that led to exile and the struggle of coming to a new land, compounded by the unique reality experienced by each wave of exiles over a span of more than five decades. All of this contributes to the polarization typical of the Cuban exile community today. This chapter corresponds to the first stage of the practical theological method (Wijsen 2005). What is the experience of the Cuban exile and how does this reflect its need for reconciliation?

The Revolution and the Beginning of the Exile

The 2010 census reports that 1,785,547 Cubans¹⁷ live in the United States, the majority living in Florida (1,213,438).¹⁸ This compares to about 11,241,161 Cubans living on the island (*Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, República de Cuba* 2011). Though there have always been a number of Cubans from the island in the United States, the vast majority arrived after the Cuban Revolution¹⁹ of January 1, 1959 (García 1996). In the

¹⁷ This includes all persons of Cuban descent whether born in Cuba or elsewhere, whether naturalized U.S. citizens or not (United States Census Bureau).

¹⁸ This data shows that Cubans in the U.S. represent 13 percent of total population living in the island (Ennis, Rios-Vargas and Albert 2011).

¹⁹ The Cuban Revolution ousted Fulgencio Batista Zaldívar who had established a military dictatorship in Cuba in 1952, after a *coup d' eta*. He had ruled Cuba on different occasions as elected president and as a result of another coup. During the 1950s, efforts

nineteenth century, Cuban communities developed in Key West, Tampa, and New York (Perez 1986).²⁰ Many of the members of these communities were temporary “exiles,” persons involved in the various wars of independence and other national upheavals. They expected to return to the island soon, and often did. The changes wrought by the revolution of 1959 and what followed were altogether different. The impact was vast and, although not universally anticipated at the time, permanent for at least two generations, radically altering lives and expectations for Cubans.

The first major change came with the Agrarian Reform. The Cuban Constitution of 1940 provided some restrictions to private property (Hendrix 1996, 10-11),²¹ but none as radical as the Agrarian Reform established on May 17, 1959. This law expropriated all landholdings over 402 hectares, and was later extended to include all landholdings over 67 hectares²² (García Luis 2001, 23). On August 6, 1960, all foreign-owned property was nationalized. This affected U.S. owned oil refineries, sugar mills, and utility companies in particular, as well as all private businesses of any size (García Luis 2001, 38-51).²³ These

to overthrow Batista were carried out by the *Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil 13 de marzo* (founded by José Antonio Echevarría in 1956) and the *Movimiento 26 de Julio* (named after the date of the attack of the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba in 1953, which was led by Fidel Castro).

²⁰ Between 1871 and 1959 the total number of Cubans who lived in the U.S. was 220,505 (Perez 1986).

²¹ These restrictions were imposed within the framework of a “social function of land” (Article 87). It limited land ownership of large farms and foreign ownership (Article 90).

²² Equivalent to 165 acres.

²³ In June 1960, American oil companies refused to refine Soviet oil, and Cuba responded by confiscating their holdings. After the U.S. eliminated Cuba’s sugar quota, all American properties were nationalized. As a result, the U.S. government cut diplomatic ties, froze Cuban assets in the United States, and strengthened the already-existing trade embargo between the United States and Cuba (Perez-Stable 2012, 81-82).

actions were broadly supported by many lower class Cubans and strongly resisted by others. A number of Cuban leaders strongly dissented against the direction the revolution was taking as it moved towards a communist state, including some who fought alongside Fidel Castro, such as Huber Matos and Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo (Sweig 2009, 49), who were ultimately imprisoned. When Matos was imprisoned for treason and sedition, members of the Provisional Government resigned (Pedraza 2009, 68).

Also in 1960, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) were created (García Luis 2001, 57-64) to monitor the activities of every person on their respective blocks. The Committees reported everything from counter-revolutionary activities to the illegal purchase of food on the black market (Clark 1985, 15). The CDR's instilled fear and suspicion in every neighborhood. The island was in an emergency situation, with the government fearing an invasion by the U.S., and those opposed to the government fearing the loss of their livelihood, or worse.

In April 1961, three months after John F. Kennedy assumed the presidency of the United States, CIA-trained Cuban exiles invaded a beach on the south-central coast of Cuba, at Playa Girón, at the mouth of the *Bahia de Cochinos*²⁴ (Bay of Pigs). Within three days, Cuban forces defeated the attackers. This was preceded by several diversionary attacks along different parts of Cuba that prompted nation-wide imprisonment of thousands of suspected anti-revolutionaries to prevent insider support of the invasion. In the days that followed the invasion, at least 600 people were executed

²⁴ Multiple studies on the Bay of Pigs invasion detail the controversial “fiasco.” See Jim Rasenberger, *The Brilliant Disaster: JFK, Castro, and America's Doomed Invasion of Cuba's Bay of Pigs* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011); Peter Wyden, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

(BBC, May 1, 1961). In May of that year, Castro announced that elections were not necessary in Cuba: "The revolution has no time for elections. There is no more democratic government in Latin America than the revolutionary government" (BBC, May 1, 1961). In December of the following year, 1,113 prisoners captured during the *Bahia de Cochino* invasion were exchanged for \$53 million in food and medicines from the United States (Perez-Stable 2012). The revolution was further consolidated in the wave of nationalist fervor that followed, taking a definitive turn towards an alliance with the Soviet Union, which had already emerged as the alternative consumer of Cuban sugar after the U.S. embargo (Sweig 2009, 87-88). On the first day of the aerial bombings of the Bay of Pigs, Fidel Castro publicly declared the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution: "Comrades, workers and peasants: this is the socialist and democratic revolution of the humble...Long live the socialist revolution!" (García Luis 2001, 68-69). Later, on December 2, 1961, Castro declared in a televised address, "I am a Marxist-Leninist and shall be one until the end of my life" (Coltman 2003, 190). During this period, many took up arms against the revolution in the Escambray Mountains.²⁵ Those who were captured by government forces were given speedy trials that resulted in long prison sentences or execution (Montaner 2001, 90).

In spite of the church's initial support of the revolution and some of its reforms (CRECED 1996, 53; ENEC 1986, 25), such as the Agrarian Reform Law,²⁶ conflict

²⁵ For six years, a number of Cubans led a guerrilla war in the Escambray Mountains. Many of them were former revolutionary leaders who wanted a democratic government for Cuba (Encinosa 2012).

²⁶ Many priests supported the revolution and Castro's life was spared through the intercession of the Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, Enrique Pérez Serantes (Pedraza

between the church hierarchy and revolutionary leaders intensified in 1960. Though some argue as to whether there was “a broad-based campaign against the churches” *per se*, no one disputes that “the Marxist-Leninist orientation of the revolution gave it an antireligious character” (Crahan 1999, 96). The Catholic Church took a clear stance against communism;²⁷ it was this and “not social and economic programs, [which] became the overriding issue for the Church” (Super 2003). Those who went to church were considered suspect of counterrevolutionary activity (Crahan 1999, 95). Religious groups and church activities became increasingly limited. On September 17, 1961, Bishop Boza-Masvidal²⁸ and 131 priests were expelled and exiled to Spain (Clark 1985, 11).²⁹ The Cuban government prohibited processions and all other religious activities

2009, 48). Auxiliary Bishop of Havana, Evelio Díaz, issued a circular letter endorsing the Agrarian Reform on May 31, 1959 (Díaz 1959).

²⁷In a pastoral letter titled “For God and for Cuba,” Archbishop Pérez Serantes, explained the incompatibility of Christianity and communism (Pérez Serantes 1960). In August of 1960 all the bishops of Cuba wrote a circular letter reiterating the same principles (Arteaga 1960).

²⁸ Auxiliary Bishop of Havana and Rector of the Universidad Católica de Santo Tomás de Villanueva. In his pastoral letters, he objected to the means the revolution employed to achieve the legitimate desire of social transformation: hatred, denial of freedom, denial of God (Pedraza 2007, 89).

²⁹ This was justified as the government’s response to a procession of Our Lady of Charity that erupted into violence, leaving one young man dead. Gómez Treto (1992, 421) echoes the government’s claim that it was organized by Bishop Boza-Masvidal, “auxiliary Bishop of Santiago and parish priest of the sanctuary of Patroness of Cuba.” This is inaccurate on two counts: Bishop Boza-Masvidal was the pastor of Our Lady of Charity parish *in Havana*, not of the Shrine of Our Lady in Santiago, and this procession was a popular initiative: “The day before the procession was supposed to take place, a government official told the bishop that the procession could not take place in the afternoon as planned, but if he wanted it, it had to be done at 7:00 a.m. He then opted to eliminate the procession and just have a mass. At the end of the mass, a procession started without the Bishop’s consent” (Antonio Fernández, Interview, Miami, January 11, 2013). “Hundreds of people gathered around the church shouting that they wanted the procession; at that moment a young man (Arnaldo Socorro) took a picture of Our Lady of

outside the church building on the grounds that they were anti-government demonstrations (Crahan 1999, 95). Of the approximately 800 Catholic priests in Cuba before 1959, about 600 went into exile during the first tumultuous years after the revolution. Even more dramatically, out of approximately 2,000 religious women, or sisters, only about 200 remained after the early years of the revolution (ENEC 1986, 25). In 1960, “nominal Catholics constituted 70-75 percent of the total population;” by 1982, only about 40 percent of the population was Catholic (Crahan 1999, 297).

The massive exodus of religious women was directly related to the closure of Catholic schools in June of 1961. Private education was ended and all education became free, but this also meant the end of parental choice in education. Teachers had to commit to the official discourse or they would lose their jobs. Under the new education system, students who did not clearly show their sympathy for the revolution could not aspire to the careers of their choice (Crahan 1999, 96). If they were active church members, they would often be ridiculed and excluded from access to higher education altogether. Parents sought to send their children out of the country to avoid political indoctrination in schools and in fear that they would lose their parental rights. They also hoped to save their boys from being drafted for military service (García 1996, 23). The Catholic Welfare Bureau of Miami, in collaboration with the U.S. government, responded with the creation of Operation Pedro Pan. From December 1960 to October 1962, more than fourteen thousand Cuban youths arrived alone in the United States. Although many of them became successful citizens, they often carry the scars of being sent away by their

Charity from a nearby house, raised it on high and began the procession...that is when a member of State Security shot him” (Gancedo 2011, 31).

parents for reasons they could not understand, and having to live with strangers or in orphanages, where some of them report to have been physically abused (Torres 2004).³⁰ Children, especially boys, were also sent to Mexico or Spain when it was too expensive for the entire family to leave as a whole. This sort of family division and separation, both physical and relational, became a widespread source of suffering for Cubans and Cuban families.

After the attack of Bay of Pigs [April 17, 1962], my father came to tell me that I had to leave to the United States. I asked, why me and not the whole family? He said I was the only one who had a visa, since I had made a recent trip to the United States, and once there I could claim the rest of the family. Two weeks later, on May of 1961, I left for New York at age 19. I did not see my parents for five years...for me it was a great trauma to be separated from my parents, family, friends, and to arrive here without speaking the language. (Rosario Bergouignan, Interview, Miami, July 26, 2012)

The breakdown of the family began in pre-revolutionary days, when family members joined opposing sides of the political debate and armed struggle (Pedraza 2007, 86).

After the triumph of the revolution, total commitment to the revolution was promoted: “As never before in Cuban history, the revolutionary government assumed a logic of absolute ends that quickly merged *la patria* [the homeland], the revolution, and Fidel Castro...Loyalty became indivisible” (Perez-Stable 2012, 83). This often required spying on and denouncing one’s family members. Friendships and families were destroyed, but

³⁰ There are divergent views on the role of the church and the CIA in the Pedro Pan Operation. A variety of resources on the subject may be found at <http://www.pedropan.org>.

for many the long-term hurt was the lifelong pain of loss and family division, something that caused an emptiness and bitterness for many, all the more so given the importance of family within Cuban culture. On March 12, 1962, the revolutionary government established a ration system throughout the country (García Luis 2001, 57-64). It was presented as a system to guarantee access to basic goods (food, clothing, and hygiene items) in the midst of the widespread scarcity that was blamed on the U.S. embargo. In practice, rationing diverted people's attention from political issues to basic survival. Finding food and scrambling to buy whatever product arrived in the market became a daily struggle. As a result, everyone became equally poor, particularly affecting those who lost previously higher social status. However, in spite of the economic hardships, exiles emphasize that their decision to leave Cuba was above all due to the "widespread violence, social indoctrination, and general climate of suspicion and harassment" (García 1996, 14). One of many testimonials supporting this claim notes:

I chose to leave Cuba, my homeland, because it was clear to me that I could no longer endure, or even survive, in that type of repressive regime. After two unsuccessful attempts, I finally managed to escape in a small boat in the middle of the night, sneaking out and looking over my shoulder, just like a thief who is trying to get away with something that is not his. In my case, I was indeed trying to get away with something, but it was all mine: my freedom, my dignity, my beliefs, my individuality, my rights, and my culture. (Romero 2001, 237)

The decision to go into exile is never easy, and this was certainly the case in Cuba. The physical separation experienced by those who left the country, never to return, created deep wounds. A commentary on the nostalgic song, *Cuando Salí de Cuba* (When

I Left Cuba), illustrates this: “I left my brothers, my dead, my friends, my city, my music, my history and my other brothers who suffer in jail...my childhood, my youth, the best moments...one day I will return and see you free.”³¹ Those leaving the country were labeled *escoria* (scum), or parasites³² by government officials. Staying in contact with them could jeopardize present and future opportunities of those left behind. Family members lost contact with each other. Many were separated for years, since travel out of Cuba was very restricted and those who left could not return.

Another event that increased the tension and fear of another invasion after the CIA-funded attack on Playa Girón was the missile crisis (October 1962). After discovering Soviet nuclear warheads deployed in Cuba, President Kennedy responded with a naval blockade. The crisis was peacefully resolved after Soviet leadership agreed to withdraw the warheads in exchange for a promise from the United States not to invade Cuba (Perez-Stable 2012, 93). However, the fear of an invasion remained and was fueled by government anti-imperialist rhetoric. After this event, many Cubans sought to leave the

³¹ The original words are in Spanish; the translation is by the author of this work.

³²“Los que se van de Cuba son, sencillamente, los que no se pueden adaptar a una revolución que ha acabado con el parasitismo. ¿A dónde van los mosquitos? ¡A donde hay pantano! ¿A dónde van las larvas y los gusanos? ¡A donde hay pudrición! (APLAUSOS.) Los parásitos, las larvas, los que no se pueden resignar al trabajo, se van a donde creen que todavía pueden seguir explotando a otros trabajadores, se van a donde creen que pueden seguir explotando al hombre; los gusanos y los mosquitos, se van al pantano, se van a la pudrición” (Garcia Luis 2001). The ones that leave Cuba are simply the ones that cannot adapt to a revolution that has ended parasitism. Where do mosquitoes go? Where there is a swamp! Where do larvae and worms go? Where there is putrefaction (Applause). Parasites, larvae, those that cannot accept the demands of work, they go where they still think they can continue to exploit other workers (author’s translation).

island in light of the looming threat of war, and clear signs that the revolution was irreversible (Sweig 2009, 84-86).

The Distinct Struggles of Each Wave of Exile

The trauma of exile is further compounded by the length of exile and its ongoing nature. This creates divisions between those who leave and those who do not, as well as between those who leave at various times. Sociologists and historians generally agree on the division of the Cuban exile experience based on waves of migration, which describe the time and method of transportation used to “abandon the island.”³³ Others prefer to use the concept of “diasporic generations” (Berg 2007, 17). This concept of generation implies that people of different biological generations may belong to the same diasporic generation, since “it places emphasis on the historic moment of leaving the island” (Berg 2007, 17). As such, it is an analytical concept based on Karl Mannheim’s (1997) use of generation as “a social creation, not a biological necessity” (Berg 2007, 17). Each wave of exile experienced particular circumstances and suffering, and “these historically situated trajectories, give rise to the different modes of remembering and relating to home” (Berg 2009, 272). Strong divisions among those in exile relate to views held by these groups on issues related to Cuba, which continue to divide the community: “It is from these differing historical orientations that much intergenerational incomprehension arises” (Berg 2009, 272). The subdivision of exile waves follows the generally accepted definitions (García 1996; Grenier 2006).

³³ This very expression of abandonment, which reflects the Spanish phrasing of the exiles themselves, illustrates the pain involved.

The First Wave (1959-1964)

The initial wave of exiles occurred from 1959 to 1964, bringing approximately 250,000 Cubans to the United States (García 1996, 13). Government officials, including military and political leaders of the defunct Batista government, left immediately. The next group to leave included those affected by the nationalization and the Agrarian Reform, as well as those concerned by the loss of Catholic schools and the move to reduce religious practice.³⁴ These groups overlapped, but not entirely. In all, about 36 percent of the members of this group were high school graduates, many of them professionals, and about 12 percent may have attended four or more years of college (Perez 1986). Thus, not everyone in this wave was part of the oligarchy, the wealthy, or the highly educated.³⁵ Many were concerned with the education of their children, the loss of freedom, and the attack on their religious beliefs. In any case, such people typically arrived as refugees after leaving behind all they owned, and expected to start a new life in a strange country with nothing more than what they had in their suitcases.

The process for departure constantly changed as a result of upheavals in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States. Initially, Cubans could obtain visas at the U.S. Embassy or consulate. However, after the United States broke diplomatic relations

³⁴ Many wealthy Cubans supported the revolution contributing an estimated total of 10 million dollars (Pérez-Stable 2012, 67). Their sympathy for the revolution deteriorated when promises of respect for private property and restoration of a constitutional government were not kept and the rhetoric of revolution turned against wealthy classes.

³⁵ Current (2007) makes the case that the first waves were less monolithic than commonly believed. She focuses on the gendered and racialized experiences of both men and women resettled in geographical areas of the United State that the "exile model" typically ignores.

with Cuba on January 3, 1961, departures had to be arranged through the Swiss embassy in Havana (García 1996, 16). Commercial flights between Cuba and the United States were suspended in 1962, as a result of the missile crisis. This marked the beginning of the risky practice of illegal travel across the Florida Straits, as the legal alternative for departure now required a complicated process under government control. Many left via Spain, Mexico, or another country. The Kennedy administration established the Cuban Refugee Program in 1961, offering Cubans housing, medical care, education, and vocational training (García 1996, 23). This group of exiles left Cuba with the notion that they would return soon, and many joined counter-revolutionary groups abroad to help oust Fidel Castro. Their perception of their identity in the new country was marked by this transitional agenda: “crucial to their identity was the belief that they were political exiles, not immigrants; they were in the USA not to make new lives for themselves as *norteamericanos* but to wait until they could resume their previous lives back home” (García 1996, 15).

Coming to the United States was very traumatic for a variety of reasons (García 1996). In addition to having to leave their homeland, family, and all they possessed, the exiles “were deprived of a future in their country” (Berg 2007, 26), at least while the existing socio-political circumstances endured. Thus, to leave the island also felt like abandonment, provoking painful feelings of guilt for many.

They came to United States penniless; “after 1961, Castro permitted emigrants to take only five dollars with them, while requiring them to surrender all other property to his government” (Neumann 2011). This group had to undergo the hardest adaptation experience, since they were the first ones to arrive. They had no one to welcome them

and guide them. Few spoke English and the majority found themselves in an English-speaking world without resources to learn the language. They had to work in menial jobs—such as cleaning, washing dishes, or picking strawberries and tomatoes. For the early exiles, suffering was marked by the loss of the Cuba they knew, the life they led, and the loss of all they had worked to achieve. By 2004,³⁶ the median age of members of this group was 70. They remain the most opposed to unrestricted travel to Cuba (72 percent), most in favor of maintaining the U.S. embargo against Cuba (75 percent), somewhat opposed to selling medications (39 percent) and strongly opposed to selling food to Cuba (58 percent). More than half (55 percent) are strongly or somewhat opposed to dialogue among Cuban exiles, dissidents, and representatives of the Cuban government.

The Second Wave (1965-1973)

The second wave of Cubans brought 260,500 people to the United States on twice-daily flights (Perez 1986, 130). In October of 1965, the Cuban government opened the port of Camarioca to allow persons from the United States to come for their relatives. About 5,000 left in this chaotic manner, until the United States put a stop to this in November, and initiated an organized migration program called the “freedom flights,” established from 1965 to 1973. The “freedom flights” program was the result of an

³⁶ Florida International University has been conducting polls on the Cuban exile population since 1991. The FIU Cuba poll 2004, conducted by Guillermo Grenier and Hugh Gladwin at Florida International University, is used in this work instead of more recent polls, because it is the last one that uses the same division of exile waves used here. More recent polls compare Cuban exiles before and after 1980, 1994, or by other criteria. The 2004 Cuba poll sampled 1,811 residents of Miami-Dade and Broward counties of Cuban descent, generated from a telephone survey using standard, random-digit-dialing procedures that ensured that each residential phone had an equal chance of being chosen for the sample (Grenier 2006).

agreement between the U.S. and the Cuban government. In order for anyone to leave the island, a family member in the United States had to submit an application and assume responsibility for the person or family being claimed. In November 1966, Congress passed the Cuban Adjustment Act,³⁷ under which Cubans could obtain residency after one year of living in the United States. This spared Cubans the burden of having to travel to a third country to obtain their immigrant visa and then reenter the U.S.

From the moment when an application was submitted to the Ministry of Interior, adult members of the family were fired from their jobs and sent to work in labor camps as sugar cane cutters or other farming jobs. The process often lasted more than five years. During this time, children and adolescents experienced rejection and exclusion in school, and were often invited to refuse to leave with their parents. The government would protect them if they decided to stay against their parents' will. Families were often harassed by groups supporting the government or intimidated by government officials.

After six years of revolution, there was a sense that communism was well entrenched in Cuba. While this cohort still held the hope of returning to Cuba, they now knew that it was not going to happen any time soon. This made their departure more radical than it was for the previous group. Before departure, U.S. government agents conducted health checks to exclude anyone who might pose a health threat to Americans. Once in the United States, more than half were resettled around the country, where agencies would find them jobs, help them with housing, and keep them from becoming an added burden

³⁷ “The CAA, as amended, provides that certain Cubans who have been physically present in the United States for at least one year may adjust to permanent resident status at the discretion of the Attorney General—an opportunity that no other group or nationality has” (Wasem 2009, 2).

to Miami and Florida as a whole. The following testimony, recounted by an individual who left Cuba at age 14, exemplifies the suffering of young immigrants:

I feel we were a lost generation, sandwiched between the first wave of migration and the later ones. By 1970, it was clear that the revolution was firmly established, and that Cuba had reached the point of no return in that regard. The Escambray rebels had been subdued, and after the failure of the Bay of Pigs, there was no hope for US intervention or new exile exploits. My family waited six years to leave in the “freedom flights.” One day, an officer arrived at our house and told us our departure had come. He did an inventory of items in the house to make sure we had not given away anything they wanted to confiscate, and the CDR knew what we had (bicycle, sewing machine, etc.). They sealed our door and we went to live with friends until we left a week later. We were allowed to take three items of clothing, one piece of jewelry, and a toy if you were a child. We had lived with the stigma of being "gusanos," outsiders in our land, and then, when we arrived in Miami, we also became outsiders to our own community, who by that time, especially the young people, had adapted and adopted the American ways. Not knowing English alienated me from the American students in my classes, but also from the better-dressed, fluent Cubans (we were not called Cuban-Americans yet) that had arrived with their parents earlier. (Maria Eugenia Pérez, Interview, Miami, September 15, 2012)

The other tool of repression instituted during this period was the *Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción* or UMAP (Military Units to Aid Production). These were forced labor camps: “without any apparent reason, numerous lay leaders, seminarians,

priests, Protestant ministers, and Jehovah Witnesses along with other considered ‘social scum’ were sent” there (Clark 1985, 21). The label of “social scum” was applied indistinctively to delinquents, homosexuals, and American music fans, especially the Beatles (Pedraza 2007, 123). The UMAP was in operation between 1965 and 1968, and estimates of internees are between 30,000 and 40,000 (Pedraza 2007, 123).³⁸ When complaints of human rights violations gained international attention, the government closed the program (Clark 1985, 21). While some prisoners later magnanimously described their experience in the camps as producing certain “spiritual benefits” (Crahan 1999, 97), most felt that the UMAP robbed them of their youth (Pedraza 2007, 125).

All levels of education were affected by the revolution. On the positive side, it raised levels of literacy and made higher education accessible, with some limitations for those who did not support the revolution (Crahan 1999, 96). However, education was increasingly used to promote the rhetoric of the revolution. Elementary school children were often ridiculed for their religious beliefs. Students were asked to say if they believed in God, and other students were encouraged to laugh at those who said they believed (Clark 1985, 44). During the mid-1960s high school students were sent to do *trabajo productivo* (productive work) in agricultural sites away from home. This project, known as *la escuela al campo* (school in the countryside), instilled a sense of shared responsibility for the agricultural development of Cuba, while distancing young people from familial influence (Clark 1985, 14). Later, many had to do their whole college education while working the fields and living in campsites under precarious conditions,

³⁸The Human Rights Committee of the Organization of American States also estimates 30,000 (2013) while Clark’s estimate is 10,000-20,000 (1985, 21).

with poor nourishment, and inadequately supervised by adults. Church activities and catechetical programs were made more difficult by organizing street games in front of the church (Crahan 1985, 328). This program known as *Plan de la Calle* (Street Program), discouraged attendance and distracted churchgoers by playing loud music during services and organizing fun activities for children (Clark 1985, 26).

The demographics of this wave is disproportionately constituted by women, students, children, and the elderly, because the Cuban government prevented males of military age (15-26) and political prisoners from emigrating (García 1996, 38). It also limited the departure of people (mostly men) who possessed much-needed technical or professional skills. Therefore, this group is mostly blue collar (57 percent), and only 12 percent included professionals or managers (García 1996, 43). They are the most opposed to lifting the U.S. embargo against Cuba (78 percent) and to dialogue (59 percent). They strongly oppose selling food (62 percent) and large numbers also oppose selling medicines (42 percent) to Cuba. They fall just below the first wave in their opposition to unrestricted travel to Cuba (71 percent) (FIU Cuba poll 2004). The first and second cohorts together comprise the “historic exile.”

The Third Wave (1974-1979)

The third cohort consists of those who came to the United States between 1974 and 1979, by which time migration between the United States and Cuba had diminished considerably. Through the Family Reunification Program, which began in 1978, a number of Cuban exiles returned home to visit their families. This was the first of such contacts, since neither the Cuban nor U.S. governments had allowed Cubans to return to the island. The exile community rejected this “émigré tourism,” and the dialogue between

exiles and Cuban government authorities that preceded it and made it possible. They argued that “as refugees and *exiliados*, Cubans could not morally travel to the country they had fled” (García 1996, 51). Nonetheless, from this point on, the idea of returning to Cuba, even if there was no change in government, made departure more bearable. This group’s support of the embargo weakens (65 percent) in comparison to other groups. Their opposition to selling medicine and food to Cuba is much lower, at 24 and 48 percent, respectively. Still, 55 percent do not agree with unrestricted travel to Cuba. Less than half (46 percent) are opposed to dialogue among Cuban exiles, dissidents, and representatives of the Cuban government (FIU Cuba poll 2004).

The Fourth Wave (1980)

By 1980, as a result of increased exposure to the outside world, people on the island began to awaken to what life could be like under another system (García 1996, 53). By this time, many who had hoped the revolution would result in a more just society were disillusioned. The moment was ripe for a new migration.

The migration explosion known as the Mariel Boatlift³⁹ began on April 1st, when a bus transporting a group of Cubans seeking asylum crashed through the gate of the Peruvian Embassy in Havana. Thousands followed,⁴⁰ cramming the gardens of the embassy, where they lived for days, and even weeks, in the most inhumane conditions. Armandina Morales shares her experience:

³⁹ Mariel is a port in northwestern Cuba, about 50 kilometers to the west of Havana.

⁴⁰ The generally accepted estimate of the number of asylum seekers at the embassy is 10,800 (Garcia, 1996, 57).

We only had the clothes we were wearing; we spent six days without access to bathrooms. The police brought fierce dogs and my granddaughter was very afraid. We would not eat, because we weren't hungry. Everything was so repugnant; we had to walk on people's excrement. (Morales 2005)

On April 20, 1980, the Cuban government announced that anyone who wanted to leave the island could be collected by their relatives in the United States via the port of Mariel. At the same time, the government placed people from mental hospitals and jails on the boats of exiles that made the journey to pick up their relatives (Ojito 2005).

Approximately 125,000 Cubans left the island by boat over a six month period. About 26,000 had criminal records, of which 2,000 had committed serious crimes. Another 2,000 had mental health problems (García 1996, 64). Thousands traveled each day; during the first month, the Coast Guard “conducted 989 search and rescue operations,” and some lost their lives when boats capsized (García 1996, 61; Ojito 2005). Once they reached the United States, processing refugees became a real challenge for the government. Several centers were opened in South Florida, mainly in Key West and Miami, to process the new arrivals. As soon as the immigrants were processed, they were released to their families, or made to wait to be sponsored if they had no family in the United States. Overwhelmed by the numbers, three additional camps were opened in Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin to process and hold those awaiting sponsorship, a wait that lasted more than a year in some cases (García 1996, 63). This new migration was not well received by Cubans who were already well-established in the United States, in part because the “American press focused an exaggerated amount of attention on those with mental disabilities and on the hardcore felons” (García 1996, 65). The *marielitos*, as

they were called, were stigmatized by the rest of the exile community. Their pain in leaving was not so much about what was left behind, since most were desperate to leave the life they had, but what they found upon arriving in the United States.

The Mariel migration was also treated differently by the federal government, since these migrants were not considered legitimate refugees. Under the 1980 U.S. Refugee Act, “Cubans did not qualify for refugee status or for special assistance that status would have entitled them to receive” (García 1996, 69). They were categorized as “entrants: status pending,” which was the government’s strategy to appear committed to stop illegal immigration. They did not receive resident status until 1984 (García 2007, 81). Members of this group were younger. At the time of arrival, the average age was thirty years, mostly male (70 percent), and included a higher percentage of blacks and mulattos than previous waves (approximately 20 percent) (García 2007, 80). In comparison to the previous group, they are somewhat less open in their positions towards rapprochement with Cuba, but much more open than the first two groups. As of 2004, 67 percent favor maintaining the embargo, 37 percent oppose selling medicine to Cuba, and 50 percent remain against the sale of food. They oppose unrestricted travel to Cuba (59 percent) and national dialogue (48 percent) (FIU Cuba poll 2004).

The Fifth Wave (1981-1989)

After the Mariel crisis, migration between the United States and Cuba was mostly nonexistent, averaging about 3,000 entrants per year (Perez 1986, 131). These exiles differ from the previous cohort in their increased openness to travel to Cuba (only 46 percent oppose it), though, as of 2004, 70 percent still consider it important to maintain the embargo (FIU Cuba poll 2004).

The Sixth Wave (1990-1995)

With the fall of the Soviet bloc in 1989, Cuba plunged into a severe economic crisis that the Cuban government called the *Periodo Especial*. Cuba had been economically dependent on the Soviet Union and was not prepared for this transition. In 1994, a new wave of immigrants crossed the Florida straits in a desperate attempt to reach the United States. After the Cuban Coast Guard sank a hijacked tug-boat called the *13 de Marzo*,⁴¹ Cuban authorities stopped interfering with those trying to leave the island. The Clinton administration suspended the thirty-year policy of allowing Cubans caught at sea to stay in the U.S. and set up camps at the Guantanamo Base to process the *balseiros* (rafters), or hold them until a third country received them. Nearly 200,000 immigrants survived the crossing on makeshift rafts, though many died on the journey. Alfredo González (2010) recounts how he could no longer live without freedom and decided, at age 28, to build his own *balsa* (raft) and leave the island at night by sea. After being picked up by the United States Coast Guard, he lived at the Guantanamo Base for a year. Maria Isabel Jimenez left with her two six-year-old twins and a group of thirty-four relatives on a fishing boat that her brother-in-law commanded.

We were caught by a Cuban boat that wanted us to return, since we had stolen the boat. They threatened to kill us, but my father knew the captain and reminded him of how he had done some carpentry jobs for him, and he let us go. We spent ten days at sea, and when we reached Mexican waters, a Cuban boat wanted to sink

⁴¹ This incident took place on July 13, 1994. Out of the 72 passengers, 41 died, including 10 children. No one was charged for these deaths. (The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Report Number 47/96 CASE 11.436, Victims of the Tugboat “13 de marzo” vs. Cuba, October 16, 1996. See <http://www2.fiu.edu/~fcf/13mem71398.htm>. Accessed, September 25, 2012).

us and force us to return, but Mexican fishing boats protected us. We said: “we are not going to ‘chicken out,’ we are not going to return,” we raised the children and reminded them of the crime they had committed with the boat *13 de Marzo*. We were finally picked up by the Coast Guard and spent five days on the “mother ship” without any hygiene, bathrooms, and hardly any food. By the time we got to Guantanamo, our hair was full of lice because we had not showered in 15 days. There, we slept in tents, enduring storms, mosquitoes, and the mud. Most people stayed for a year. We were able to leave after six months because my daughter had a serious case of ear infection. (Interview, Miami, September 13, 2012)

The *balseero* group experienced the most traumatic departure (Ackerman 2004). Even though there have been rafters in all periods since 1959, the numbers peaked in 1994. The degree of desperation may be measured by their willingness to risk their lives crossing the shark-infested Florida Straits in “floating vessels made of inner tubes, wood and even the shells of abandoned cars,” (Sweig 2009) only to be picked up at sea and sent to live at the Guantanamo Base.⁴²

This crisis ended with the establishment of the “wet-foot, dry-foot policy”⁴³ by the Clinton administration, which denies entry to the United States to any Cuban caught at sea, but gives asylum to those who reach dry land (Wasem 2009). A new legal immigration program was also established, allowing a minimum of 20,000 visas to be granted per year to those who apply for visas as family-sponsored immigrants, including

⁴² See “The Cuban Rafter Phenomenon: A Unique Sea Exodus” (Ackerman, Domínguez, and Fernández 2006).

⁴³ Cuban Migration Agreement, September 1994.

immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, or as refugees. To fill the number of allowed visas, a lottery of visas was created, popularly known as *el bombo*.⁴⁴

The 2004 FIU Cuba poll suggests that the rafter migration represents a significant change in attitudes. Only 50 percent support the embargo and only 20 percent oppose selling medicine to Cuba and 29 percent oppose selling food. Compared to other cohorts, many fewer oppose dialogue among Cuban exiles, dissidents, and representatives of the Cuban government (38 percent). This group includes some who once sympathized with the revolution and gradually became disillusioned, though others never sided with the government. Nonetheless, the timing of the *balseo* crisis was economic, not political. Given these factors, earlier cohorts commonly cast doubt on this group's motivations to come to the United States, including their political or religious views.

Recent to Present

Under the Cuban Migration Agreement of 1994, Cubans may legally enter the United States with a visa or *parole*⁴⁵ each year. However many continue to reach the United States by boat or by traveling via a third country. In 2008, 16,260 Cuban migrants reached or tried to reach the United States but were intercepted en route. Four years later, at the end of 2012 fiscal year (September 30), the number decreased to only slightly more than 13,000 (Alfonso Chardy, *The Miami Herald*, November 2, 2012).

⁴⁴“Bombo” is the Spanish name for lottery ball machines. Since its implementation, there have been three visa lottery open seasons in 1994, 1996, and 1998. The number of qualifying registrants increased each year, from 189,000 in 1994 to 433,00 in 1996 and to 541,00 in 1998 (Wasem 2009, 1).

⁴⁵ This term is used in immigration law to refer to the temporary permission granted to aliens until they are admitted in lawful status or otherwise required to leave (Wasem 2009).

Attitudes of Cuban exiles have evolved, though relative differences between cohorts remain. According to the latest FIU Cuba poll (2011),⁴⁶ 56 percent of the Cuban exile population surveyed still favors the embargo. However, there is a significant division between those who came before 1994 (58 percent in favor) and those who came after that date (42 percent in favor). This represents a considerable change in comparison to the 1991 poll, when 87 percent were in favor of the embargo (78 percent “strongly in favor” and 9 percent “mostly favored”). Similar trends can be seen regarding travel to Cuba and the other issues.

Table 2.1. Opinions about tightening the embargo: FIU Cuba polls 1991-2011

	1991	Jun-93	Mar-95	Jun-97	Oct-00	Mar-04	Mar-07	2011
Strongly Favor	78%	73%	74%	78%	62%	66%	57%	56%
Mostly Favor	9	12	9					
Mostly Oppose	5	6	5	22	38	34	42	44
Strongly Oppose	7	9	11					
Not with Fidel/Raul			1					

⁴⁶ FIU Cuba Polls after 2004 no longer subdivided the exile according to migration waves specified in this work. Researchers were contacted to obtain more recent data subdivided according to exile waves, but they responded that the latest poll (2011) divided exile into those who came before and after 1994.

Table 2.2. Opinions on establishing national dialogue: FIU Cuba polls 1991-2011

	1991	Jun-93	Mar-95	Jun-97	Oct-00	Mar-04	Mar-07	2011
Strongly Favor	31%	23%	21%	30%	34%	39%	50%	48%
Mostly Favor	18	20	20	22	17	16	15	20
Mostly Oppose	8	3	7	14	12	8	10	11
Strongly Oppose	31	41	42	35	37	37	25	32
Not with Fidel/Raul	12	13	11					

While the percentage of those who strongly oppose establishing national dialogue did not change much between 1991 and 2011 (31 and 32 percent respectively), those who are strongly and mostly in favor increased from 49 percent in 1991 to 68 percent in 2011.

Table 2.3. Opinions on travel to Cuba: FIU Cuba polls 1991-2011

	1991	Jun-93	Mar-95	Oct-00	Mar-04	Mar-07	2011
Strongly Favor	34%	23%	22%	53%	46%	55%	57%
Mostly Favor	16	18	15				
Mostly Oppose	5	5	9	47	54	45	43
Strongly Oppose	34	45	49				
Not with Fidel/Raul	11	9	5				

Attitudes supporting travel to Cuba have been steadily increasing since the *Periodo Especial* (Cuba's economic crisis in the 1990s). Opposition to travel is based on political

views, for instance, “Sen. Marco Rubio recently slammed Americans who visit Cuba, including some of his Senate colleagues, saying that they are helping enable the island's communist government” (Fabian, 2013).

The embargo against Cuba has had no success in its goal to force the Cuban government to capitulate. According to Jorge Domínguez, Harvard expert in Latin American and Cuban affairs, far from hurting the Cuban government, it fuels its image as a victim before the world and, thus, favors it. Domínguez argues that “the current policy of the United States may be doing the opposite of what it intends” (2007, 257). Opening certain aspects of the economic embargo, some argue, would allow a free flow of information that would eventually lead to democratization.

Girard, Grenier, and Gladwin (2010) contend that the exiles endorse the embargo as a symbol of anti-communist or “exile ideology,”⁴⁷ not for strategic or pragmatic reasons. According to this interpretation, the decreasing support for the embargo among Cuban exiles is the result of the “demographic decline of the political substrate of the exile ideology, namely the Cuban immigrant community that arrived in the United States between 1959 and 1973” (Girard, Grenier, and Gladwin 2010, 17). As years pass, earlier waves naturally diminish and newer waves not only increase in numbers, but influence the remnants of the earlier waves on their perception of these issues. Half of Cubans living in the U.S. (52 percent) arrived in 1990 or later (Motel and Paten 2012). In addition, the polarized views that continue to divide the exile community cannot be

⁴⁷ Lisandro Perez’s describes the “exile ideology” as a commitment to an uncompromising struggle against the Cuban government, an overriding focus on Cuba, a lack of tolerance for debate and diversity of views towards Cuba, and an overwhelming commitment to the Republican Party (Perez, 1992, 1-17).

explained solely by taking into account the experience of each wave of migration. The length of time in which these émigrés have lived in South Florida, or in the Miami-based enclave community, also influences their views (Grenier and Stepick 1992, 90). The enclave and the influence of Cuban exile anti-Castro media are considered key factors in the maintenance of the exile ideology (Grenier 2013).

The enclave has implications for the persistence of an “exile” ideology. The institutional completeness [characteristic of an enclave] tends to insulate the members of the ethnic community, minimizing outside contact, and thereby reinforcing the culture (including ideology). (Grenier and Stepick 1992, 99)

Age at the Time of Migration

The polarized views that continue to divide the exile community cannot be explained solely by taking into account the experience of each migratory wave. A very important factor is the age of the person at the time of migration, regardless of when the person migrated. Those who migrated as adults have a different understanding of the exile experience than their children. For children, there was no choice. They left with their parents, or had to accept being sent alone to the United States or another country.

Those who migrate as adults are considered first generation, while those who migrate as children are known as the “one-and-a-half” generation (Rumbaut 2004),⁴⁸ meaning that they are part of the first generation, but did not grow up in the country of origin and are, in some ways, second generation—born in the host country. The “one-

⁴⁸ According to sociologist Ruben Rumbaut (2004), generational cohorts are divided as follows: Foreign born 18+ at arrival (1.0), foreign born 13-17 at arrival (1.25), foreign born 6-12 (1.5), foreign born 0-5 at arrival (1.75), U.S. born of foreign parents (2.0), U.S. born of one foreign parent (2.5).

and-a-half” and younger generations were imbued with Cuban identity by older family members, mostly through story-telling, but differ from adult émigrés in that “their formative and educational experience outside of Cuba molded their worldviews, which were quite distinct from their traumatized parents, who lost everything they worked for” (Poyo 2007, 243). These generations may be branded with strong sentiments about Cuban politics, but are more open to “dialogue and engagement than intransigence and confrontation” (242) relative to their parents. This group shares a sense of loss and nostalgia, made up of memories that are often borrowed from their elders, as childhood recollections fade. In their view, the idea of returning to Cuba to recover one’s childhood does not constitute a betrayal of the love for the homeland, as it does for the first generations of the historic exile. Some accept the nomenclature of Cuban-Americans, as Perez Firmat observed in his book *Life on a Hyphen* (1994). Others refuse to consider themselves anything but Cuban, despite American citizenship. Often, second generation persons in the exile community have absorbed their parents’ and grandparents’ experience to such a degree that they too experience trauma. This is known as transgenerational trauma (Atkinson 2006/2007).

Those who migrated at an old age (70 or older) to be close to their children and grandchildren often personally suffer the most (Perez 1986, 132). They left their lives behind and depend on younger generations, since it is particularly difficult for them to enter the work force or learn the language. They have a hard time adjusting to the individualism of American society, having lived their lives in close-knit communities, where families knew each other through several generations, and houses were built close together. Their knowledge of American life and the interpretation of the exile events is

mediated mostly by reactionary Cuban radio station commentators. This older generation often embraces the “exile ideology” because they have no other contact with reality.

Age at the time of migration plays an important role on how the exile experience is integrated in the adult years. This helps explain the attitudes of older exiles who arrived as children in earlier waves and are, nonetheless, very tolerant and open to dialogue. Younger people tend to be more open to issues regarding Cuba than older ones, independent of when they migrated. The following charts reflect the impact of age on the opinions regarding travel to Cuba, continuing the embargo, and dialogue between the U.S. government and the Cuban government (2008 FIU Cuba poll).

Table 2.4. Would you favor or oppose eliminating restrictions on travel to Cuba for Cuban Americans? (Source: 2008 FIU Cuba poll)

	Ages 18-44	Ages 45-64	Ages 65+
Favor	71%	64%	53%
Oppose	29%	36%	47%

The majority of younger generations are opposed to restrictions on travel to Cuba for Cuban-Americans. In March of 2009, the Obama administration eased the restrictions on travel to Cuba by allowing religious organizations and accredited institutions of higher education to sponsor travel to Cuba. In addition, those who have family in Cuba are permitted to visit every year and for longer periods of time than previously (BBC, “Barack Obama Eases Restrictions of Travel to Cuba,” January 14, 2011). Travel to Cuba remains subject to the embargo policy.

Table 2.5. Do you favor or oppose continuing the embargo? (Source: 2008 FIU Cuba poll)

	Ages 18-44	Ages 45-65	Ages 65+
Favor	35%	47%	68%
Oppose	65%	53%	32%

The majority of younger generations oppose the embargo, a position that distances them politically from older generations. They are also strongly favor direct talks between the Cuban and United States government.

Table 2.6. Should the U.S. government and the Cuban government engage in direct talks about migration and other critical questions? (Source: 2008 FIU Cuba poll)

	Ages 18-44	Ages 45-65	Ages 65+
Yes	88%	74%	62%
No	12%	26%	38%

Motives for Migration

Cubans in the exile community are divided over real and perceived motives for migration. A sizable segment of Cubans outside the island “view themselves as exiles or political refugees...others abandon Cuba without developing an opposition consciousness and do not identify themselves as exiles, claiming instead to have ‘emigrated’ in search of better personal opportunities” (Blanco et al. 2011, 41). “Exiles” tend to self-identify as having “pure” political, not economic motives for leaving Cuba. Their identity as exiles

is found in a narrative focused on their search for freedom and resistance towards political injustice. Political injustice does not need to involve direct, personal aggression or mass atrocity.

Surveillance, the imprisonment of dissidents, and the obstruction of oppositional journalism, public speech, gatherings, and religious activity, backed by the threat of force and smoothed by a measure of popular acquiescence, enables some regimes to achieve through pervasive fear what others gain through crude bloodshed. (Philpott 2012, 25-26)

However, the simple fact is that it is very difficult to distinguish economic and political motives (Domínguez 2010). One view is that the term exile (implying that someone was “forced” to leave) applies to specific situations, not the majority of Cuban immigrants, given that the lines between political, economic, cultural, ideological, moral, and religious motivations are blurred (Alonso 2010). The political system is intrinsically connected to the economic system that brought about tight restrictions in all areas of livelihood. The gradual loss of political idealism and disenchantment with the revolution took place at the same time, as the economy deteriorated to the point that people’s basic needs became their main priority, if not their obsession. There are some who claim to have migrated for political reasons, while failing to recognize the economic underpinnings of their decision, as the new political system took over private business and the economy declined. Some of the members of the later waves who claim to be migrants fail to see how the economic conditions that led them to seek a different horizon are the result of the political system.

Some prefer the term “diaspora” over “exile,” because they “find its emotional impact too excluding... That is, to define ourselves by what has ceased to be, by what no longer works, by what is missing” (Rojas 2007, 44). Diaspora⁴⁹ refers to dispersed and displaced people, a concept that comes from the experience of the Jewish people and tends to reflect an origin in persecution, or some other force external to the community itself. Put another way, diaspora “involves migration and is at the very core a political phenomena” (Segovia 1995, 60), but the term “has grown to include individuals in search of better life and opportunities they believe do not exist in their country of origin” (Blanco et al. 2011, 41).⁵⁰ In a related way, some have “called for a radical redefinition of exile and diasporic existence that does not see mobility as pathological, but rather embraces the new realities of transnational identities or celebrates the emergence of global hybrids (Smith-Christopher 2002, 17). Others highlight that the term that most clearly emphasizes the aspect of political persecution and the impossibility of return is “refugee” or “asylum seeker” (Marill 1998, 35). Exile means not having “the right to return to one’s country whenever one wants to, nor in the condition that people normally return to their countries” (Eduardo Mesa, Interview, Miami, July 24, 2012).

Certain peculiar aspects of the Cuban diaspora represent a common denominator among those who describe themselves as exiles and those who prefer to avoid this term. Except for a minority with foreign residency permits, all Cubans residing

⁴⁹ For further discussion of the concept of diaspora, see Robin Cohen (2001) *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* and Rainer Baubock and Thomas Faist, eds. (2010) *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories, and Methods*.

⁵⁰ For reflections on the meaning of the Cuban diaspora from a broader literary, cultural, and social perspective, see O’Reilly (2001; 2007), and Fernández and Cámara (2000).

outside of the country—whether they describe themselves as exiles or emigrants, whatever their reason for relocating—have a “permanent exit” stamp in their passports. All have lost the right to live in their country of origin. (Blanco et al. 2011, 41)

All these terms also imply a temporary situation and the possibility or dream of return. The Cuban community outside the island has lived emotionally in exile—always longing for the homeland—but, in practice, has fully adapted to life in the United States and demonstrated its success in the political arena and financial world (Stepick et al. 2003). According to the Pew Research Hispanic Center, Cubans in the United States are actually more likely to call the United States home than immigrants from any other Latin American country (2006, 4).⁵¹

Part of the reluctance among Cuban exiles to travel to Cuba is that if one can return home, one cannot truly sustain the claim that one is a political refugee. This is one of the reasons they supported the restrictions imposed by the Bush administration in 2004.

Supporters of the tightened restrictions argued that both educational and family travel to Cuba had become fronts for tourist travel. Tightening up on such travel, they argued, would deny the regime dollars that help maintain its repressive control. Another argument made by some supporters of the tightened restrictions was that the limiting of family travel to once every three years would help ensure that such travel

⁵¹ More than half (52 percent) of Cuban-born persons in the U.S. consider the U.S. their “real homeland,” as compared to Mexicans (36 percent), Central and South Americans (35 percent) and Puerto Ricans (33 percent) (Pew Research Hispanic Center 2006).

was limited to family emergencies. Along these lines, some argued that limiting family travel would make travelers more sensitive to political repression on the island and highlights that Cuban Americans are political refugees, not economic immigrants. (Sullivan 2012, 3)

Regardless of how Cubans living outside the island identify themselves, their opinion on these core questions of self-identity translates into emotions and attitudes that are often grounded in profound experiences of personal trauma.

Understanding the Exile through the Lens of Trauma Theory

Since the 1980s, the concept of trauma has been used to develop studies and mental health interventions with refugees (Ingleby 2005, 9). Traumatizing events leave a mark on people's psyche and often have long-term repercussions. When trauma is not healed, it leads to "lack of empathy and intolerance of differences, dichotomized, either-or thinking [and an] inability to see beyond one's own pain" (Yoder 2005, 33-34). Trauma studies thus offer an appropriate framework to understand the reaction of some Cuban exiles to their experience of loss and displacement. Understanding traumatic syndromes may also help delineate the recovery process. Trauma research suggests three stages of recovery: Safety (actual and perceived), mourning and remembrance, and reconnection (Herman 1997), which "can be observed not only in the healing of individuals but also in the healing of traumatized communities" (Herman 1997, 241). A process of personal and communal reconciliation will therefore benefit from a deep understanding of how people respond to traumatic situations and how they can heal. In other words, "trauma does not just go away. It has to be worked through" (Atkinson 2006/2007, 3506-25).

Unhealed trauma has very negative psychosocial repercussions on individuals and whole communities (Figley 1985; 2012). When experiences affect a whole community and a nation, they may be considered “societal or collective trauma,” and those affected often experience feelings of helplessness, fear, and loss of control (Yoder 2005, 10-12). Collective trauma has “longer lasting repercussions. It sinks in the fabric and soul of relations and beliefs of people as community” (Atkinson 2006/2007, 1019-34). Such is the case of Native Americans and Australian aborigines, a community that has experienced “cumulative emotional psychological wounding over the life span and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma” (Brave Heart 2005). Six primary wounds can be identified as flowing from cases of serious political injustice: “the violation of the victim’s human rights, harm to the victim’s person,⁵² ignorance of the source and circumstances of political injustices, lack of acknowledgement of the suffering of victim, standing victory of the wrongdoer’s political injustice,⁵³ and harm to the person of the wrongdoer” (Philpott 2012, 33-41). These wounds carve memories that carry emotional meaning that translate into postures or judgments, and sometimes actions that perpetuate the suffering in the victim and towards others, causing secondary wounds or wounds inflicted by wounded people (Philpott 2012, 42-47).

⁵²In harm to the person Philpott lists the following: death; loss of loved ones; permanent injury from torture or assault; grief; humiliation; trauma; sexual violation; loss of wealth; proper, and livelihood; the two types of wounds as a result of the conquest and subordination of the victim’s community; the taking of the victim’s land; the defilement of the victim’s race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or gender (2012, 34-35).

⁵³ The standing victory of a perpetrator’s injustice is the wound created by impunity, when the perpetrator seems to continue winning and his/her actions are not condemned (Philpott 2012, 39).

Yoder (2005) identifies three responses to trauma: fight, flight, or freeze. Some Cubans have chosen to fight in a variety of ways. In the early days, there were several attempts to organize military actions to overthrow the Castro government: the Escambray guerrillas, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and many other smaller military operations. Some have chosen to fight by organizing terrorist attacks within Cuba, or against those considered Cuban sympathizers in the United States and elsewhere (De La Torre 2003, 42-45). One such case, although those responsible were not fully identified, was the bombing of *Cubana de Aviación* Flight 455 on October 6, 1976, which resulted in 78 casualties. Although the Cuban government blames the exile community for organizing and supporting ongoing terrorist actions (*Juventud Rebelde*, September 25, 2010), U.S. government policy since the mid-1980s has strongly discouraged such actions.

After the turbulent years of the sixties and seventies, when political intolerance unleashed terrorism against dissenting voices which may have dared to speak out for dialogue with the Cuban government, the Reagan Administration took the initiative of passing the word that the United States' days of the Old West were over and anyone who would commit crimes on American soil would be dealt with accordingly. (Blanco 2012, 7)

The exile community has been stereotyped as a mafia involved in *la lucha* (the struggle) against Satan—personified as Fidel Castro (De La Torre 2003, 42). According to De La Torre, *la lucha* serves to construct the Cuban exilic identity (69). This is supported by the myth that there is a “common exile ideology” (Grenier 2006). While this may be true for a diminishing segment of the population, this position is not representative of the current attitudes of the majority of the exile community (FIU Cuba

poll 2011). This became evident when the majority of Cubans voted for Obama in the last election (Tamayo 2012).⁵⁴ Thus, “the degree of flexibility or intransigence of different sectors of the Cuban population on the island and in the diaspora are not static” (Blanco et al. 2011, 60). Fissures within the exile community are precisely reflective of larger fissures among the Cuban people, whether on the island or not. Another war is fought through the airwaves of some Cuban radio stations in Miami. They earn their ratings by sharply criticizing anyone who seems “too soft” in their political views towards Cuba. Using a “combative and strident” tone (Grenier and Stepick 1992, 99), they communicate that “anyone who criticizes the community’s normative attitude toward the present regime in La Habana runs the risk of being labeled a communist and ostracized” (De La Torre 2003, xv).

Others have chosen to “flee,” without any sort of “fight,” avoiding any sort of contact with the reality of Cuba today, putting Cuba out of their minds entirely. They are obsessive precisely as they obsessively block out all thought of Cuba. Exiles often express that they do not want to go to Cuba, not only for ideological reasons, but because they do not want to suffer again.

After I came, I disconnected from the reality of Cuba. I did not want to know anything about it. It was such a deep pain that I did not even want people to mention Cuba. First of all, I was not interested because the family members that stayed behind were all communist, and we did not speak to each other again. I did not want

⁵⁴ Republican affiliation is part of the exile ideology.

to know anything. I did not want to suffer. I was in denial. It was like a mental block.
(Rosario Bergouignan, Interview, July 26, 2012)

Many thus choose to forget what they left behind. For this reason, some refuse to communicate with families and friends on the island, even though it is much easier to do so now. Forgetting about Cuba is hard to do in Miami, because it is so close to Cuba—geographically and affectively.

The third response is to “freeze” and, clearly, many Cubans have frozen in time. This fuels a sense of nostalgia. They cherish the memories of Cuba before 1959, about “the real Cuba,” which existed then but does not exist now. As De La Torre says, “exilic Cubans avoid the pain of displacement by constructing a mythical Cuba” (2003, 32). Each year, Miami celebrates a major event called “Cuba Nostalgia.” This exhibit showcases art, music, food, and memorabilia from pre-Castro times. The theme of nostalgia is central to Cuban exilic literature (Machado Sáez 2005). By focusing on an idealized past, many Cubans neglect the reality and needs of Cubans on the island today, or the reality of pre-revolutionary Cuba.

These three responses exemplify unhealed trauma. Trauma theory not only helps identify and understand behaviors that reflect an experience of trauma, but also offers a direction for treatment and care of those affected by it. The complexity of the Cuban experience shows that trauma is the result of multiple and prolonged situations that affect people in different ways and to different degrees. The path to healing starts from understanding the roots of personal and collective trauma through avenues of forgiveness, conflict transformation, and reconciliation, both personal and social. The next chapter

will explore these elements so as to inform a practical theology of reconciliation for Cuban exiles.

Chapter Three

RECONCILIATION RESEARCH

Reconciliation is to recognize that we are all brothers and sisters.

—Pedro Pablo Alvarez⁵⁵

This chapter examines reconciliation in its multiple layers and practices. It begins by addressing personal reconciliation, its relationship to forgiveness, and models of intervention that can foster forgiveness. Reconciliation cannot happen unless healing and forgiveness are addressed (Schreiter 2010, 368). This means that reconciliation within the exile community as respect for diversity, including views that promote a more open relationship with those in the island, and a different approach to creating change in the system, require some degree of personal healing, including forgiveness. Forgiveness is part of the necessary process of healing to support social reconciliation within the exile community. The second section in this chapter addresses the social dimension of reconciliation, and ways to approach conflict from a perspective of transformation, identifying key components for a process of reconciliation for the Cuban exile community. This chapter seeks to answer the following questions: What do the social sciences contribute to the understanding of reconciliation? What do they suggest for a process of reconciliation?

People understand reconciliation in different ways. For Cuban exiles, the word is often understood as implying rapprochement with a Cuban government that has not expressed remorse for its actions, and does not show any intention towards respecting

⁵⁵Interview with Pedro Pablo Alvarez in Miami, September 17, 2012.

human rights, protecting civil liberties, or allowing free elections. Following this logic, reconciliation is not an acceptable avenue. This is the same argument presented by a group of South African theologians in the *Kairos Document*. They reject “cheap reconciliation,”⁵⁶ or reconciliation without justice, which lends itself to a theological justification of the apartheid (De Gruchy 1997, 17). To avoid misunderstanding, most of the discussion on reconciliation refers to post-conflict situations, since “one cannot forgive what is still being done” (Schreiter 2010, 368). Others in the exile community relate the concept of reconciliation to the exile’s relationship with the people of Cuba, and conclude that there is no need for reconciliation, since the exile community has no quarrel with the people of Cuba, but with its government (de Aragón 2012). A third application of the concept of reconciliation is within the exile community itself. In this case, many claim that there exists strong solidarity among Cubans in exile, since those who arrive in the U.S. are welcomed even if they took an active part in the Cuban government; thus, the exile community has no need for reconciliation.

As such, it is understandable that for many exiles the idea of reconciliation is out of the question and even taboo. It is important, first of all, to identify the actors in the reconciliation process (Schreiter 2000, 105). This work is not aimed at social reconciliation with the Cuban government, or the Cuban people on the island, though its insights can be applied to that purpose in the future. Rather, the goal of this work is to promote reconciliation within the Cuban exile community. Its starting point is a critique

⁵⁶ “The concept of ‘cheap reconciliation’ is used in reference to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “attack on the way in which the Lutheran *sola gratia* had been reduced to ‘cheap grace’ within the German Evangelical Church during the Third Reich” (De Gruchy 1997, 17).

of the claim that exiles welcome anyone who leaves the island. The reality is that many in the exile community only accept other exiles *as long as* they share anti-Castro sentiments. The problem arises when people express diverse views that depart from the long-standing ideology of a segment of the exile community.

Those inside or outside the community who voice views that are “soft” or conciliatory with respect to Castro, or who take a less-than militant stance in opposition to Cuba’s regime, are usually subjected to criticism and scorn, their position belittled and their motives questioned. (Grenier 2006, 219)

Polarization is further compounded by the way later arrived Cubans have been influenced by the official discourse in the island that portrays the exile community as monolithic and intolerant, a mafia stuck in the past and ready to reclaim its properties in Cuba. Divisions within this community reflect a real need for reconciliation. Prejudice and rejection among Cuban exiles is the second form of trauma Cubans experience. Thus, this exile community faces a double trauma, leaving their homeland and discord among themselves.

The need for reconciliation among Cubans inside and outside the island has been articulated in different ways by Cuban church leaders, academics, and observers of the Cuban situation (García Ibáñez 2012; Meurice Estiú 1997; Valdés 1999; López Levy 2010; Domínguez 2010).

Throughout our short history, our common efforts [to achieve justice and well-being for all] have been hampered by our selfishness, our incapacity for dialogue and respect for others, ... exclusion and intolerance, emphasizing our differences to such degree that they become irreconcilable, instead of finding the points of coincidence

that can help us walk together....It is necessary to overcome the barriers that separate Cubans. (García Ibáñez 2012)

The Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba established reconciliation between Cubans living inside and outside the island as a central theme in the program commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the image of Our Lady of Charity⁵⁷ in 2012. A decade earlier, the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University conducted a two-year study to offer guidelines for a national (Cuban) reconciliation project (Perez-Stable and others 2003). Similar to the bishops' conclusions, the study suggests "reconciliation of every Cuban with himself [sic]" and "reconciliation in the diaspora" as key components for Cuban national reconciliation (74-75). However, a practical process to address the emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of reconciliation among the Cuban exile community has not yet been developed.

Reconciliation, as a social phenomenon, has multiple meanings and multiple models. Ackerman identifies two concepts of reconciliation among Cubans that may be applicable to the exile community. The first concept is reconciliation as mutual coexistence, which

⁵⁷ "La Santísima Virgen quiso quedarse entre nosotros bajo el título de 'Caridad' que significa amor, y, ante su presencia materna los cubanos tomamos conciencia de la fraternidad que debe reinar entre nosotros, que nos mueve a la comprensión, el perdón, la justicia, la solidaridad, la tolerancia, el amor entre los cubanos, sin hacer distinciones." *Mensaje De Los Obispos de Cuba a Nuestros Hermanos Cubanos con Ocasión de los 400 Años del Hallazgo y Presencia de la Imagen de la Virgen de la Caridad entre Nosotros "A Jesús Por María, La Caridad Nos Une"* (August 15, 2008, #16). "Convocamos, en Adviento y Navidad, a la reconciliación que supone el respeto que merece toda persona y dejar atrás las divisiones, los rencores y las enemistades para unirnos todos como hermanos en la familia y en la sociedad." *Mensaje de los Obispos de Cuba en Ocasión de la Celebración del IV Centenario del Hallazgo y Presencia de la Imagen de la Virgen de la Caridad en Nuestra Patria* (December 8, 2011, # 21). See <http://www.iglesiacubana.org/>.

implies a process of “building respect for difference, communicating across differences” (1999, 343). The second understanding of reconciliation relevant to the Cuban exile experience is community-building and seeking common ground. Along the same lines, Isasi-Díaz understands reconciliation as “the process of building solidarity among people who experience themselves apart from one another and wish to come back together for the sake of the future...it is about building a common programmatic vision about Cuba” (2001, 19).

Such understandings of reconciliation are often part of ongoing processes along a continuum, since, as a goal, full reconciliation “is never achieved” (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 184, 258). Each modality or understanding of reconciliation requires certain strategies. Therefore, reconciliation is a goal and a process: “a horizon for a different kind of world... [and a] process with distinctive tasks and steps to be taken” (Schreiter 2010, 367). This work identifies the goal of reconciliation among Cuban exiles as respect for difference and mutual understanding in the shared task of building a common future. The goal of reconciliation, in this context, is to work towards unity in the midst of diversity. In order for this to happen, exiles need to enter a process that begins with interior healing.

Healing has both an individual and a social dimension. Individual healing may be defined as “restoring the dignity and humanity of victims” (Schreiter 2010, 376). For Cuban exiles, it involves addressing the wounds caused by loss, oppression, denial of human and civil rights, and lack of acknowledgement. This is particularly challenging because the situation that caused these wounds remains unchanged for the most part. Philpott (2012) claims that the wounds of political injustice are first and foremost

redressed through practices⁵⁸ that imply a transformation of the system that created them. The challenge Cuban exiles face is how to heal, or repair, the human harm caused by political injustices when there has been no acknowledgement from the political order that caused the harm, nor reparations, punishment, or sign of apology. The one thing that can be changed is how one responds to this reality. Lack of healing has major personal and social implications; it leads to attitudes of avoidance, aggression, unforgiveness, resentment, intolerance, and discord (Yoder 2005, 33). Therefore, the critical task is to learn to promote healing of painful memories so they do not lead to emotions, judgments, and actions that lead to more harm, intolerance, hatred, and division. These wounds need to start healing for the sake of individual well-being and for the exile community to be able to move towards social healing. Personal healing paves the way for social healing—the repair of communal relationships. Social healing helps “mobilize the energies of the present [and] sketch out a vision for the future” (Schreiter 2010, 377). Healing “opens people up to the possibility of the future...to the degree people are healed, they are receptive to a new paradigm” (Sarkin and Daly 2007, 192).

Personal Reconciliation

Psychologists understand personal reconciliation in terms of two interrelated dimensions: intrapersonal and interpersonal reconciliation. Intrapersonal reconciliation is “the process of living in relative peace with different aspects of ourselves as well as

⁵⁸ The six practices identified by Philpott are: building of socially just institutions, acknowledgement from the political order that caused the harm, reparations, punishment, apology, and forgiveness (2012, 173-174).

with other people” (Rubin 1980, 24). It involves self-acceptance and acceptance of one’s history, healing of memories, and forgiveness of self and others.

Interpersonal reconciliation, “the process of healing a damaged relationship” between two individuals (Worthington 2006, 221), has been studied among couples (Coop, Baucom, and Snyder 2005, 407-421; Fincham, Hall, and Beach 2005, 207-225) and families (Battle and Miller 2005, 227-241). In these studies, forgiveness plays an important role. Forgiveness is an integral component in both dimensions of personal reconciliation.

Reconciliation and Forgiveness

The concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation have mistakenly been used interchangeably (Enright and Baskin 2004). While forgiveness happens *within* the individual,⁵⁹ reconciliation is relational. It involves some type of restoration of the relationship (Worthington 1998, 129). Forgiveness is “one-sided, while the essence of reconciliation is mutuality” (Staub 2005, 444).

Furthermore, forgiveness need not lead to reconciliation. As Freedman (1998) explains, some people do not want to forgive precisely because they fear that one would have to reestablish a relationship that has hurt them. This distinction is important for Cubans, since those in exile have no interest in reestablishing a relationship with the Cuban government, which is typically the source of the pain that led to their exile. Forgiving those who wronged them does not need to be followed by reconciliation.

⁵⁹ Forgiveness as an inner change in attitude, feelings, and ideas toward the offender is often expressed in changes in one’s words, gestures, and actions (Govier and Hirano 2008, 429). Externalized forgiveness has a relational dimension, but does not imply mutuality as reconciliation does.

Along the same lines, Luskin notes: “Some think that forgiveness has to be a precursor of reconciliation, but you can forgive and rejoin a relationship or forgive and never speak to the person again” (2002, 68). Freedman (1998) outlines four possible relationships between forgiveness and reconciliation. Each of these may be applied to the experience of Cuban exiles.

- Forgive and reconcile: An example of this option is illustrated by the following story: “After I left Cuba, we severed our ties with the members of our family that were communist. When I returned to Cuba, I wanted to be reconciled to them. I did not have any ill feelings towards them and went to visit them at their home. I felt reconciled, I don’t know about them” (Rosario Bergouignan, Interview, Miami, July 26, 2012).
- Forgive and not reconcile: This option is very typical among those who do not see the need, or the feasibility, for establishing a relationship with those who hurt them (as in the case of the Cuban government and its supporters), but want to be free of resentment. As Lorenzo shares: “The people that offended me have been erased from my memory, all our resentment has been concentrated in two people: the Castro brothers. The good thing is that we don’t have to hate a million people. We forgive those who hurt us, but will not reconcile with the Castros” (Lorenzo Ferrer, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012).
- Not forgive and interact: This is the most unlikely position. It may be found among families where deep ideological differences have led members to engage in mutual attacks and cause harm to others within the family. They

continue to interact, but avoid revisiting the past. Forgiveness may be the result of this ongoing interaction.

- Not forgive and not to interact: This is the totally closed-off attitude typical of the most radical positions represented by members of the exile community (“exile ideology”). This is reflected in the rejection of dialogue, as well as any effort toward reconciliation or contact with those who think differently within the exile community and in Cuba. This is exemplified in the reaction of exilic Cubans towards efforts made by Miami Cubans during the late 1970s to engage in dialogue with the Cuban government. Protesters on the streets of Miami carried signs that read: “Dialogue is treason to our martyrs,” “Dialogue is treason to a free Cuba” (De La Torre 2003, 50).

Forgiveness is generally regarded as a unilateral act “advocated on the basis of a Kantian ethic committed to intrinsic worth of persons, as mark of the wrongdoer’s human status, for religious reasons, or as a means to the victim’s improved health (Govier and Hirano 2008, 429). Bilateral forgiveness implies that the victim is responding to the offender’s acknowledgement (429). From a theological perspective, forgiveness is often part of reconciliation; its main purpose “is not to feel better, but to deepen and enrich community” (Frise and McMinn 2010, 85). Forgiveness can help promote reconciliation of self and reconciliation with others (Enright and Baskin 2004, 130), and is often considered a precondition to reconciliation (Worthington 2005, 465). While some claim that there cannot be reconciliation without forgiveness (Tutu 1999); for others, reconciliation (in the sense of engagement and interaction) can happen first and may lead to forgiveness (Lederach 1997; 2003).

Definitions of Forgiveness

The conceptualization of forgiveness is very diverse (McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen 2000, 7). Some authors claim that forgiveness is best understood in terms of what it is not. Forgiveness is not accepting or tolerating injustice, letting go, or “moving on.” It does not mean forgetting or ceasing to be angry towards those who have caused harm. Forgiveness is not the same as juridical or legal amnesty; one may “forgive and still bring legal justice to bear as required by the situation” (Enright, Freedman, and Rique 1998, 49). It is not “pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, and denying” (Enright and Coyle, 1998, 141). Forgiveness frees the person who forgives, but does not justify the wrongdoer’s actions. Granting forgiveness is “a gift to others, not just to self” (Enright, Freedman, and Rique 1998, 48). Although forgiveness primarily benefits the personal healing process, it also helps bring about social healing. In the context of Christian communities, such as the target population of this work, forgiveness helps build community. Therefore, forgiveness is not sought for individualistic therapeutic purposes, but to bring about social reconciliation.

Definitions differ in the emphasis placed on cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior. McCullough’s (McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen 2000) emphasis is on motivation. He sees the essence of forgiveness as an intra-individual, pro-social change in one’s motivation toward a perceived transgressor, situated within a specific interpersonal conflict. He defines it as “the reduction in avoidance motivation and revenge motivation following an interpersonal offense” (2000, 9). Luskin defines forgiveness as “the feeling of peace that emerges as you take your hurt less personally,

take responsibility for how you feel, and become a hero instead of a victim in the story you tell. Forgiveness is the experience of peacefulness in the present moment.

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it changes the present” (2002, 68). As Pedro Pablo’s grandfather used to tell him: “Those who hate are the ones that really suffer, not those being hated” (Pedro Pablo Alvarez, Interview, Miami, September 17, 2012).

Worthington places the emphasis on emotions, although he defines forgiveness as a decisional and emotional process that replaces “unforgiving stressful emotions with positive, other-oriented emotions” (2006, 17). Emotional forgiveness is a longer process and less under the person’s control. He clarifies that a lessening of unforgiveness⁶⁰ is not the same thing as forgiving, which implies a positive emotion (2006, 174). He emphasizes that letting go of unforgiving emotions is not enough if not replaced with positive emotions (2006, 73).

Enright defines forgiveness as “willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the underserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her” (Enright, Freedman, and Rique 1998, 47). It implies changes in the affective, cognitive, and behavioral systems.

Some limit forgiveness to a release of resentment, while others suggest replacing it with positive emotions and behaviors toward the offender (Worthington 2005, 560).

The first movement—which mainly benefits the forgiver—does not depend on whether the offender has repented or changed behavior, or whether the person is alive or dead.

⁶⁰ Unforgiveness is a delayed response to a transgression, which results from rumination. It is characterized by resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, anger, and fear (Worthington 2006, 49).

Forgiveness, even at this level, results in many positive consequences, such as relief from psychological pain, increased empathy and positive regard for offenders, and movement towards reconciliation with offenders (Williamson and Gonzales 2007). The second movement—to replace negative emotions with positive ones—benefits the forgiver *and* the offender, but depends on whether the offender is a stranger or an acquaintance (Worthington 2005, 557), and whether it is a non-continuing or continuing relationship (Worthington 2005, 560). In the case of acquaintances, it makes sense to replace negative thoughts with positive feelings, motivations, and behaviors, and the possibility of reconciliation. In the case of strangers, there is nothing to replace, since there was no relationship until the harm-causing incident. In its most complete form, “forgiveness is an interpersonal bilateral⁶¹ transaction” (Kalayjian and Paloutzian 2010, 77), especially in communitarian cultures that are not satisfied with an inner release of resentment. In these contexts, what really counts is what one does. Kalayjian and Paloutzian (2010) differentiate between the intrapersonal process related to the person’s feelings (giving up feelings of hatred and the desire for revenge), and the interpersonal process that involves contact with the offender and some kind of action (communicating with the perpetrator or performing an act of forgiveness). This represents a third movement after the two intrapersonal movements described above: letting go of negative feelings and replacing them with positive feelings.

⁶¹ This use of the word “bilateral” differs from Govier and Hirano’s (2008, 429) which refers to forgiveness as a response to the wrongdoers’ admission of guilt and/or repentance. Here bilateral forgiveness is the act of expressing and interacting with the offender.

Forgiveness in the Cuban exile context is especially crucial for the healing process of those who have suffered under the actions of others. The first goal is to heal by letting go of past hurts. The decision to forgive may be directed at anyone: government officials, real or symbolic persons, family members, and other people—alive or dead. A second movement implies replacing those negative emotions with mercy by separating the offender from the offense. When the offender is an acquaintance who is accessible, the most complete practice of forgiveness is to express it in words or actions. This occurs often when Cubans in exile seek out former “enemies,” or distanced family members to express forgiveness. Cuban culture is very communitarian; therefore, this externalization of forgiveness is important. The result of these interactions has often led to reconciliation, but not necessarily. This final movement of forgiveness is important, as shown in Holocaust victim Eva Kor, who was subjected to Mengele’s twin experiments. After fifty years, Kor decided to forgive a former Nazi doctor who worked at Auschwitz. They were asked to present together at Boston College, and she seized the opportunity to seek complete forgiveness.

I thought that would be a nice gift. But realizing that I had that power, a power that no one could give me and no one could take away. I realized I had the power over my own life. [Forgiveness] is not a religious thing. It is a human need for human beings to heal themselves. The minute you forgive someone in your head and your heart, they can no longer hurt you. And you are not doing it for them; you are doing it for yourself. (Murrill 2012, G2)

Self-forgiveness

Another form of forgiveness is not directed to others, but toward the self. It is an important part of the healing process for many. However, focusing on self-forgiveness can encourage isolation and narcissistic tendencies, and interpersonal forgiveness offers better long term results (Mead 2006). There are two types of self-forgivers: those who struggle to forgive themselves, but eventually do—guilt-prone self-forgivers and those who do not tend to self-condemnation, but rather to a sense of entitlement—self-absorbed non-self condemners (Tangney, Boone, and Dearing 2005). Worthington (2006, 191) suggests two other types: those who do not easily recognize they have done wrong—they do not experience empathy nor react to others (non-reactive non-self-condemners)—and those who easily condemn themselves and have a high sense of guilt and low self-esteem (reactive self-condemners). While some who have done wrong in Cuba refuse to admit it (non-reactive non-self-condemners), others struggle to forgive themselves (reactive self-condemners).

Self-forgiveness can be a challenge for those exiles that have not come to terms with the decision to leave Cuba, either because it implied leaving loved ones behind, or because they felt they abandoned their commitment to their homeland or their church. Pedro Pablo Alvarez was jailed for voicing his opinions and organizing peaceful resistance. He was given a life sentence that was later reduced to 25 years. After serving five years of his sentence, he was released through the mediation of the church.

I was freed with the condition that I had to leave the country. At first I did not want to go, but my brothers in the cause told me it was good for me to go, so I could raise awareness about their situation. Later on, it hit me and I came to think that I

had not done the right thing. (Pedro Pablo Alvarez, Interview, Miami, September 17, 2012)

In a recent blog by the Cuban Communist party, journalist Rafael Hernandez posted “A letter to a young person who is leaving” (*La Joven Cuba*, June 13, 2012), reproaching young people for not being willing to stay and build a better Cuba, for not having ideals, being self-centered, and so on. Many have experienced this pressure.

Due to my good performance in school, I was invited to join the *Union de Jovenes Comunistas* (Union of Communist Youth). At that time, I declared that my family had plans to immigrate to the U.S. They pleaded that I stay, urged me not to listen to my parents and offered me a scholarship to study ophthalmology in Germany. When I refused, I was not allowed to register at all in the university. I had to stay home (Maria Elena Alfaro, Interview, Hialeah, October 3, 2012).

Some church leaders also discourage immigration, since they are constantly forming leaders and losing them when they leave. Thus, the pressure not to leave is experienced from both the state and the church.

Determinants of Forgiveness

Several factors condition interpersonal forgiveness. These interrelated factors contribute to a person’s ability or inability to forgive. However, they are not equally important. Research shows that “the most proximal determinants of forgiveness are social-cognitive (or affective) variables related to the way the offended partner thinks and feels about the offender and the offense” (McCullough et al. 1998, 1587). The quality of the interpersonal relationship conditions the degree of forgivability. The level of intimacy, or closeness, is positively related to forgiveness (McCullough et al. 1998). This

pro-social disposition is also reflected in the degree to which a person is inclined to see the other's perspective (involving practices of agreeableness, tolerance, and understanding), to experience empathy, and to not recourse to entitlement and vengeance (Rusbult et al. 2005, 195). On the contrary, rumination⁶² has been found in direct relation with revenge, avoidance, and lack of forgiveness (Worthington 2006, 48). The severity of the offense and its consequences also play an important role in the offender's ability to forgive.

Studies of personality traits⁶³ show that traits condition whether one has a forgiving personality or not. Agreeableness is the most favorable, and neuroticism the most unfavorable trait for developing forgiveness. Studies of resentment, revenge, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of self suggest that personality explains up to a third of the reasons why these emotions are present, or not, in a given situation (Mullet, Neto, and Rivière 2005, 150). This implies that the Cuban exile's ability or inability to forgive is not only conditioned by historical factors and other determinants identified earlier, personality plays an important role and explains how people who have experienced similar situations respond in different ways.

Finally, religion influences how forgiveness is understood (Philpott 2012, 119-166). Different religious traditions offer different understandings of forgiveness. In Judaism, if

⁶² "Rumination is repetitive thinking about an event and its consequence for a person" (Worthington 2006, 123).

⁶³ According to Worthington (2006, 114), the major five personality aspects in terms of reconciliation are: openness to experience (seeking and accepting new experiences), conscientiousness (responsibility, duty, detail), extroversion (being outgoing, energized by social interaction), agreeableness (getting along with others, not letting challenges or stresses upset one), neuroticism (emotional reactivity).

the offender never admits wrongdoing and, therefore, never goes through the process of return, *teshuvah*, forgiveness need not be granted (Dorff, 1998, 46; Rye et al. 2000, 32). Muslims value forgiveness as part of their submission to God, though forgiveness varies depending on the person being in-group or out-group (Worthington 2006, 136). Christianity holds forgiveness at its “theological and ethical core” (Rye et al. 2000, 30). Forgiveness from God is contingent on forgiveness of others (Worthington 2006, 135). Worthington also notes that a person of faith may be more prone to forgiveness because such a person may rely on God to enact justice (135).⁶⁴ In addition, if people believe that God has forgiven them, they are more likely to forgive others (2006, 137).⁶⁵

The main motivation for forgiveness among some Cuban exiles is faith; specifically, the example of Jesus: “What has helped me forgive and heal is my encounter with Jesus. I try to see how he acted when he was persecuted, offended publicly, crucified. This is the key for me.” (Lorenzo Ferrer, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012). This is also the testimony of Pedro Pablo:

I do not feel resentment towards anyone. We need to know how to forgive. First of all, I am Christian, a follower of Christ; he is for me the greatest example. If Christ was able to forgive those who did horrors to him, what else can I do? When I was in jail, I would say to myself: “Christ suffered more than me.” He always spoke about forgiveness. When criticized for reaching out to sinners, he would answer:

⁶⁴ For more on forgiveness of enemies from a psychological perspective, see Worthington et al. (2006).

⁶⁵ Research shows that people who feel forgiven by God are two and half times more likely to offer unconditional forgiveness without requiring repentance from the offender (Krause and Ellison 2003).

“They are the ones that need healing.” I have always tried to live according to his example. Human beings can change, we cannot hold on to hate. (Pedro Pablo Alvarez, Interview, Miami, September 17, 2012)

Models of Forgiveness

Researchers have developed models that describe the general pathway a person follows in the process of forgiveness. These models help develop educational and therapeutic programs, which in turn validate the underlying theory. They incorporate the reality that each person’s ability to forgive may lead to skipping steps, or returning to a previous step to complete the process. Enright’s process model includes four phases (Enright and Fitzgibbons 2000, 18- 68): uncovering, decision, work, and deepening. A second major model was developed by Worthington (1998, 2009). It presents a five-step approach called the *Pyramid Model of Forgiveness*. He uses the acronym *REACH* to represent the steps: Recall the hurt, Empathize with the one who hurt you, offer the Altruistic gift of forgiveness, make a Commitment to forgive, and Hold on to forgiveness. The following table compares the two models.

Table 3. Comparison of Models of Forgiveness

Components of Forgiveness	Enright	Worthington
Awareness of defenses, desire for revenge, admit wrong was done.	Uncovering	Recall
Change of heart, commitment to begin process of forgiveness	Decision (this decision is only to begin the work)	Not specifically mentioned by Worthington, but change of heart is what moves the person to next stage

Reframing (cognitive), ⁶⁶ viewing the wrongdoer in context, empathy (emotional), giving a moral gift (volitional)	Work	Empathy
		Altruistic gift of forgiveness
Finding meaning in the suffering, realizing how he or she may also need forgiveness, and gaining a new sense of purpose and direction. Healing, emotional release.	Deepening	Worthington combines elements of Enright's "Work" and "Deepening" phases
Written or public commitment to forgive		Commitment to forgive
Strategies to help keep the decision made		Hold on to forgiveness

These two models offer important components for a process of reconciliation.

Both emphasize five critical elements: the recognition of suffering and acknowledgement of the desire for revenge; the decision to move in a new direction; an emotional empathy through reframing; development of a new narrative; and the offer of forgiveness and compassion. They flow from cognitive insight to emotional transformation: "thinking anew about an offender and then feeling anew is part of a developmental sequence" (Enright 2000, 19). Forgiveness is an important element of reconciliation. It plays an important role in both personal and social reconciliation, since a lack of healing impacts all relationships. For some Cuban exiles, the inability to forgive people who hurt them in the past—representatives or sympathizers of the Cuban government—limits their ability to relate to others in exile who may be more

⁶⁶ Reframing is the effort "to understand the offender's personal history, current pressures, and basic human worth" (Enright, Freedman, and Rique 1998, 54). Reframing helps separate the offense from the offender. The behavior continues to be labeled as wrong, but culpability is lessened.

open on issues that seem to favor the source of their hurt. Personal healing is crucial to social reconciliation. Therefore, Cuban exiles find they need to begin by addressing past hurts, in order to be able to move forward and build a different future through a process of personal and social reconciliation.

Social Reconciliation

Social reconciliation requires reconciled individuals, but is not the same as individual reconciliation (Schreiter 2000, 111). The success of social reconciliation depends to some degree on the leadership of reconciled persons; however, “they are not a sufficient condition for social reconciliation” (Schreiter 2000, 116). These two types of reconciliation have different goals, follow different processes, and require different strategies.

In its individual form, reconciliation takes place internally within the victim and leads to the social consequence of forgiving the wrongdoer with the hope of leading the wrongdoer to repentance. Social reconciliation is a public process that seeks repentance and forgiveness at key points along the way to the final point called reconciliation. (Schreiter 2000, 114)

Thus, personal reconciliation involves those who hurt Cuban exiles in the past, usually personified in government leaders. The goal is releasing resentment and letting go of the past. It does not go as far as seeking the wrongdoer’s repentance, nor reconciliation, though this opportunity may occur in isolated cases. Generally, personal reconciliation is an interior process, one that can, in turn, can help effect social reconciliation among exiles, as well as the wider Cuban community. Social

reconciliation is a process that, when successful, culminates in actual reconciliation as a result of different initiatives that lead to dialogue, rapprochement, acknowledgement, and exchange of apologies.

Daly and Sarkin (2007) survey common understandings of social reconciliation drawn from experiences around the world. One general approach to social reconciliation focuses on helping individuals within a society change their ways and come together, generally by stopping fighting, setting aside differences, and integrating and working together on a common project. Considering how difficult it is to achieve individual transformation, another approach focuses on “the entire society, from a political, economic, and social perspective, rather than on the psychological and emotional attitudes of the individuals within the society” (2007, 187). This second approach, however, implies situations involving political transition, which is not applicable to reconciliation within the Cuban exile community. While such an approach may not be relevant in the context of the Cuban exile community, Daly and Sarkin’s definition of social reconciliation as “a joint commitment to a common purpose” (2007, 199) remains valid. Its future orientation helps bypass the differences that impede reconciliation. Their emphasis is not on harmony among groups, but on shared values in the service of common goals. This work argues that for long-term success, reconciliation cannot just focus on identifying shared values and working towards a common purpose while disregarding personal and communitarian healing and harmony.

The task of social reconciliation is fundamentally about fostering mutual understanding and respect for difference, which calls for a social space where this can happen. Within the Cuban exile community, social reconciliation is about growing in

mutual understanding, which begins at the affective level, and seeks to explore the issue of conflict, identify shared values, and establish common ground in order to work towards the future through dialogue. For these reasons, it is important to explore different approaches to social conflict.

Approaches to Social Conflict

Intergroup behavior is different from interpersonal behavior (Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis, 2002; Hewstone et al. 2006; Tam et al. 2007). A number of underlying principles appear to operate in social situations where there is an in-group/out-group dynamic. Brewer identifies the following principles, or group dynamics: intergroup accentuation, in-group favoritism, and social competition (1997, 197-211).⁶⁷ These dynamics are present in the relationship between different groups within the exile community, but such dynamics did not begin here: “The Cuban government has created the division between revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries” (Pedro Pablo Alvarez, Interview, Miami, September 17, 2012). This “either/or,” dualist thinking and the related politics of exclusion are also present among exiles in an inverted form. Within the exile, the binary is that of anti-communists and communists, rather than revolutionaries and anti-revolutionaries. Thus, some people in the exile community label anyone opposing the embargo as a communist (De La Torre 2003, 49). This dualism is at the root of a division that impedes respect for diversity. While, conflict

⁶⁷ Intergroup accentuation emphasizes the common aspects within the in-group, and in-group favoritism marks the preference for in-group members. By contrast, the principle of social competition is reflected in the sense of opposition between in and out-group. As a result of these principles, people promote relationships with in-group members and tend to reject out-group members (Worthington 2006, 256-257).

resolution techniques may be used in this case to help resolve differences, but they cannot eliminate the problem nor help people deal with their wounds (Worthington, 2001, 166). Conflict transformation is needed.

Conflict Transformation

Conflicts are a normal aspect in interpersonal and social relationships (Lederach, 2003, 15). For this reason, John Paul Lederach suggests an approach to social conflict that is more about transformation of conflict than resolution. Lederach argues that problems cannot be resolved unless the roots of conflicts are addressed (2003, 25). If this is not done, cycles of revenge and division are perpetuated. Such conflict transformation begins with a proactive foundation that seeks constructive change, and views conflict as an opportunity for growth, with the expectation that something new will result from the energy created by the conflict (1997, 25). For Cuban exiles, this approach to conflict between them does not seek to eliminate pluralism, or impose a particular view, but simply recognizes that all sectors of the Cuban community in exile can collaborate and work together towards similar goals.

Conflict transformation is relation-centered rather than problem-centered, and requires skills for dialogue in face-to-face interaction (Lederach 2001, 185).

Dialogue is essential to justice and peace on both an interpersonal and a structural level...Dialogue is necessary for both creating and addressing social and public spheres where human institutions, structures, and patterns of relationships are constructed. (Lederach 2003, 21-22)

The importance of relational, experiential, and nurturing dimensions of peacebuilding are also emphasized in feminist ethics (Porter 2007, 56).⁶⁸ These understandings of reconciliation privilege the interpersonal encounter as an opportunity to express the trauma of loss towards and with one another, and the grief and anger that accompany the pain and memory of injustices experienced. Story-sharing validates feelings and constitutes the first step in the process of restoring interpersonal relationships. Acknowledgement is decisive in the “reconciliation dynamic” (Lederach 1997, 26). For Lederach, “reconciliation-as-encounter suggests that space for the acknowledgement of the past and envisioning the future is the necessary ingredient for reframing the present” (1997, 27).

Reconciliation is a “place, as in destination, and a journey” (2001, 187). This means that, as noted before, it is a dynamism reaching towards a goal, but the process itself is also reconciliation. For such a journey or process, accompaniment (side-by-side) is more important than leadership (in-front-of). This approach to reconciliation requires humility, not imposition, to restore the fabric of community. It also requires patience to wait for healing processes to occur. This is the case for the Cuban exile, given that the hurts are deep and experiences varied across decades. Cubans who long for change in their homeland may not realize that reconciliation can be a tool for transformation at all levels—interpersonal, inter-group, and social structural (Daly and Sarkin 2007, xi).

⁶⁸ Feminist approach to peacebuilding integrates a justice and a care perspective (Porter 2007, 57).

Conflict transformation seeks to “rise above dualistic polarities” (Lederach 2005, 35). Dualistic thinking has four characteristics: it is self-righteous and claims to hold absolute truth; it is dogmatic and closed-minded; it is closed to dialogue; and exclusivist, rejecting difference (Porter 2007, 44-45). Porter suggests that the antidote to such behavior is “humility, openness, dialogue and reconciliation” (2007, 63). Such transformation may be facilitated by structured processes that foster personal encounter and “provides a language for reconciliation” (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 76).

Components of a Process of Social Reconciliation

Few studies of reconciliation develop interventions to promote reconciliation at a societal level (Worthington 2005, 568). However, many do offer a number of key components or moments that comprise the reconciliation process. The expert interviews conducted with Cubans who have demonstrated a certain degree of reconciliation confirm the importance of these components.

Healing of Memories through Remembrance and Grieving

Mending memories is very difficult when dealing with intergroup conflict (Worthington 2006, 260). One of the most tested practices in processes of reconciliation is the creation of a safe space where participants may share their stories (Botcharova 2001, 257-279). In this regard, Father Michael Lapsley (2013), founder of the Institute for Healing Memories (Cape Town, South Africa), notes that “when personal stories are heard and acknowledged, individuals feel healed and empowered. Through deep listening and meaningful sharing, human relationships can be

transformed and restored.”⁶⁹ As Cuban exiles put it: “We need spaces to express ourselves without fear” (Iliana Laucirica, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012). Also, “in order to promote reconciliation in the exile, it would be good to create spaces where people can share their experiences, have a catharsis, speak and listen with respect and foster the values of compassion and mercy” (Eduardo Mesa, Interview, Miami, July 24, 2012).

Narrative therapy (White 2007) offers rich therapeutic potential, and has been positively recognized in conflict transformation (Witty 2007). Narrative therapy is a respectful, non-blaming approach to counseling that views problems as separate from people (Morgan 2012). It helps gain a more positive perspective on situations by helping people externalize the condition, identify positive elements in the story, and re-evaluate the situation (Morgan 2012). Before people can move to their future, they need to heal their past (Herman 1997, 190). If this does not happen, the long-term viability of social reconciliation is compromised, and new divisions arise which threaten the success of the process. Emotional reconciliation happens when the hurts of the past no longer obstruct present relationships or future goals.

People who have experienced trauma may need to tell their stories many times (Schreiter 2000, 44). Sharing stories provides an avenue for remembrance and mourning: telling the story helps integrate it into the person’s life (Herman 1997). It is through acknowledgement of the past, and subsequent grieving, that people can come to accept that life will never be the same and history cannot be turned back (Yoder

⁶⁹ The Healing of Memory workshop is the object of a recent study that endorses the value of this kind of process (Tabak 2011).

2005, 55). This is crucial for Cuban exiles that never have experienced a formal process of healing, and cling to the idea of a glorious past, or the possibility of restoring Cuba to its former state. Upon arrival in the United States, they focused their efforts on adapting to their new context. Thus, the wounds of exiles tend to be buried, but not healed. Typically, exiles have never shared their pain in a way that validates it. Sharing is especially helpful when witnessed by people from other waves of the exile community, or by those who think differently: “Nothing seems as important as the sharing of personal experiences through their stories” (Botcharova 2001, 289). The goal of reliving these memories is to be able to remember these experiences in a way other than through rumination. These stories are sometimes shared through literature in testimonial narrative.⁷⁰ Reinaldo Arenas, poet and writer, experienced imprisonment, persecution, and rejection for his anti-government views and for being gay. He finally left the island during the Mariel boatlift.

Arenas exemplifies this approach in his recounting of the effects of Castro's regime, describing aspects of Cuban culture lying outside of official versions, and revealing the follies of Cuban life and history as he sees them. Arenas

⁷⁰ Some major works in Cuban exile literature are: *Next Year in Cuba: A Cubano's Coming-of-Age in America* (Gustavo Pérez Firmat 1995). The author left Cuba as a teenager in the 1970s and tells the story of his constant longing for Cuba and his transition in a new world. Another work is *Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy* (Eire 2003). In this autobiographical narrative, Carlos Eire tells his story from the days before the revolution until his arrival in the United States in the early 1960s. In *Spared Angola: Memories from a Cuban-American Childhood*, Virgil Suarez (1997) shares autobiographical stories and poems. Reflecting a later period is the story of exile, *Finding Mañana, Memoirs of a Cuban Exodus* by Mirta Ojito (2005), which relates her difficult departure during the Mariel boatlift in 1980. As a journalist, she effectively documents the events that led to the Mariel boatlift.

shares trauma victims' feelings of helplessness under persecution, a sense of being tainted, and lacking social support that would aid healing. (Vickroy 2005, 109)

Works of fiction, such as Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (2004), are also a vehicle through which to express the pain, loss, and search for identity. Early exile testimonial literature is more about denunciation of the abuses of the Cuban government than people seeking healing by sharing stories.⁷¹ They were also generally written in Spanish, whereas more recent works are written in English.

Forging a New Plural Narrative through Group Sharing

Contact between groups, sharing stories of each group's experience, and the effort among opposing groups to forge a shared perception are common practices in reconciliation efforts (Staub 2005, 454). Building trust through "sharing stories of pain and fear" is the starting point whereby "both sides begin to realize that there is common ground in shared pain and suffering and the desire to move on" (Porter 2007, 89). Dialogue is an effective instrument to transform antagonistic relationships and identifications (Aiken 2013).

Truths are an important part of reconciliation, since people on different sides of conflict have different experiences and understandings. Many people on each side generally hold beliefs that attribute blame to members of the opposing side for the

⁷¹ *Plantado: En las Prisiones de Castro* by Hilda Perera (1981); *Contra Toda Esperanza* by Armando Valladares (1987).

injuries they have suffered; their partial truths typically justify anger, hostility, and vengeance. (Kriesberg 2004, 83)

When these “partial truths” claim to be the total truth, they breed intolerance and promote exclusion by generalizing and classifying people according to single-dimensional concepts or labels (“*marielito*,” “communist,” “revolutionary,” “exile mafia,” etc.). The Cuban exile experience is very diverse, and the perceptions derived from it are conditioned by migratory waves, age, and motivation for migration. No single perspective may claim to represent absolute truth with regard to the exile experience. No single identity may claim to be “truly Cuban” in an exclusive sense. Meta-narratives in the exile tend to limit the plurality of voices. Drawing from Lyotard’s (1984, 37) postmodern critique of meta-narratives of knowledge, history, and freedom as inadequate representations of difference and diversity, reconciliation can be seen as producing a new narrative that incorporates the full range of experience.⁷²

There are different types of truth: objective or forensic truth, personal or narrative truth, dialogical truth,⁷³ and restorative or moral truth, which comes from the process of seeking and telling the truth (Schreier 2010, 387; Avruch 2010, 37). A narrative that clarifies the facts as much as possible (objective truth), respects the different interpretations of these facts (personal truth), and integrates them in a shared narrative

⁷² However, being able to establish the facts or even common new narrative does not mean that people will arrive at shared truths (Avruch and Vejarano 2001, 52). Weissmark (2004) studied children of Holocaust survivors and Nazi soldiers. She concluded that although the stories told by both groups of children differ, they are both true. Bringing them together was an effort to forge a common story, a new narrative of these memories.

⁷³ Dialogical truth includes narrative from all sides of the conflict.

(dialogical truth) allows for the emergence of the “metanarrative of reconciliation” (Avruch 2010, 38). “Healing of past wounds can only take place if the two groups communicate their stories and form a public common history...that considers positive and negative behaviors of both sides of the conflict” (Worthington 2006, 263).

In an exile community that arrived in stages over decades, and where there has been little communication between those who left the island and those who stayed behind, face-to-face encounters and dialogue are crucial for those who were part of the early waves of exiles and those who arrived in recent waves. These encounters foster mutual understanding and also help challenge myths held by each side. Some of the most important myths to deconstruct concern the reality of life as it was in Cuba and life as it is in the United States. Earlier exiles usually have a greater appreciation for what life in the United States has offered them. More recent exiles have a better understanding of people on the island, and can help earlier waves view them in a different light. Although this work is not about reconciliation between exiles and people on the island, thinking about their brothers and sisters in Cuba in a more positive light can help Cuban exiles advance personal reconciliation. As Pedro Pablo Alvarez explains, “We have to realize that many people who embraced the ideals of the revolution did so in good faith. The fact that they are communist does not make them bad persons.” (Interview, Miami, September 17, 2012). Reconciliation requires the transformation of antagonistic identifications and language that perpetuate enmity (Aiken 2008, 14).

Reconnection and Mission

Creating a shared but plural interpretation of events is not easy. Diverse interpretations of past and present situations make it difficult for Cuban exiles to agree on a variety of issues. Even in the event that full reconciliation at the level of ideas and truths may not ultimately be possible, reconciliation can nonetheless still take place at an affective level. Reconciliation is “relationship-centric” (Lederach 1997, 26), and thus “quite different than a focus on issues, the shaping of substantive agreements, or cognitive and rational analytic-based approaches to conflict resolution” (Lederach 2001, 185). Communion (affective relationship) is possible within a continuing diversity (of understandings and points of view). Reconnection at the affective level is important for Cuban culture in general (Ortiz 1987).

Reconnection is the point where people realize that, in spite of those elements that divide them, they share a common identity and a common desire to make a positive contribution to their homeland.⁷⁴ This sometimes leads to a shared mission or the creation of an alliance with others in order to work towards a common purpose (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 199), which is another form of reconnection. The Cuban exile community is divided by opposing, polarized views on how to deal with the past and present reality of Cuba, a process of reconciliation is exactly what is needed, insofar as it can help identify a common vision. While people may have different ideas on how to

⁷⁴ Several ways of reconnecting have been suggested for reconciliation between Cubans in exile and on the island: concerts with musicians from both sides, baseball games, gatherings of different types of networks (professional, classmates, ex-residents from same town), humanitarian aid in the event of natural disasters, internet networks (Blanco et al. 2011).

achieve this vision, they can still come together through common goals. It moves from the plural narratives of the past precisely because it looks to the future.

Isasi-Díaz's (2001) understanding of social reconciliation emphasizes the future practical aspect. For her, "conciliation" starts at the personal level, but focuses on dreams and expectations regarding the future of Cuba, national values, and renewed political and economic structures (2001, 22). She argues that "looking at the past only made sense if it was part of constructing the future" (2001, 24). Collaboration and finding common ground can happen, even if people differ ideologically, but are willing to work together for a better future.

Reconnection with people on the island has been identified by some exiles as a source of personal healing. This takes place in a particularly unique way when those in exile actually travel to Cuba. This has been the testimony of some of the exiles interviewed:

After I came in 1961, I totally disconnected from Cuba. It was lost in my memory. When Pope John Paul II visited Cuba in 1998, I was invited to go. At the mass, a woman asked me for some aspirin and I gave her two. On the plane back, I could not stop crying thinking that I could have given her the whole bottle. There, I decided to go back and bring medicines, shoes, whatever I could to help them. This changed me and helped me rediscover myself as Cuban again. After this, I go every year and try to help the people there in any way I can. (Rosario Bergouignan, Interview, Miami, July 26, 2012)

In most cases, returning to Cuba helps the exile's process of personal healing because in so far as it enables them to integrate memories and reality through the direct

contact with their homeland, and by offering emotional and sometimes material support to friends and family living on the island.

After coming, our life centered on bringing up our children here, and we distanced ourselves from the reality of Cuba. When John Paul II went to Cuba, Radio Paz invited Noelia and I to cover the mass in Camagüey, since it was our hometown and we still had some connection to the church in Camagüey. It was a powerful experience to go back and be received as if we had never left. Since then, our ties to the Church in Cuba are very strong and we are always looking for ways to help. (Lorenzo Ferrer, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012).

Travel is not an option for many Cubans because the immigration policies in both Cuba and the United States do not favor such travel. In addition, some exiles feel that travel is not acceptable until the political model in Cuba changes. However, the data clearly show that personal reconciliation and social reconciliation benefit from exiles' travel to Cuba. Even in the case of those who choose not to return to Cuba, being able to help the Cuban people is a way of encouraging healing and personal reconciliation as well as social reconciliation. One way to deal with a painful past is to "transcend it by making a gift to others" (Herman 1997, 207).

Reconnection then may happen in multiple ways: through the fraternal/affective encounter, by building a shared vision and setting common goals for Cuba, by joining in a common mission, and by offering humanitarian assistance.

Ritual

A recognized way of dealing with the trauma caused by loss and displacement is through ritual practice (Morejón 2011). A ritual “is any prescribed or spontaneous action that follows a set pattern expressing through symbols⁷⁵ a public or shared meaning” (Arbuckle 2010, 82). The primary purpose of rituals is to promote transformative and cultural change, which happens in four stages: breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration or schism (Turner 1977). During the stage of redressive action, “people feel they need to discover meaning in what is happening, and so they are forced to reflect on fundamental myths that could guide them to resolution of the crisis” (Arbuckle 2010, 92), thereby helping them come together as a community.

In the case of Cuban exiles, rituals create community because they help the displaced participants to find commonalities in the coping that goes on with the isolation caused by language difficulties, with the separation from family and friends, and with the lack of cultural fluency. Their exilic rituals also build community around individual and collective PTSD due to the loss of the country of origin and cultural values (Morejon 2011, 295).

Rituals involve symbolic actions that result in “emotionally experienced meaning” (Arbuckle 2010, 23). Symbolic actions touch a deeper level than that of ideas, because “symbols seek to draw us beyond the observable to a higher experiential, transcendent

⁷⁵Arbuckle offers the following definition of symbol taken from Adolfo Nicolas, SJ: “any reality that by its very dynamism or power leads to (that is, makes one think about, imagine, get into contact with, or reach out) to another deeper (and often mysterious) reality through a sharing in the dynamism that the symbol itself offers” (2010, 22).

level of knowledge” (Arbuckle 2010, 23). Rituals “solemnize some permanent reality or value” (Martos 1991, 6). Ritual offers four critical aspects to a process of reconciliation: Its repetitive nature helps heal the depth of the pain. Ritual allows the gift of reconciliation to emerge at its own graceful pace. It overcomes time and transcends the past. Ritual also provides a forum for a communitarian experience that furthers the power of reconciliation (Schreiter 2000, 92-93). A process of reconciliation for Cuban exiles thus needs to incorporate rituals of forgiveness, reconciliation, and celebration. Rituals can thereby connect individuals and communities at psychological and cultural levels as well as religious ones.

Any such processes must begin by recognizing that each situation and each group of people is different. De La Torre points out that “any process seeking reconciliation must remain contextual to that particular situation and those particular needs” (2007, 87). Social reconciliation is “subject to cultural variances” (Schreiter 2000, 115). Each culture⁷⁶ and context develops a specific understanding of relationships, and how they are forged and restored. Sensitivity and knowledge of the culture will guide the choice of music and symbols in an effort to find seeds of reconciliation in the tradition and practices of the culture.

Witnesses of Reconciliation

Witnesses of reconciliation are a powerful force in a process of reconciliation because they model and show the way. This has been evident in a variety of

⁷⁶According to Clifford Geertz, culture is an “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life” (1999, 1127-38).

reconciliation processes where the testimonies of those who have performed heroic acts of forgiveness challenge others to do so (Bocharova 2001, 284). Community leaders help “interpret the events, frame the narrative, and address the needs” in ways that help people “separate fantasy from reality and past from present” (Yoder 2005, 52). The exile community has often listened to voices that fuel more division and anger (De la Torre 2003, 49). This has been a negative contribution to personal and social healing. On the contrary, there have also been voices of reconciliation that have made reconciliation real:

I have been the privileged to know people who live the Gospel fully and are essentially reconciling. The influence of these people is the key here. Faith is an invitation to reconciliation. Jesus was the man who reconciled us, and from the cross continues to say: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” but without concrete witnesses of Jesus, such as Bishop Román, who for me embodied reconciliation, it is less understandable. (Eduardo Mesa, Interview, Miami, July 24, 2012)

One model of reconciliation that stands out in Cuban history is nineteenth century Cuban patriot José Martí. His commitment to the independence of Cuba led him to live in exile most of his adult life, the last fifteen years in the United States. He was a prolific writer, lawyer, and diplomat, and his ideas helped shape the quest for Cuba’s freedom and the concept of nationhood. Martí sought to reconcile the revolutionary leadership and especially tried to “unify the disparate forces that made up the exile movement” (Tone 2006, 36). Similar to present day exiles, nineteenth century émigrés passionately disagreed about Cuba’s political future (García 1998, 5). Some of the military leaders of the independence movement thought “he was a better poet than a revolutionary” (Tone

2006, 34). The divisions among the organizers of the independence efforts and the rejection Martí experienced from some of the top leaders (34) provide the hermeneutical context for one of his best known poems (Hernández-Chioldes 1978, 293): “The White Rose.” It is part of the *Simple Verses* (1891, verse 39), written during Martí’s exile in New York⁷⁷ (Atencio 2012). The poem is not directed to his obvious enemies, the Spaniards, but rather to friends who have hurt him, maybe companions in the struggle. His response to them is to return evil with good. It is a poem of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I cultivate a white rose
In July as in January,
For the sincere friend
Who offers his frank hand to me.
And for the cruel one whose blows
Break the heart by which I live,
Thistle nor thorn do I give,
For him, too, I cultivate the white rose. (Martí 1972, 78-79; 1997)

His vision for Cuba included the participation of all who wanted Cuba’s freedom, even Spaniards⁷⁸ (Martí [1891] 2003): *Con todos y para el bien de todos* (With every one and for everyone’s good) (Martí [1891] 2003). He was also an advocate for racial harmony (Fountain 2003, 7).

⁷⁷ Martí was a member of the Twilight Club where he shared with other intellectuals and was inspired to write many of his works (Sarracino 2010).

⁷⁸ Speaking to Cuban exiles in Tampa, Martí ([1891] 2003) said: “¡Por la libertad del hombre se pelea en Cuba, y hay muchos españoles que aman la libertad! ¡A estos españoles los atacarán otros: yo los ampararé toda mi vida!” (The struggle in Cuba is for man’s [sic] freedom and there are many Spaniards who want that freedom. These Spaniards will be attacked by others; I will defend them all my life).

Martí had to bring diverse interests together and to wage a powerful war of words to ensure that the movement would not fail the Cuban people in its aims. He had to counter the interests of military leaders, those content with autonomy (home rule rather than independence for Cuba), and those desiring annexation to the United States. (Fountain 2003, 6-7)

In an effort to demonstrate that his commitment went beyond words, and that he was willing to fight for Cuba, Martí returned from exile and joined the rebels. Thirty-eight days later, he was killed in battle on May 19, 1895 (Fountain 2003, 7).

Faith

The final key element in a process of reconciliation for Catholic Cuban exiles is faith. Researchers recognize that an element that helps cultivate the ability to move beyond the cycle of trauma is “a sustaining faith or spiritual practice” (Yoder 2005, 51). Faith is a determinant for forgiveness, and so is discussed in terms of personal reconciliation. At the personal level, research shows that religion and spirituality have a positive impact on the ability to cope with stress (Weaver et al. 2003; Zeidner 1993). It also has a social impact: “reconciliation born of spiritual conviction can play a critical role in inspiring the parties in conflict to break the cycle of revenge that typically characterizes such disputes” (Helmick 2001, 128).

Religions have been and remain among the causes of conflicts between groups and nations,⁷⁹ in spite of the fact that the teachings of the major religions present ethical

⁷⁹ See “Does Religion Fuel or Heal in Conflicts?” by Raymond G. Helmick, SJ in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001).

demands that foster forgiveness and harmony (Volf 2001, Harakas 2001, Montville 2001). Churches have played an important role in processes of reconciliation throughout the world, as in South Africa. However, sometimes actions of the church are met with criticism from those who view this as too much involvement in political issues, while others think churches do not speak strongly enough against injustices (Baum and Wells 1997). The Catholic Church in Cuba is no different—the exile community is its greatest critic. Faith is a critical element for Cuban Catholics who want to be reconciled, since it reminds them that reconciliation is, first and foremost, a gift. Human strategies may create the possibilities for reconciliation, but cannot produce it (Schreiter 2000, 16-17).

This chapter has explored both personal and social understandings of reconciliation informed by social science. Both elements are critical to advance reconciliation among Cuban exiles. Without personal reconciliation to address the trauma caused by the experience of loss and displacement, of oppression and the violation of human and civil rights, Cuban exiles will continue to exhibit attitudes of intolerance, dichotomized, thinking, thus obstructing social reconciliation. The healing process involving remembrance and grieving often leads to forgiveness. Moreover, without interpersonal encounters that help forge a plural narrative among members from different waves of the exile migration, relationships remain dominated by preconceived notions about the other and misunderstandings stemming from diverse experiences of exile. Ultimately reconciliation is about reconnection with others and building trust, about creating an alliance with others to work for a common purpose. All these elements point to faith and its importance in the construction of community. Faith can have a critical role in a process of reconciliation for Cuban Catholics and for Cubans in general.

Chapter Four

FOUNDATIONS FOR A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION

What we were being asked to undertake was profoundly religious and spiritual, and consequently spiritual resources were appropriately brought to bear on our task.

—Desmond Tutu (1997, 81)

The experience and study of reconciliation entails more than concerted efforts by the parties involved. Faith plays an important role in the experience and understanding of reconciliation. Desmond Tutu understood this when he led the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa,⁸⁰ incorporating faith into the South African process of reconciliation. A faith-engaged approach is no less critical for Catholic Cuban exiles entering into a reconciliation process. Faith makes a positive contribution to a process of reconciliation in three ways: First, faith helps the integration and coping process that facilitates reconciliation (Yoder 2005, 51; Pargament and Rye 1998, 59-78).⁸¹ Second, faith highlights the spiritual dimension—rather than strategic—of such processes (Schreiter 2000, 16-17). Third, faith points to profound traditions that inform and challenge the practice of reconciliation (Schreiter 2010, 367).

⁸⁰ The Anglican bishop, Desmond Mpilo Tutu, became known worldwide during the 1980s for his defense of social rights and opposition to apartheid.

⁸¹ Research comparing “religiously integrated forgiveness intervention” and secular forgiveness intervention showed no difference in efficacy. However, participants in both groups identify religious resources as their key sources of assistance in their forgiveness process. Forgiveness strategies used by participants included: asking God for help in the efforts to forgive and praying for the person who had wronged them (Pargament and Rye 1998, 69). This suggests that the experience of forgiveness is closely connected to faith and thus underlines the value of fostering faith-based processes of reconciliation.

This chapter corresponds to the third stage of a practical theological method, which correlates and confronts the attitudes and behaviors of the Cuban exile and understandings of personal and social reconciliation within the Christian tradition. Reconciliation of Catholic Cuban exiles involves the interplay of past, present, and future. Although the focus of this work is on Cuban exiles today, it does not ignore that reconciliation of this community is tied to the suffering of the past, and to questions of how to respond to the present and possible future of Cuba. These are all areas of disagreement and struggle among Cuban exiles. This chapter, therefore, articulates a practical theology of reconciliation grounded in and informed by the Christian tradition and the Cuban experience of faith. It seeks to respond to two key questions: How does Scripture and the church tradition inform and challenge the present practice of Catholic Cuban exiles? What should reconciliation look like for Catholic Cuban exiles in light of the Christian tradition?

Reconciliation permeates all Scripture (Fitzmyer 1981, 162) beginning with the Genesis stories of creation, the flood, Abel and Cain, and the Tower of Babel. Yet the word “reconciliation,” and others with the same etymological root, is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures (Schreier 2009, 726). Hebrew lacks a term for “reconciliation;” however, such terms are found in Hellenistic Jewish writings. The words *katallagē*, *apokatallassō*, *diallassō*, and *katallassō* are different compound forms of a root meaning “other,” which denotes “to make otherwise” (Fitzmyer 1981, 164). These words denote a change that primarily takes place in relationships or situations that are transformed (Fitzmyer 1981, 165). In the New Testament, examples of the “word-group ‘reconcile/reconciliation’” appear some sixteen times, primarily in reference to God,

including cosmic reconciliation (Turner 2007, 38). In four cases, reconciliation refers to the relationship between persons (*diallassō*).⁸² The word “reconciliation” appears mainly in Paul and only twice in the Gospels. The Gospel writers depict Jesus as using the word to emphasize that one needs to be reconciled with others before one can worship God—or before appearing in court (Mt 5:24; Lk 12:58). Beyond these two instances, the theme of reconciliation is evident in Jesus’ teachings and actions.

There are two privileged sources for the understanding of reconciliation: Jesus’ practices of reconciliation in his ministry and the Pauline understanding of reconciliation in interpreting the Christ-event. The former focuses on reconciliation in Jesus’ earthly life and the latter focuses on the implications of his death and resurrection for the reconciliation of humanity. Both are foundational for a praxis and theology of reconciliation, which in turn is linked to the notion of justice.

After examining implications of Jesus and reconciliation, Paul and reconciliation, and how these understandings relate to the notion of justice, the final section of this chapter will examine the role of Our Lady of Charity in the Cuban historical experience of reconciliation. In the Cuban context, Christian themes of reconciliation are readily tied to *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad* (Our Lady of Charity) and the rich tradition and symbols surrounding this devotion over the centuries.

⁸² The four cases of reconciliation between human persons are as follows: Mt 5:24; Lk 12:58; 1 Cor 7:11; Acts 7:26. Cosmic reconciliation appears in Col 1:20-22 (2 times). The main usage of reconciliation in Paul is between God and human persons. Examples of this usage include the following: 2 Cor 5: 17-21 (5 times), Rm 5:10-11 (3 times) and Rm 11:15, and Eph 2:16.

Jesus and Reconciliation

Jesus is both the “proclaimer and the initiator” of the *basileia* through his words and practices (Sobrino 1998, 87). Jesus’ reconciling practices, continued by his disciples, are critical in realizing the *basileia* (Tilley 2008, 127; van der Ven 1998, 69). Jesus’ message of reconciliation is embodied in his practice and unpacked in his teaching.

Jesus’ Practices of Reconciliation

Jesus practiced reconciliation in multiple ways. Tilley identifies a number of reconciling practices of Jesus that were “*actively* remembered by his disciples,” and thus specifically continued by the early Christian community (2008, 133). A number of these practices have particular relevance for the concrete need for reconciliation in the Cuban exile. These practices of reconciliation in Jesus’ ministry include healing in its individual and communitarian dimensions, forgiveness as a self-transcending initiative and as an invitation to new possibilities, and alterity as manifested in Jesus’ acceptance of diversity.

Personal and Social Healing

Jesus’ miracles of healing demonstrate the positive social consequences of personal reconciliation. Jesus performed exorcisms to heal both physical and psychological illnesses attributed to demons. The practice of exorcism and the realization of the reign of God are clearly connected (Tilley 2008, 139). As Jesus says: “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the reign of God has come upon you” (Lk 11:20).⁸³ Jesus, “through his actions, did pioneering work in the universal reconciliation of the kingdom of God” (van der Ven 1993, 213). In the story of the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:1-20),

⁸³ This work will use the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition* (1993).

“the man “needs reconciliation with God, himself, and his family and friends” Jesus’ healing of the man shows that “...the healing effects reconciliation” (Tilley 2008, 142). The same can be said of other healings performed by Jesus: they have a communal aspect. Not only do they restore the individual, they return that person to the community and point toward participation in the *basileia*: “Jesus’ curing of lepers, the blind, the hemorrhaging, and others frees them not only from bodily misery but from the social stigmas that ostracized them” (Tilley 2008, 146). This practice manifests the interconnection between personal and communal dimensions of reconciliation.

Reconciliation within the Cuban exile also has these two dimensions. Unless exiles undergo some degree of personal healing or reconciliation, social reconciliation will continue to be jeopardized. Lack of healing in a segment of the exile community leads to harsh criticism of those who do not exhibit an uncompromising anti-Castro stance. At the same time, this behavior reflects a certain intransigence on issues of Cuba, which causes them to be rejected and ridiculed by the larger community (Grenier 2006, 219). After the Elián saga,⁸⁴ “polls revealed that the overwhelming majority of non-Cubans were angered by and opposed Miami's Cubans’ strident opposition to the U.S. government’s efforts to return the boy to his father” (Stepick and Dutton Stepick 2009).

⁸⁴ Elián González was a six-year-old boy who left Cuba in a boat with his mother and a group of people. The boat capsized and his mother and most of the group drowned. The boy was rescued and placed with Miami relatives who wanted to honor the mother’s wish and keep the boy in the United States. The father in Cuba refused to sign the request for asylum and the custody battle began. What seemed irrational to the American public and a violation of parental rights, made perfect sense to exiles who identified with the boy and the struggle of the Miami relatives to honor the mother’s wish. According to many Cuban exiles, the situation became a political battle between Castro, who wanted the boy back, and the exiles in Miami (Montaner 2001, 207). When the boy was sent back to Cuba, many exiles felt betrayed by the U.S. government and defeated by Castro again (Stepick et al. 2003, 1-8).

Forgiveness as Self-Transcending Initiative

Jesus offered forgiveness as a gift of God so that human beings may have life (Jn 10:10). This was central to his mission: “to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4:18). He declared that he had come for the sinner and the sick, the lost and not the healthy (Jn 3:17; 12:47; Lk 5:32; 19:9-10). He readily forgave those who acknowledged their need for forgiveness, as in the case of the woman who anoints his feet (Lk 7:36-50), and even some who did not ask for it, as in the case of the paralytic (Mk 2: 1-12). On the cross Jesus asks the Father to forgive those responsible for the crucifixion (Lk 23:34). These words are “part and parcel of Luke’s theology of rejected prophet and of a Jesus who teaches and practices forgiveness of enemies” (Karris 1990, 719). Jesus’ words, echoed in the martyr Stephen (Acts 7:60), manifest that in spite of “the enormity of the wrong being done to them...they feel united still to God, and call upon God to forgive” (Schreier 2000, 62). Jesus grants the wish of the repentant thief who indirectly pleads for forgiveness by asking to be remembered in the kingdom (Lk 23: 39-41). After the resurrection Jesus appears to the disciples, and instead of reprimanding them for abandoning and betraying him, Jesus says: “Peace be with you” (Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23).⁸⁵

Jesus’ practice highlights the gratuitous dimension of forgiveness. Jesus grants forgiveness as a free gift, regardless of how others have acted. He takes the initiative in seeking out the sinner, focusing on the need of the other, not on the offenses he might have received from them or others. This challenges Cuban exiles to move beyond their

⁸⁵ For more on how the resurrection appearances suggest a theology of reconciliation as spirituality, ministry, and strategy. See Schrieter (2000).

own pain and hurt to grant forgiveness to those who have caused their suffering. Exiles' inability to see beyond their own pain is characteristic of those who have experienced trauma (Atkinson 2006/2007, 3506-25). Cuban exiles often compare their suffering with those who stayed in Cuba or those who came later, establishing a competition as to degrees of suffering (Lorenzo Ferrer, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012). If these exiles could transcend their own woundedness, they could begin to understand what others have experienced, realizing that all wounds are different and require acknowledgement. Lack of communication between Miami-based exiles and people in Cuba has produced a lack of mutual knowledge. Groups that arrived at different times often cannot understand nor recognize what others endured. Many of those who stayed behind came in later waves of migration. These different chronologies of migration have created a relational abyss between those who remained in Cuba and later migrated and those already in exile. This relational abyss calls for intentional efforts to promote encounter and communication across the Cuban community.

Forgiveness as an Invitation to New Possibilities

Forgiveness creates the possibility for reconciliation: "the overwhelming grace of being forgiven can bring even compulsive sinners, especially unwitting ones who know not what they do, to repentance and reconciliation with those who forgive against them" (Tilley 2008, 167). Jesus' presence awakens the need for conversion and awareness of personal sinfulness. One such example is Simon Peter's response to Jesus: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" (Lk 5:8). The offer of forgiveness is transformational in itself. It transforms enemies into neighbors (Albright and Mann 1973, 71). Jesus' granting of forgiveness to those who do not ask for it provokes conversion of

the sinner (De La Torre 2007, 81). Schreiter explains the role of the victim at the personal level of reconciliation. He states:

The process [of reconciliation] begins with the victim, who experiences God's healing power. This power leads the victim to call upon God to forgive the wrongdoer, and then moves the victim him- or herself to forgive the wrongdoer. The wrongdoer's experience of being forgiven by the victim leads the wrongdoer to repentance...we have reconciliation → forgiveness → repentance. (2000, 64)

This forgiving initiative, which seeks to encourage moral acknowledgement in the perpetrator, is what Govier and Hirano call "invitational forgiveness" (2008, 429-444). De La Torre argues that this model "naively ignores how power works, specifically how those in power never willingly relinquish their powers; forgiveness offered by the disenfranchised makes little difference to them" (2007, 121-122). Instead De La Torre proposes a model that moves from "rebuke to personal forgiveness, then repentance, justice, communal forgiveness, and finally, reconciliation" (122). However, De La Torre's model still leaves unanswered questions. If non-condemnatory forgiveness cannot bring about repentance, will forgiveness preceded by rebuke be able to elicit this response? Further, it is unclear how De La Torre's approach would move the wrongdoer to enact justice.

Griswold advocates for "prospective forgiving," by which the unrepentant offender is encouraged to change and thus "the conditions for true forgiveness will be enacted backwards" (Griswold 2007, 121). Forgiveness is seen as the "practice of creating justice not by repairing injustices of the past, by balancing the scales, or by collecting what one is owed, but by letting the past be past so that we can live together now and in the future"

(Tilley 2008, 170). This other dimension of forgiveness, which invites change and repentance, is another reason—a strategic one—to practice forgiveness even with those who have not expressed any remorse: “Unilateral forgiveness invites the perpetrator’s apology and seeks a world in which the wrong is overcome, transformed, and divested of force” (Philpott 2012, 272). Jesus’ forgiveness of the adulterous woman (Jn 7:53-8:11) reflects this form of unilateral, “prospective forgiveness” (Griswold 2007, 121), which invites sinners to conversion without accusing them. Forgivers need to decide whether the situation and the person need to be confronted with claims of justice or if non-recriminatory forgiveness will speak louder than words.⁸⁶

Alterity as Acceptance of Diversity

Alterity is a concept that expresses the ability to enter, respect, and appreciate the world of another, while letting the other be other (Levinas 1987, 83; Levinas 1999).⁸⁷ Jesus practiced alterity in different ways, beginning with the calling of twelve disciples from very different backgrounds. The twelve disciples represented opposing political views and clashing personalities, placing a Roman collaborator (tax collector) alongside an anti-Roman Zealot, and including the notably impulsive (Peter) and other fiery (“sons of thunder”) characters (Brown et al. 1990, 1378). Jesus transcended the boundaries

⁸⁶ The practice of invitational forgiveness requires certain conditions: the person who forgives must be a victim of the wrong; the victim must be alive or capable of forgiving; there must be some likelihood that the perpetrator will acknowledge the wrongdoing; the perpetrator has not apologized yet; the goal of the victim is to encourage perpetrator to commit to change, and the victim must inform the perpetrator that he is forgiven (Govier and Hirano 2008, 431-433).

⁸⁷ Levinas’ philosophy emphasizes respect for the otherness of the other, which must be absolute, that is, “other with an alterity constitutive of the very content of the other” (Levinas 1969, 39).

established by society and culture. He approached and often praised Samaritans in a Jewish culture (Jn 4; Lk 10:29-37). He recognized the faith of the centurion (Lk 7:2-10; 23:47; Mt 8:5-13; 27:54), even though the centurion was an official of the oppressive Roman Empire. Openness to non-Jews is less evident in Matthew's Gospel, where Gentiles never become disciples (Saldarini 1994, 82). Thus, Jesus was surprised to find faith among non-Jews, but yet this shows that "faith transcends the particularism where it was first experienced and where one naturally, therefore, most expects to find it" (Lee 1988, 71). Besides incorporating diversity in the Twelve and among his disciples, Jesus related in a respectful and caring way to women in a patriarchal culture.⁸⁸ Jesus' practices of reconciliation introduced the hope that human beings can overcome the differences that history, culture, politics, religion, gender, and personal limitations create. The deep polarization of ideas within the Cuban exile poses a challenge to the practice of alterity. Practicing alterity in the Cuban exile implies respectful acceptance of a diversity of ideas and opinions.

One unique expression of alterity was Jesus' practice of table fellowship, which was among the most controversial of Jesus' reconciling practices (Tilley 2008, 175). Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors (Mk 2:15-17) and, by doing so, showed "how a renewed and reconciled community could live and eat together...all could participate in the meal" (Tilley 2008, 178). The Gospels abound with food and banquet motifs that speak of hospitality and welcoming the marginalized (Mt 22:1-3; Lk 14:15-23). Based on Jesus' practice, no one should be excluded from the "table." In other words, all are welcome to

⁸⁸ Some examples are: the woman at the well, Jn 4; Martha and Mary, Jn 11; anointing in Bethany, Mk 14, 3-9.

participate in the construction of the common good, regardless of their views or social status.

Jesus's welcoming treatment of those who were different and his table fellowship with sinners and tax collectors, contrasts with the exclusionary attitudes based on ideological views often held by certain sectors of the exile community (De La Torre 2003, xv). This is exhibited in the exiles' attempts "to censor cultural events in Miami by artists or intellectuals from Cuba; such intolerance of opposing views has been a source of friction between Cubans and other groups" (Grenier 2006, 219).

Jesus' Teaching on Reconciliation

Jesus' teaching on reconciliation reaffirms and expands the message implicit in his practice. The message of reconciliation, expressed in his teachings on love, appears in very distinct ways in both the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel. In the Synoptics, this message takes place in the context of out-group relationships, while, in John's Gospel, it is directed to in-group dynamics.

The Synoptics present Jesus' teachings of love as unconditional forgiveness. This forgiveness involves a love of enemies that requires a proactive initiative towards the other who is considered an enemy. Through these actions, the disciple—who is also a sinner—gives to others the gift of love and forgiveness received from God. Jesus' message of forgiveness is an exhortation to forgive *others*, and so is aimed at the agents of forgiveness, rather than at those who receive the gift of forgiveness. These teachings are presented either as challenges to the disciple or as responses to those who refuse to forgive or criticize Jesus' compassionate treatment of sinners (Lk 15:1-2). Jesus' message

of reconciliation in the Synoptics is summed up in three themes: unconditional forgiveness, love of enemies, and mutuality—which means forgive as you are forgiven.

Unconditional Forgiveness

Jesus's practice of unconditional love and forgiveness is illustrated in the parables of Luke 15:1-32 about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. These parables speak of a merciful and loving God who seeks out the sinner. In the parable of the Prodigal (lost) Son, Jesus' way of treating sinners is contrasted with the Pharisees and teachers of the law's approach to sinners (Lk 15:1-2), whose attitudes are depicted in the older brother of the parable. In Luke 15:2, the Pharisees and teachers of the law criticize Jesus' unconditional acceptance of those who have gone astray. Jesus responds with the story of a father whose son greatly offends him, and yet this father forgets his son's offense. As soon as he sees his son coming from afar, he begins to celebrate his return. One can note that when the father initially sees his son, he does not know why the son is coming back and does not wait for an apology. The lost son's return does not seem to be motivated by repentance, but by personal need. His confession of guilt does not come spontaneously. Indeed, he rehearses it on the way, suggesting that it was not from the heart (Lk 15:18).

Does this mean that forgiveness does not require repentance? Paradoxically, Luke is the only Gospel that mentions repentance as a condition for forgiveness,⁸⁹ but the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15) and the words of Jesus at the crucifixion (Lk 23:34) suggest otherwise. Jesus does not require anything from "the lost son" nor from his executioners.

Jesus teaches that forgiveness is ongoing, as Jesus' answer of forgiving seventy times seven times seems to imply (Lk 17:3-4; Mt 18:15, 21-22). The disciple who wants

⁸⁹ "If he repents, forgive him" (Lk 17:3).

to practice forgiveness is invited by Jesus to grant the gift of forgiveness freely. This gift comes from the inner bounty of love, which is unconditional. However, for that gift to fully benefit the person receiving it, it must be accepted with an open heart. It requires a response or acknowledgement of the “causes of the estrangement and an attempt to take action to eradicate these causes” (De La Torre 2004a, 42).

While forgiveness does not require repentance from the wrongdoer, reconciliation—the restoration of right relationship—involves both the *initiative* or *will* to reconcile, which is unconditional and indiscriminate, and *actual* reconciliation, which requires truth and justice (Volf 2000, 171).⁹⁰ This distinction is critical for exiles who oppose *any* type of dialogue with the Cuban government *until* human rights are secured (FIU Cuba polls). This form of thinking is reflected in the words of historian Pedro Roig:⁹¹

Reconciliation with the murderers who do not admit their crime is like a dangerous trip of one who walks happily without knowing where and when one would be killed. Reconciliation implies three stages: recognition of the fault, acknowledgement of guilt, and the request of forgiveness. In this case, the victim is the people of Cuba whose civil liberties and human rights are systematically violated by corrupt military and the communist party. (Roig 2012)

⁹⁰ For Volf, genuine embrace “cannot take place until the truth about the transgressions between people has been told and justice is established. Hence, the will to embrace includes the will to find the truth and the will to determine what is just. The will to embrace includes the will to rectify the wrongs that have been done and to reshape the relationship according to what one believes to be true and just (2000, 171).

⁹¹ Pedro Roig is a lawyer, historian, and advisor at the Institute of Cuban Studies of the University of Miami.

Such steps to reconciliation do not happen often. In long-term conflicts such as the Cuban situation, expecting that either side will admit their mistakes is unlikely. Conflict transformation avoids this winner/loser duality and reframes conflict as an opportunity to build something new (Lederach 2005, 35). Someone has to initiate the conversation that may or may not end in reconciliation.

Love of Enemies

The greatest challenge in the Synoptics is to love one's enemies (Mt 5:43-48; Lk 6:27-36). This form of love surpasses the demands of *lex talionis* (Lv 24:20; Dt 19:16-21),⁹² which was intended to limit punishment by making it proportional to the offense. Nevertheless, Jesus' teaching is an invitation to go beyond that, following the Jewish tradition of love of enemies in the Wisdom and later Jewish literature, such as the writings from Qumran (Klassen 1992, 21). Jesus' exhortation to forgive and pray for one's enemies is based on the imitation of God (Cahill 1994, 31), the call to be "perfect as God is perfect" (Mt 5:48) or merciful (Lk 6:36).

Love of enemies is also illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). In this parable, the Samaritan is the one who practices this kind of love towards his enemy (the Jew in distress) and, by doing so, the Samaritan makes his enemy his neighbor. As Gutiérrez says, "the neighbor is not he whom I find in my path, but rather he in whose path I place myself, he whom I approach and actively seek" (1996, 113). In his compassionate initiative, the Samaritan puts aside antagonism between Jews and Samaritans. Cuban exiles that send remittances to people in Cuba put aside political

⁹²Love of enemies may be inferred in Leviticus 19:17-18.34, which says: "take no revenge... [of those who offend you] ...you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (van der Ven 1998, 222).

arguments that “remittances serve to prop up Fidel Castro’s government” (Blue 2004, 67). Research on the determinants of family remittance to Cuba indicates that helping relatives in the island⁹³ is more important than political disincentives (Blue 2004, 80). However, sizable numbers of exiles oppose selling medications and food to the island (FIU Cuba polls), because in their opinion this helps the Cuban economy and perpetuates the system.

Mutuality

If forgiving others is difficult, recognizing one’s need for forgiveness may be even more challenging. Concerning the conditions for receiving forgiveness, Jesus teaches that forgiveness is mutual. To pray for forgiveness implies that one has forgiven or is willing to forgive others: “When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions” (Mk 11:25). In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus provides forgiveness as an incentive to forgive others (Mt 6:12; Lk 11:4): a person, who wants to be forgiven, ought to forgive. Matthew places the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:23-35) in the chapter dedicated to the construction of community. This demonstrates that a community, who wants to be forgiven, ought to forgive. The community’s ability to forgive comes from its experience of being forgiven by God (Uña Fernández 2012, 8).

If Jesus is so forgiving, how does one explain Jesus’ recriminating words to the Pharisees and Herod? In Mark 8:15, Jesus states: “Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.” Jesus’ message combines radical forgiveness and love

⁹³ This study was conducted with pre-1980 exiles, who are frequently the most opposed to any activity that may help the Cuban economy.

for enemies (Mt 5:33-48; 18:21-22; Lk 6:27-36) with confrontation of hypocrisy and injustice (Mt 23; Lk 19:46). Jesus embodies the “dialectic tension between the severity of God’s justice and the tenderness of God’s mercy” (Lee 1988, 89). The double-sided nature of his message has often been ignored (Wells 1997, 5-7). Some emphasize the forgiving Jesus, while others stress that forgiveness of one’s sins is interdependent with the forgiveness of others.⁹⁴ Jesus’ teachings on forgiveness need to be read in the context of the Gospel writers and their audiences. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus has very harsh words for his opponents. This reflects the Matthean community’s attack on Jewish leaders, “the institutions they control[,] and the interpretations of Jewish law and customs they propose for Jewish society” (Saldarini 1994, 67). According to Sobrino (1994, 87-89), the Synoptic Gospels show that Jesus did not deal in the same way with sinners who were marginalized, who acknowledged their need for help, and those whose sin created the conditions of marginalization, injustice, and exclusion (e.g., the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Lk 18:9-14). Jesus strongly admonished the self-righteous and those who hardened their hearts or rejected God’s offer, as when he reproaches Chorazin and Bethsaida for not repenting (Lk 10:13-16). De La Torre interprets the commandment to love one’s enemies as the “struggle to restore the humanity of the powerful by fostering a justice that liberates not only the oppressed but also the oppressor” (2007, 79-80) and thus solves the dilemma of practicing both justice and mercy.

⁹⁴ “Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us” (Lk 11:4).

A different perspective on love is reflected in the Johannine community. Instead of a message of love of enemies, the Johannine tradition speaks of the commandment of love (“love one another”). The commandment of love appears in the Farewell Discourses (Jn 13:31, 15:9-17). These chapters were likely added after the original writing of the Fourth Gospel (Segovia 1982). Thus, they likely reflect the experience of the Christian community at that time, who were forced to create their own internal bonds under intense rejection from the synagogue. In other words, “the hatred from without must be balanced and opposed by love within” (Rensberger 1992, 305). In the context of such opposition, the witness of unity and love among members of the Johannine community “testifies not only to the strength of their conviction but also to its validity, with the aim that even those who oppress them should come to believe as well” (Rensberger 1992, 307). Cuban exiles who experience in-group division today may also draw from the Johannine tradition’s emphasis on mutual love, which can make the message of reconciliation contagious. In this sense, the Gospel of John resonates particularly well with a process of reconciliation among exiles.

Thus, John’s contribution on the theme of love is a call to unity for the in-group, while the Synoptic Gospels project love to out-group relationships, even enemies. Paul, “who makes the profoundest contribution to the Christian understanding of love” (Klassen 1992, 19), does not explicitly mention the commandment to love enemies. However, he prescribes a treatment of persecutors that implies love of enemies, or at least

not returning evil with evil.⁹⁵ Perhaps Paul's greatest contribution to the theology of reconciliation is his use of the word "reconciliation" itself.

Reconciliation in Paul

Most of Paul's letters were written before the composition of the Gospels, and his writings, therefore, reflect the oral traditions of Jesus within the earliest Christian communities (Harris 2006, 325). Paul's letters show that his "dominant interest was in what Jesus accomplished for humanity in his passion, death, burial, resurrection, exaltation, and heavenly intercession" (Fitzmyer 1981, 163). Paul uses different terms figures to describe this Christ-event, particularly "reconciliation," as in Romans, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians.⁹⁶ Paul's reconciliation language is "at the center

⁹⁵ Rm 12:9-21; 1 Cor 4:12-13.

⁹⁶ Rm 5:10-11: "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled (*katēllagēmen*) to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled (*katallagētes*), will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (*katallagēn*)."

Rm 11:15: "For if their rejection is the reconciliation (*katallagē*) of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!"

2 Cor 5:17-21: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled (*katallaxantos*) us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation (*katallagēs*); that is, in Christ God was reconciling (*katallasson*) the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation (*katallagēs*) to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled (*katallagēte*) to God."

Eph 2:16 "And might reconcile (*apokatallaxē*) both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it."

Col 1:20-22: And through him God was pleased to reconcile (*apokatallaxai*) to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled (*apokatēllaxen*) in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.

of his theology” (Porter 1996, 693). Perhaps his best exposition of the concept of interpersonal reconciliation is the letter to Philemon (Turner 2007, 39). Although here the word “reconciliation” itself is not used, the concept is still present. The apostle asks Philemon to take back Onesimus not as a slave “but as a brother” (Phlm 16). The Second Letter to the Corinthians contains frequent usage of Greek words for “reconciliation,” with the verb form (*katallassō*) appearing three times and the noun (*katallagē*) appearing twice (Porter 1996, 693). This concept is used in a unique way not found in previous Greek usage. In this case, “the subject effects reconciliation by giving up its own anger against another party” (Porter 1996, 696). Paul is the first author to use the active voice form of the verb with the offended party taking the initiative in effecting reconciliation (Porter 1996, 693). Four key aspects of Paul’s theology of reconciliation are reflected in his use of the term: the divine character of reconciliation, the gratuitousness of reconciliation for a non-deserving humanity, reconciliation as a form of ministry, and reconciliation as unity brought about by the Christ-event, which transcends diversity and overcomes antagonism within the community. Each of these aspects carries particular relevance to the Cuban situation.

The Divine Character of Reconciliation

Within the New Testament, only Paul refers to Christ as an agent of reconciliation (Busch 2005). For Paul, reconciliation is “restoring humanity (and the world, *kosmos*) to a status of friendship” with God and other persons (Fitzmyer 1981, 166). God initiates and creates reconciliation through Christ’s death (Busch 2005). Reconciliation is what Christ did for humanity through his passion, death, and resurrection. This reconciliation

"is a comprehensive restoration of humanity to a state of right relationship, a work of justice that is closely linked with mercy, peace and the kingdom of God" (Philpott 2012, 141).

The Pauline emphasis on the divine dimension of reconciliation offers another key insight for the work of reconciliation: "it is not about a technique or strategy but an encounter with a person and with the mysterious resources of creativity that come from that" (Schreiter 2009, 731). Reconciliation work, therefore, cannot be approached in a mechanistic way; one cannot expect immediate, automatic results from implemented practices. Such a process reduces reconciliation to skills and techniques. Rather, reconciliation practices must include mediation, understanding of group dynamics, and negotiation. Most importantly, reconciliation needs to be approached not as "a skill to be mastered, but rather something to be discovered—the power of God's grace welling up in one's life" (Schreiter, 1998, 27). Though reconciliation is ultimately God's work, this does not mean that human collaboration is not required. Thomas Aquinas emphasized the interrelatedness of human and divine action in the experience of grace. God works in the person (*operans*) and with the person (*cooperans*), but it is the same grace (Aquinas *S.T.* I-II, 111, 2).⁹⁷ Thus, reconciliation is ultimately about grace (2000, 15); God works in and with the person and the community throughout the process.

The Gratuitousness of Reconciliation

One of Paul's central arguments in favor of reconciliation is based on Paul's own experience of God's graciousness and unconditional offer of mercy. Paul is painfully

⁹⁷ *Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, question 111, article 2.

aware that he was a real enemy of the faith when Christ intervened in his life on the way to Damascus. The encounter with Christ and the gift of revelation Paul received led him to convert. Yet, Christ did not disregard Paul's unjust behavior; "the divine voice named the action by its proper name, 'persecution' (Acts 9:40). Disapproval of the action was powerfully conveyed: Paul fell to the ground" (Volf 2000, 166). Paul's theology of reconciliation is profoundly marked by the conviction that "reconciliation is an act of God prior to and independent of any abandonment of enmity to God...equally prior to and independent of any human endeavor to secure a standing with God" (Martin 1980, 367). This theme appears in Romans 5:

God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:8-11)

The same theme appears in other Pauline texts such as 2 Corinthians: "in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Cor 5:19). The experience of being unconditionally forgiven is an invitation to forgive others in the same way. Similarly, the author of Ephesians exhorts Gentiles to welcome the Jews because this is what God has done with them:

Remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:12-13)

Paul stresses that no one merits reconciliation, which comes from God. God does not wait for humanity to change, but rather intervenes to make change possible. This understanding of the graciousness of God's gift of reconciliation questions and even shatters the argument that *until* those who have caused harm in Cuba repent and apologize, they cannot be engaged. If Christ died for humankind *while still in sin*, in order to save it from sin, rapprochement cannot be postponed until there is change in Cuba. In this light, efforts of dialogue with the Cuban government or others who support it are far from being an endorsement of the *status quo*, but rather necessary, gospel-mediated initiatives with potential for transformation. Moreover, some Cuban exiles point out that every Cuban has some degree of responsibility for the situation of Cuba: "Only a few may be guilty, but we are all responsible in some degree for such tragedy" (Eduardo Mesa, Interview, Miami, July 24, 2012). Mesa is referring to the shared responsibility for suffering brought about by the sociopolitical situation of Cuba.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

In 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, Paul describes the origin of reconciliation in the Father through the mediation of reconciliation through the Son, making the case that his own ministry has the same divine origin (Martin 1986, 156). Paul identifies himself as an "ambassador of reconciliation" to highlight that the message and work of reconciliation is Christ's, not his own. Paul claims that this message of reconciliation has been entrusted

“to us” (2 Cor 5:18). This implies that this message is not something merely shared by himself, but with all disciples (Matera 2003, 141). As ambassadors of reconciliation, those who follow Jesus are called to initiate efforts of reconciliation (Myers and Enns 2009). They have experienced the gift of God’s saving love and feel impelled to be heralds of that message. The experience of reconciliation transforms the reconciled into reconcilers. For Paul, reconciliation is not an idea, but an experience that requires “a response on the part of those whom God reconciles to himself” (Matera 2003, 142). When Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20b that “we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God,” he is making an appeal “to receive what God has already given, to appropriate what God has already done” (Furnish 1977, 212). Such a practical theological understanding of reconciliation makes demands on the Cuban exile community, calling for people to actively embody the spirit of reconciliation through their words, attitudes, decisions, and actions.

Reconciliation as Unity in Diversity

The Letter to the Ephesians presents both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of reconciliation. Ephesians 2:14-16⁹⁸ refers to the unity between Jews and Greeks that comes from the Christ-event, which also brings them into communion with God (Fitzmyer 1981, 169). In this letter, “the deutero-pauline author—much in the spirit of Paul—is suggesting to gentile readers that they need to show more graciousness to the Jews, who were the first heirs of the covenant” (Schreier 2009, 729). Reconciliation

⁹⁸“For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.”

brings about a “new humanity” in Christ, not by abolishing or denying differences between Jews and Gentiles, but by ending the hostilities between them (Turner 2007, 44). Another dimension of unity found in Ephesians is “the unity of interpersonal relationships in the local congregation and households” (Turner 2007, 43). Christ appears as the agent of reconciliation (Matera 2003, 138). This has special resonance for divided communities, such as the Cuban exile, in need of God’s power to break down barriers that prevent real community and conversion.

Ephesians 2 calls for a revolution of human identity. It signals to us that apartheid... patriarchy, class status, and other systemic forms of classifying humanity for domination are being replaced by a new structure of “one new humanity” through Jesus’ death on a cross and resurrection. (Boesak and DeYoung 2012, 19)

The division afflicting the community of Ephesus, much like that of the Corinthians, could not be resolved by sheer human efforts, but by recognizing that they are one body (1 Cor 12) called to live by the law of love (1 Cor 13). Most importantly, as Paul insists, without Christ—his death *and* life—reconciliation is not possible. Personal and social reconciliation intersect to form “one church” (Martin 1996, 221). This “one church” is made possible through God’s reconciliation in Christ’s sacrifice.

In the hymn at the start of the letter to the Colossian church, the reconciling effects of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross are presented in cosmic perspective. Paul’s reference to the reconciliation of “all things” “embrace[s] things on earth and things in heaven just as the [reference to] ‘all things’ which were created through Christ embrace[s] things in heaven and on earth” (Bruce 1984, 293). The call to be one is not only humanity’s vocation, but also the vocation of all of creation. From an eschatological perspective,

reconciliation is the ultimate vocation of all human beings and all creation. A focus on eschatological or final reconciliation cannot evade the concrete tasks of the process of reconciliation and how it relates to justice.

Justice

The relationship between reconciliation and justice is critical for any discourse on the praxis and ethics of reconciliation. This is especially important for Cuban exiles divided over their understanding of justice. They commonly resist reconciliation out of their fear that justice will be compromised (de Aragón 2012). While some exiles are willing to focus on the future and ignore past transgressions, many more demand that, before promoting dialogue and reconciliation with the existing Cuban government, political changes need to take place and the guilty need to be punished. Exiles ask: “Is reconciliation possible when the criminal pretends to ignore his guilt and does not accept the need for repentance?” (Roig 2012). The understanding of “justice” demanded by those in the exile varies from basic acknowledgement of wrongs and an end to human rights violations to retribution and reparation for wrongful actions of the past. Without this conceptual clarity regarding the nature of justice, the exile will continue to be divided. The Christian tradition can offer the Cuban community considerable guidance on the concept of justice.

Biblical Notion of Justice

In the Hebrew Scriptures, two terms are used to convey the concept of justice: *tsēdaqah* (righteousness) and *mishpat* (justice). These words also refer to ethical and moral standards, as well as the equality of all people before the law (Mafico 1992, 1127).

Justice in the Hebrew Scriptures is fundamentally both an attribute of God (Is 5:16; Ps 97:2) and what God demands of those who follow God's ways (Dt 16:20). Biblical justice is "inextricably tied to God's mercy and grounded in the relationship between God and humankind" (Freedman, Byers, and Beck 2000, 534). For the Israelites, justice was a central aspect of community relationships. God was "regarded as the source and guardian of justice" (Mafico 1992, 1128).

When people felt treated unjustly, they called on God to judge their oppressors and avenge them (Dt 32:43; Ps 94). God was the protector of the poor and oppressed (Ps 10:17-18; 82:1-8), the defender of their rights. When the Israelites forgot the covenant and acted unjustly, God sent them prophets to denounce their evil actions and call them back to faithfulness. Although God's justice seemed to favor Israel, the psalmist claims its universality: "all people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings" (Ps 36:7). Justice, in their experience, referred to respect for basic human rights and right relationship. God did not require piety, but justice and righteousness (Am 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8; Hos 6:6).

God was seen as judge to the nations: "God's justice is manifested in his retribution to all people and nations according to their just deserts" (Mafico 1992, 1128). As revelation progresses, the notion of mercy and forgiveness toward other nations develops with greater clarity. Thus, God forces Jonah to preach to the Ninevites⁹⁹ so they can repent and be forgiven. While this understanding came late in the Hebrew Scriptures,

⁹⁹ Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire, Israel's enemy.

God's justice was always intimately related to the people's experience of God's mercy and faithfulness (Hos 2:21-23).

In the New Testament, the concept of justice is related to two Greek nouns: *krisis*, a term related to judgment and *dikaios*, a term related to righteousness. It appears most frequently in the Gospel of Matthew and in Romans (Ziesler 1993, 657). In Matthew, justice appears as a requirement, but also as a gift (3:25; 5:6; 6:33). Jesus sets a new standard of justice or righteousness: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20). For Paul, justice describes the life of the people of God (Phil 4:8; 2 Cor 5:14). God's righteousness usually refers to God's saving activity (Rom 1:18). There are two sides of the concept of justice throughout Scripture: right conduct and right response to wrong conduct (Philpott 2012, 53). Both relate to right relationships; the first is the practice of right relationship and the second is the repair of "relationships that injustices have ruptured so that the persons involved are once again living according to the demands of right relationships" (Philpott 2012, 53).

Justice and Reconciliation

The relationship between justice and reconciliation is a major question in social science and theological literature on reconciliation. Some argue that "the establishment of justice is the first condition for a process of reconciliation" (Aquino 2003, 129).

Contemporary discussion on justice identifies two types of justice: retributive and restorative, also termed reparative (Avruch 2010, 36). Retributive justice in the liberal

paradigm¹⁰⁰ is justice carried out by a formal criminal judicial proceeding. It is “the justice of punishment, vengeance, and *lex talionis*, which is retroactive and focused primarily on the perpetrator” (Avruch 2010, 36). Restorative justice is oriented towards the needs of the victim. It seeks compensation for the victims, repair of the harm caused, and, most importantly, to restore the dignity of the victim (Blustein 2010, 583). It also seeks to repair the damage done to the “wider community, as well as the damage that is self-inflicted by the perpetrator” (Himes 2010, 290). Restorative justice does not exclude punishment of the perpetrator and some degree of retribution, but it should not be confused with vengeance or retaliation (De La Torre 2007, 118). The goal is to help transform the perpetrator. This has been called “restorative punishment” since it seeks “an actual restoration of human flourishing among victims, communities, and perpetrators” (Philpott 2012, 208). Restorative justice is not necessarily amnesty, which partially or totally forgoes punishment (Philpott 2012, 213).¹⁰¹ It may include elements of accountability that need to be discerned to avoid further polarization and political instability. In some contexts, such as Zimbabwe (Machingura 2010), the invitation to reconciliation has been led by the perpetrators of violence. The result has been greater division and a sense of betrayal among the victims, illustrating the need for careful, prudent discernment.

¹⁰⁰ The liberal model originates in the Enlightenment period and is associated with philosophers such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and John Rawls. This model stresses human rights, democracy, free market, and justice as punishment (Philpott 2007, 95). For more on the origins of liberalism, see Holland (2003, 22-23).

¹⁰¹ Schreier differentiates between amnesty and pardon: “Amnesty is a ‘legal’ forgetting that the deed ever occurred.” Pardon means “that there will be no punishment. It does not imply ‘forgetting’ that the deed occurred” (2000, 125).

These two types of justice correspond to two paradigms: the liberal human rights tradition and the reconciliation approach (Philpott 2007, 94). The liberal human rights tradition is

part retributivist—as Kant was, insisting that dictators and their minions receive the punishment that they deserve, and part consequentialist—stressing the value of punishment for deterrence of future crimes and for establishing new political orders on the basis of the rule of law. (Philpott 2007, 95)

The reconciliation paradigm seeks an alternative to the basic restoration of rights and right relationship. It is a more holistic approach to transitional politics “involving apology, forgiveness, empathetic acknowledgement of suffering and the healing of enmity” (Philpott 2007, 106). While the liberal model relies on reason alone, the reconciliation model is grounded in part on religious rationales, though not exclusively, and reflects the practice of restorative justice within the Judeo-Christian tradition.

These understandings of justice and punishment are key in the effort to articulate the relationship between reconciliation and justice. From a perspective of political reconciliation, Philpott has identified seven models of relationships (2012, 49-53). The first model sacrifices justice in order to attain a kind of “cheap reconciliation.” This reconciliation is usually promoted by those who committed the injustices. The second model sees reconciliation as unjustly paternalistic, belonging in religion, not in politics. These first two have a negative regard for the concept of reconciliation.

The third model “takes reconciliation to mean healing, forgiveness, and often amnesty...as a second-best alternative to the justice of prosecution and restitution” (2012, 51). In some circumstances, the desire to consolidate democracy and promote national

unity may outweigh the need for legal adjudication (Amstutz 2006, 153). This was the choice Spain made after the democratic transition (1975-1978) that followed the civil war (1936-1939). This illustrates that “regimes in transition may consciously or explicitly choose not to engage the past in order to safeguard the transition to a more democratic future” (Avruch 2010, 38). The fourth model sees justice as complementing reconciliation. This type of justice is punitive. Under this view, reconciliation is built on justice and is separate from it (Tombs and Liechty 2006). This hybrid form combines trials with restorative measures.

The fifth model identifies reconciliation with justice. Here justice is considered a positive peace, where enemies come together in respectful interaction, but do not go as far as reaching social harmony. Rather, they operate on the principles of liberty and equality, which enable people to live together in spite of differences. According to the sixth model, reconciliation encompasses justice. It rejects both the position of “reconciliation without justice” and “first justice, then reconciliation,” instead suggests “placing the struggle for justice within an overarching framework of reconciliation” where reconciliation has a primacy over liberation and love has primacy over justice (Volf 2000, 169). This model still understands justice as “judicial punishment, human rights, and equality” (Philpott 2012, 52). The final and seventh position, which Philpott advocates, considers reconciliation equal to justice. Here justice is understood as a comprehensive restoration of relationship. His overarching concept is that of restorative justice, and he sees reconciliation as *a form* of that justice (Philpott 2012, 53).¹⁰²

¹⁰² Philpott claims that Schreier (2000), Wells (1997), Daly and Sarkin (2007), and Lederach (1997) are other examples of his view.

Isasi-Díaz also understands reconciliation as an element of justice (Isasi-Díaz 2004; 2006). In this view, reconciliation requires that one “works in a concrete and effective way to build bridges over the rifts created by prejudices or diversity of experiences, world views or values” (2004, 228). For Philpott and Isasi-Díaz, justice is the overarching concept, while for Schreiter the overarching concept is reconciliation. Philpott operates from the perspective of right relationship within political orders. Right relationship is the goal of political reconciliation (Philpott 2012, 86). Reconciliation from a theological perspective includes personal and social as well as human and spiritual dimensions that transcend the realm of strategies and practices.

In personal reconciliation, the gracious offer of forgiveness may lead the wrongdoer to repentance. In a similar way, the path of reconciliation can become an instrument to achieve justice. This is another way to relate reconciliation and justice. In the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, church leaders took a dialectic approach to reconciliation. The opposition’s reconciling engagement of the established government led to greater justice and the end of apartheid. As a result, a true reconciliation process began (De Gruchy 2002, 22), which involved the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deal with the harm caused by apartheid. In this case, reconciliation is seen “both as a *result of justice* and as an *instrument of justice*” (Volf 2000, 170).

Another way of understanding the relationship between justice and reconciliation may be found in the teachings of Pope John Paul II. In his second encyclical, *Dives in*

Misericordia (1980),¹⁰³ he establishes the insufficiency of justice because of the necessity of love and mercy; love modifies justice.

The experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions. (John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 10)

In some areas of the encyclical, Pope John Paul II declares the intrinsic connection between mercy and justice, which he describes to be very closely related.

True mercy is, so to speak, the most profound source of justice... Mercy that is truly Christian is also, in a certain sense, the most perfect incarnation of "equality" between people, and therefore also the most perfect incarnation of justice as well, insofar as justice aims at the same result in its own sphere. (*Dives in Misericordia*, 10)

In the end, Pope John Paul II argues, love has primacy over justice.

Mercy is in a certain sense contrasted with God's justice, and in many cases is shown to be not only more powerful than that justice but also more profound... Love, so to speak, conditions justice and, in the final analysis, justice serves love. The primacy and superiority of love vis-a-vis justice—this is a mark of the whole of revelation—are revealed precisely through mercy. (*Dives in Misericordia*, 4)

In his yearly messages on the celebrations of the World Day of Peace, Pope John Paul II often revisited the tension between forgiveness, love, and justice. In his 2002

¹⁰³ Philpott sees in this document a mixture of both the sixth and seventh type of the relationship between justice and reconciliation (2012, 299).

message, he points out that some believe that justice and forgiveness are irreconcilable, but he argues that when mercy touches justice, justice is transformed.

Mercy, however, has the power to confer on justice a new content, which is expressed most simply and fully in forgiveness. Forgiveness, in fact, shows that, over and above the process of "compensation" and "truce" which is specific to justice, love is necessary, so that man may affirm himself as man. Fulfillment of the conditions of justice is especially indispensable in order that love may reveal its own nature. (John Paul II, "No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness," January 1, 2002, 3)

Reconciliation, which involves healing, comes through forgiveness, but without ignoring or bypassing the injustices that have taken place:

Forgiveness is in no way opposed to justice, as if to forgive meant to overlook the need to right the wrong done. It is rather the fullness of justice, leading to that tranquility of order which is much more than a fragile and temporary cessation of hostilities, involving as it does the deepest healing of the wounds which fester in human hearts. Justice and forgiveness are both essential to such healing. (John Paul II, "No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness," January 1, 2002, 3)

Love as the basis of justice is analogous to the notion of love as "the key to the right interpretation of the whole Law" (Mott 2011, 41). Love transcends justice (Mott 2011, 45) and theologically is the only motivation that can make the pursuit of justice have permanent, constructive results. Justice transformed by love is restorative and conducive to reconciliation. It takes justice seriously and seeks to establish the truth and restoration for the victims, but not revenge. In this understanding of justice, the goal is to reconstitute

community. The purpose of this justice is reconciliation (Goizueta 2012). These claims suggest that there are many more possibilities than “justice without reconciliation” or “reconciliation without justice,” the two alternatives that Cuban exiles often debate.¹⁰⁴

The concept of restorative justice discussed here, including restorative punishment, which is motivated by love and mercy, offers the key to an ethical relationship between reconciliation and justice.

In a process of social reconciliation, forgiveness and reconciliation do not need to be at odds with justice. Forgiveness relinquishes punishment *motivated by* revenge and retribution and, most importantly, it “involves internal relinquishment, a forgoing of anger, resentment, and the victim’s construal of the perpetrators as one to be condemned and brought low for his deeds” (Philpott 2012, 260). Forgiveness in political contexts is about separating the perpetrator from his/her deeds and believing in every person’s possibility to change (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 157-158). This kind of forgiveness is oriented to the future (Schreiter 2012; Daly and Sarkin 2012, 157). Such constructive forgiveness leads to justice or “restoration of right relationship” (Philpott 2012, 264). Ideally, a process of reconciliation requires that “those within the dominant culture come to terms with their undue power and privilege and address their participation in oppressive structures” (De La Torre 2007, 114). According to Boesak and DeYoung (2012), when efforts of reconciliation disregard the need to uproot injustice, the result is “political pietism.” When Christians ignore justice, they practice a form of “Christian quietism.”

¹⁰⁴ De Aragón 2012.

When we...[Christians] for reasons of self-protection, fear, or a desire for acceptance by the powers that govern our world seek to accommodate this situation, justify it, refuse to run the risk of challenge and prophetic truth telling, we become complicit in deceitful reconciliation. (Boesak and DeYoung 2012, 1)

Christian anthropology understands the call to reconciliation as engraved on the human heart: “The experience of the divine always occurs in human culture” (Espín 1996, 309). Seeds of reconciliation are found within all people and all cultures (Schreiter 2009, 29). According to Bevans, Christian theology is always contextual due to the Incarnation, the sacramental nature of reality, and the interpersonal understanding of revelation (1992, 7-9). Realizing the importance of cultural contextualization for understanding the meaning of reconciliation, the next section will examine the experience of reconciliation as mediated by a preeminent symbol of Cuban identity: Our Lady of Charity, patroness of Cuba.

Our Lady of Charity as a Symbol of Reconciliation

in the Historical Experience of the Cuban People

Cultural symbols are important unifying elements in processes of reconciliation (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 100). These symbols “communicate to individuals both within and without the society what the defining ideas of that culture are” (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 100). Our Lady of Charity has consistently been identified as a national symbol, even by secular historians (Portuondo Zúñiga 1997, 3).

History of the Devotion and its Significance

Within the Catholic experience, Mary signifies and makes present the salvific mystery of Christ that can never be disassociated from her. In Hispanic popular Catholicism,¹⁰⁵ “the revelation of the sacred or what is ‘of’ the sacred (statues of Mary, Joseph, the saints, religious processions, and home altars)...serves as a sacramental means for understanding the... encounter of grace” (Díaz 2001, 65-66).¹⁰⁶ Our Lady of Charity has been a reconciling presence in the experience of the Cuban people. The history and devotion that surround this presence contains foundational elements for a theology of reconciliation for Cubans everywhere.

The document of the original testimony of the finding of Our Lady of Charity contains the definite story of how the small image of Mary on the main altar of the shrine in El Cobre¹⁰⁷ was found. Until the 1970s, when Cuban historian Levi Marrero found this document in the Archives of the Indies,¹⁰⁸ Our Lady of Charity had been depicted as a dark skinned woman with a blue mantle carrying the baby Jesus. Below her, three men struggle in a rowboat engulfed by the waves: two are rowing while the one in the center

¹⁰⁵Popular Catholicism, according to Espín, is not called “popular” because it is widespread, but because its “creators and practitioners are the people, and more concretely, the marginalized” (1997, 162). This religious practice of the common people is characterized by the integration of medieval and baroque Catholic Spanish roots, Amerindian and African influences, and an emphasis on ritual, arts, and drama as mediating grace (1997, 111-155).

¹⁰⁶ In Hispanic popular Catholicism “symbolization is theo-centric in nature. The divine reality, or the ‘beyond’ of the symbol, is encountered within the symbol itself” (Díaz 2001, 64). These symbols are usually “an object, image, or action that reveals, mediates, and makes present what may be called the ineffable, the holy, the sacred, or the supernatural” (Goizueta 1999, 27, note 26).

¹⁰⁷ El Cobre is about 20 kilometers from Santiago de Cuba.

¹⁰⁸ The *Archivo de las Indias* in Seville, Spain contains documents related to the discovery of America and the period of Spanish colonization that followed.

(a black youngster) seems to be praying.¹⁰⁹ These men are represented in the pictures or images as a white man—Spanish or *criollo*,¹¹⁰ an Indian, and a black man. Holy cards also add two angels above her holding a banner with the following inscription: “*Mater Caritatis Fluctibus Maris Ambulavit*” (Mother of Charity who walked on the stormy seas). Indeed, popular iconography continues to affirm the depiction of multi-ethnic Cubans under the protection of Our Lady of Charity. The lived practice of this devotion thus reveals elements that point to ethnic reconciliation. Additionally, she is a touchstone for other forms of reconciliation as well.

The historical account¹¹¹ contained in the testimony of Juan Moreno, a royal slave,¹¹² is dated April 1, 1687 and relates the following story (Larrúa-Guedes, 2011). In the year 1612, Juan Moreno and two Indian brothers, Rodrigo and Juan de Hoyos, were searching for salt in the Bay of Nipe when a storm came up over the waters. After taking shelter for a while, they set back out to the sea, and then they saw a white object floating on the waters. It was a small statue (about fourteen inches high) of the Virgin set on a board with the following inscription: *Yo soy la Virgen de la Caridad* (“I am the Virgin of Charity”). To their surprise the image was dry. They took the image with them and

¹⁰⁹ See Díaz (2006, 157-179) for a theological interpretation of the significance of three men on the boat.

¹¹⁰ In colonial times, this Spanish term referred to a person of Spanish descent born in the New World. “*Criolla, criolla*: in Cuba, ...usually refer to native-born (“creole”) men and women of primarily Spanish descent, who are generally also [sic] view themselves as *blancos* (“white”)” (Cámara 2008, endnote no. 16, 160).

¹¹¹ Based on the document found in the *Archivo de las Indias*. A transcription is available at <http://www.palabranueva.net/contens/0909/000102-5.htm>.

¹¹² Royal slaves were directly owned by the King of Spain and controlled by his agents. The Crown confiscated the copper mines of Santiago del Prado (El Cobre) in 1670 (Díaz 2000, 32).

reported their finding to the captain in charge of the copper mines, who ordered them to build a small shrine for the image in Barajagua. At that point, the story goes, the image kept miraculously disappearing and reappearing from the original place where it was housed in Barajagua until it was taken to the hill town of El Cobre (near the copper mines). It was placed first in the parish church, and then the hospital chapel, until a special shrine was built,¹¹³ where the image remains to this day.

There are many theories about the origin of the statue. One of the authorities on the subject is Cuban historian Olga Portuondo Zúñiga (2002). Though the statue is very similar to an image named Our Lady of Charity, venerated in the Toledan town of Illesca, Portuondo Zúñiga seems more amenable to the theory that the image did not come from Spain but rather was constructed in Cuba (Portuondo Zúñiga 2002, 58-60). This is deduced from the materials of the head of the image, which is made of a vegetable material, such as corn, commonly used by indigenous people. Larrúa-Guedes (2011, 158) also rejects the theory that the image was brought from Spain, since it is significantly different from the one in Illesca. The Spanish image has light complexion, blond hair, holds a cross with a skull, and stands on a half moon pointing up. The image found in Cuba has a dark complexion, holds the baby Jesus on one hand and a cross on the other, with the half moon under her feet pointing down. Further, the image is constructed with techniques similar to those used by indigenous Mexican image-makers (2011, 159). During this time, Indians from the Yucatan peninsula and other parts of Mexico were

¹¹³A royal inventory dated 1648 is the first document showing the existence of a shrine that has the image of Our Lady of Charity in the main altar (Larrúa-Guedes 2011, 738). This shrine was rebuilt many times until the one standing today was completed in 1927.

brought to this area of Cuba. While these theories may explain the origin of the statue, they cannot account for the lasting significance of what was experienced as a miraculous finding on the waters of Nipe.

In 1783, the royal slaves of El Cobre sent a document (called *representación*) to the King of Spain asking for their freedom. They claim that they did this because they were inspired by their “Queen and Mother” for whom they built a temple (Larrúa-Guedes 2011, 290-291). One hundred years before the abolition of slavery in Cuba, 1,065 slaves were granted their freedom, an event associated with their devotion to *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad*.¹¹⁴ For obvious reasons, this devotion has always been associated with the quest for freedom and the rights of the disenfranchised. During the Cuban War of Independence from Spain in the latter part of the nineteenth century, this devotion of the copper slaves and eastern Cuba became a national icon of identity (Portuondo Zúñiga 2002, 23-24). The rebels, *mambises*, attached image of Our Lady of Charity to their clothing or hats (Portuondo Zúñiga 2002, 180-184) and invoked her protection in battle: “*Que la Caridad del Cobre nos ilumine*” (Let Our Lady of Charity be our guiding light). This was the battle cry of patriot Ignacio Agramonte on an occasion in which he defeated the Spanish army in spite of being quite outnumbered (Larrúa-Guedes 2011, 426). In their experience, Our Lady of Charity, *La Virgen Mambisa*, was one of them, with them, and on their side. She functioned as a symbol of both national identity and the struggle

¹¹⁴ For a well-documented history of these slaves and their devotion to Our Lady of Charity, see Díaz (2000).

for freedom (Larrúa-Guedes 2011, 435). In 1894, exile Fermín Domínguez Valdés¹¹⁵ wrote in the New York newspaper *Patria*: “the miraculous and Cuban Virgin of Charity is holy and deserves all of my respect because she was a symbol of our glorious war” (quoted in Larrúa-Guedes 2011, 438). Her dark skin, as in the case of Our Lady of Guadalupe, speaks to the incarnation of Christianity in the Cuban *creole* culture and ethos. It is a major sign of Christianity with a Cuban face.

In the nineteenth century, the Catholic hierarchy in Cuba was mostly Spanish and, therefore, not sympathetic to independence. They were naturally more supportive of Spanish Marian devotions than the subversive devotion of *la Caridad*. However, many Spanish bishops and priests embraced this popular devotion. Such was the case of Spanish Archbishop Anthony Mary Claret. When he arrived in Cuba (1851) to lead the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, he went to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Charity and presented his new mission to her (Claret 1976, 510). Ten years after the establishment of the Republic of Cuba, she was already hailed in a hymn as *Patrona de Cuba* (Tweed 1997, 23). In 1915, veterans of the Cuban War of Independence, who had gathered at El Cobre, decided to write to Pope Benedict XV to request that Our Lady of Charity be officially named Cuba’s patroness and their request was soon granted. In 1927, the shrine to Our Lady of Charity was consecrated on the hill of El Cobre; it remains there to this day.

The devotion spread throughout the whole island, although it remains stronger in the eastern part of Cuba. Devotees and pilgrims visit the shrine and present their needs or

¹¹⁵ Domínguez Valdés was a close friend of Cuban patriot, José Martí, and *Patria* was the journal of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, both founded by Martí (Fountain 2003, 6).

thank *la Virgen* for favors granted. A display of military insignia and medals of valor dating back to the Cuban War of Independence reflect how this devotion cuts across time and ideologies (Portuondo Zúñiga 2002, 56). These tokens of their faith experience are often related to healings, conversions, and experiences of protection. In the shrine's well-attended celebrations, an enormous diversity of people—blacks and whites, rich and poor—come together to worship God and to venerate the mother of all. Many Cubans have never had an opportunity to reach this easternmost sanctuary, but this devotion is practiced at home and passed on from generation to generation (Larrúa-Guedes 2011, 670). During the years after the 1959 revolution, many people abandoned a formal Catholic affiliation, and some even identified themselves as atheists, but retained their devotion to Our Lady of Charity. This has become evident in the overwhelming response of the people in the recent pilgrimage in 2010-2011 of the image of Our Lady of Charity throughout the island in preparation for the four hundredth anniversary celebration of the discovery of the image. For this event, devotional practices and festivities were organized in every city, town, and village (Ortega 2011).

Our Lady of Charity, thus, points to reconciliation. The image itself functions as a sign of reconciliation insofar as she reconciles European Catholicism with Cuban culture and incarnates Christianity in a Cuban context (Díaz 2001, 75). Since its beginning, devotion to Our Lady of Charity has brought together Cuba's races and ethnicities: "the statute of Mary and her Child are so obviously mixed-raced that no explanation but intentional choice could explain their color in seventeenth-century Cuba" (Espín 1991, 94). While the tradition of depicting the three men as belonging to different races is not historical, its presence in the oral tradition emphasizes that, in the minds of the people,

the Virgin of Charity brings enemies together and unites the races under her mantle. This could also be interpreted in a negative way, as González-Maldonado points out:

The removal of one indigenous brother and the insertion of the criollo [may be construed] as a way of defusing the subversive power of the apparition...Neither the narrative nor the imagistic power of her appearance among the oppressed in the Cuban colony should be diminished by substituting a white man for a man of color. (2006, 98)

The devotion to Our Lady of Charity also brings together people of different political views, whether in the case of the Spanish and revolutionaries in the nineteenth century, or the communists and non-communist in the late twentieth century. As a cultural symbol recognized by all members across these various divides, Our Lady of Charity helps advance reconciliation (Daly Sarkin 2007, 100). Our Lady of Charity as a cultural symbol functions as source of unity.

This depiction of Mary expresses a clear option for the marginalized, with whom she walks. Cubans of all races and perspectives come together in this devotion (Díaz 1999): “la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre...is a vital symbol of Cuban religious and national identity. Even for those without religious beliefs, she is a symbol of what it means to be Cuban” (González-Maldonado 2006, 79).

Our Lady of Charity as a Symbol of Reconciliation for the Cuban Exile

Not only was Our Lady of Charity a symbol of reconciliation in the past, but she remains an important symbol for Cuban exiles. Two years after the beginning of the Cuban exile, on September 8, 1961, an estimated 25,000 Cubans gathered at the Miami

Stadium¹¹⁶ to honor Our Lady of Charity (Tweed 1997, 32). A duplicate of the original statue had just arrived from Cuba, smuggled out with the help of the Panamanian embassy in Havana. This was the first event that brought the diasporic community together, helping it reconnect to the homeland and their hope for freedom. Through the devotion to Our Lady of Charity, Cubans make sense of their exile experience and express their diasporic nationalism. They “symbolically construct a common past and future, and their shared symbol bridges the homeland and the new land” (Tweed 1997, 84).

The celebration of Our Lady of Charity has been taking place in Miami ever since. An *Ermita* (shrine) was built on the shores of Biscayne Bay with mostly small donations from the impoverished exiles, under the pastoral guidance of then priest, and later bishop, Agustín Román. This shrine, consecrated in 1973, is first and foremost a place of religious encounter and the focal point of the devotion. Young and old, poor and rich, white and black, men and women find a home there (Tweed 1997, 60).

The devotion to Our Lady of Charity gathers together people with varying degrees of commitment to the Catholic faith, including Catholics who attend church frequently and consistently, syncretic practitioners, and the non-practicing or nominal Catholic. More than ever, Our Lady of Charity is highly venerated by followers of *Santería*¹¹⁷ associated

¹¹⁶ Bobby Maduro Miami Stadium stood at the corner of NW 10th Avenue and 23rd Street in Allapattah (Miami neighborhood). It was demolished in 1999 (Powell 1996).

¹¹⁷ *Santería* is the combination of Catholic beliefs and practices with those of the Yoruba religion in Africa (De La Torre 2004b, xiii). African slaves preserved their religious traditions disguising them as Catholic devotions (González-Maldonado 2006, 87; Espín 1997, 113). This phenomenon occurred as African slaves, forced to adopt Catholicism in Cuba, began associating their gods with Catholic saints and Marian images, hence the name “*santería*” in reference to saints/*orishas*.

with the African deity (*orisha*) *Ochún* or *Oshún* (Cabrera 1983, 37). As González-Madonado says, “*la Caridad* is the shared symbol around which unchurched and churched Cubans gather together to construct a Cuban national identity in exile” (2006, 94).

The Ermita in Miami unites Cubans in a number of ways. One very real way in which these two populations are joined together is that every Saturday night the mass celebrated in Miami is transmitted live to Cuba through Radio Martí. People who attend experience a real connection to people in the island, not only through prayer, but through the radio waves.

The location of the Ermita by Biscayne Bay allows pilgrims to look over the ocean and imagine that the land and the people left behind are just beyond the horizon. At the Ermita faith intersects with nationalism. The Ermita is not only a place of prayer and devotion, but a place where Cuban exiles are given help in a myriad of situations related to their freedom from Cuba: such as human rights violations, political prisoners, divided families, those who escape the island or die in the Florida Straits. The Ermita is the place where many newly-arrived Cubans first encounter the Catholic Church in the United States and begin the difficult process of integrating their Catholic experience of their homeland and this new environment. Cubans who came in previous exile waves welcome recent arrivals through programs organized at the Ermita to assist the new exiles with their basic needs as well as initial Catholic formation or sacramental preparation. These are some of the many ways in which, Mary, archetype of the church, functions as “a sign and instrument of union and unity” (*Lumen Gentium*, 1).

La Virgen also continues to journey with Cubans in their exile experience. Under her gaze, Cubans continue to wrestle with questions about the meaning of their exile, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

A Theology of Reconciliation for Cuban Catholics

The practices and teachings of reconciliation in the Christian tradition in correlation with the Cuban experience suggest six aspects for a theology of reconciliation for Catholic Cuban exiles. The first key aspect for a theology of reconciliation is the interconnectedness between personal and social reconciliation. As exemplified in the miracle stories of Jesus, healing is holistic, so is reconciliation. Personal healing is the basis of social reconciliation. Efforts of reconciliation that only take into account social practices, policies, and strategies will be insufficient without relationship-centered opportunities that pay attention to personal and interpersonal wounds (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 58). Individual reconciliation prepares the way for social reconciliation and can be experienced even while political situations are not ready for social reconciliation (Schreiter 2000, 116). Reconciliation in the Cuban exile requires “healing miracles” of individual and social wounds; these healings of past hurts enable Cuban exiles to respond to the present and to build the future.

Forgiveness, as an unconditional gift, is the second key aspect of a theology of reconciliation for Catholic Cubans. Granting forgiveness does not depend and cannot wait for the wrongdoer’s repentance, which means that the wrongdoer’s power, or the power of the wounds inflicted by them, continues to control the person (Schreiter 2012). Forgiveness, even of one’s enemies, is what Jesus practiced and is a characteristic

practice of the followers of Jesus. It flows from the experience of being forgiven. The parable of the unforgiving servant and the Lord's Prayer imply a commitment to forgive in response to the experience of being forgiven. The practice of forgiveness is constitutive of discipleship, and its call to Catholic Cubans is clear.

Forgiveness, as an unconditional gift, is a source of personal healing, but that is not its primary goal. It is a unilateral movement. It is an act of freedom from the power wounds, since it reflects that the suffering of the past does not determine the present. It serves the purpose of benefiting the other, considering the other person is someone that can be engaged.¹¹⁸ Christian forgiveness is not simply limited to letting go of resentment for the sake of personal benefit. It is a "proactive, constructive effort on the part of the victim to view the perpetrator in new light" (Philpott 2012, 260). As a result of this new way of seeing, the victim may offer generosity and love as an invitation to change. This forgiving approach has often transformed enemies into neighbors more successfully than revenge and retaliation (Govier and Hirano 2008, 440). Jesus' models this; he treated people with such dignity and respect that sinners were transformed.

Reconciliation, on the other hand, does require some degree of mutuality, acknowledgement, accountability, and reparation for wrongs committed, but always from the perspective and for the purpose of extending mercy and love. This responds to a notion of justice as "the righteousness of God which affirms the dignity of the oppressed as well as the oppressor" (Torrance 2006, 80). In situations of long-standing conflict, demanding accountability may not be the place to begin, particularly if the goal is

¹¹⁸ The person is alive, reachable, and open to this encounter.

reconciliation, but following Jesus' example, injustices cannot be ignored. They must be dealt with at some point.

The third aspect suggests that the work of reconciliation demands that the person transcend personal and social wounds and differences to initiate reconciliatory actions. This is evident in Jesus' attitude at the cross and after the resurrection. Instead of reproaching others, Jesus offers forgiveness and peace. In his ministry he clearly stated that he did not come to condemn, but to save: "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:17). In the post-resurrection encounters with the disciples, he reaffirms this salvific mission by creatively engaging them and bringing them out of their fears (Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23). This is also what Paul understood by reconciliation: God, the offended one, takes the initiative to save humankind. The parable of the Good Samaritan, who provided food and care to his enemy, is a call to place humanitarian concerns above political views fueled by past wounds. For Cuban exiles, this translates into practices of charity towards those arriving from Cuba as well as those back on the island. The practice of good works towards others also helps the personal reconciliation of those who perform the works. In this sense, their wounds become healing wounds (Schreiter 2012).

Following that understanding, a fourth aspect is the primacy of love over justice (John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 4). In the absence of mutuality, the will to reconcile is the active hope that change is possible, even in the most intractable conflicts. As the offer of forgiveness invites repentance, the offer of reconciliation may promote the kind of dialogue that leads to the transformation of relationships. These efforts hold a greater potential to bring about the desired transformations than unbending opposition provides.

This aspect implies a shift from a retributive paradigm to a restorative paradigm, which affects all the issues that divide the Cuban exile. In other words, love can lead to a shift from focusing on the past to the future. Ultimately, reconciliation is about the practice of love, a love that goes beyond justice and transforms it: “Love presupposes and transcends justice which must be fulfilled in charity” (PCJP 2004, 204).

A fifth element of a theology of reconciliation for Cuban Catholics is the centrality of Our Lady of Charity as a symbol that embodies a quest for justice and a love that transcends differences. Respect for alterity celebrates difference as a gift that enriches the community. Cuban Catholics find in the historical experience of this devotion a reason to continue to advocate for unity in the midst of diversity and to advocate for understanding among members of different exile waves. In the Cuban experience, reconciliation has a name and a face: the face of *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad*. Who could better teach Cubans to lovingly bridge differences, look to the past with compassion, and build a future with hope, all while pursuing reconciliation?

The sixth and last aspect of a theology of reconciliation for Catholic Cuban exiles is to trust in the transformative power of God’s grace through Christ, who can break down the walls (Eph 2:14-16) that divide the exile and the Cuban people as a whole and replace these dividing walls with unity amidst the community’s diversity. The core of the Pauline message is that the Christ-event is the source of reconciliation. Remembering the divine role in reconciliation is essential for Cuban exiles, so they do not rely either solely on their own efforts to bring together the community, or solely on political and/or economic strategies to bring about change in their homeland. Knowing, as Paul knew, that ultimately it was God’s work and not his, helps those in the exile to stay committed in

this difficult but critical and transformative work. This grace-filled dimension does not take away the responsibility to be “ambassadors of reconciliation.” Rather, it gives this responsibility a sense of mission. The same God who has brought healing now sends the healed¹¹⁹ to continue the work of reconciliation. This is a mission that begins by building the bonds of the exile community with all Cubans in mind. From this perspective, faith, acting through love (Gal 5:6) and not hate, is what will sustain “the relentless and enduring pursuit of the exile of recovering the homeland” (Grenier 2006, 223) or recovering themselves as a people.

The core elements of a practical theology of reconciliation, built from and with the experience of Catholic Cuban exiles, shape the theoretical framework of the Circles of Reconciliation. This dialectical relationship between theory and practice is at the heart of the practical theological approach and of the process of reconciliation that flows from it. The next chapters will incorporate this theology into a practice to further explore these understandings. Chapter Five presents the design of the Circles and Chapter Six offers a qualitative analysis of the themes that emerged in the four sessions of the process of the Circles of Reconciliation as developed for the Cuban Catholic population with Miami exile community. A final chapter evaluates the work of the Circles and proposes an ethic of reconciliation for Cuban exiles based on what has been learned.

¹¹⁹ Since complete healing is hard to achieve, ambassadors of reconciliation are often “wounded healers” (Nouwen 1972).

Chapter Five

THE DESIGN OF THE CIRCLES OF RECONCILIATION

Circles are spaces where the energies in our emotions can be released and processed with others. As this happens, even the most painful energies can start flowing in constructive directions.

Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge (2003, 64)

Best practices in reconciliation work suggest the formation of “creative and respectful space” (Cilliers and Nell 2013, 6) where the estranged can enter a healing process, which includes sharing their memories and listening to others’ stories (Botcharova 2001, 289). Before designing this process, selected Cuban exiles were interviewed as part of an expert interview approach¹²⁰ (Litigg 2011, 1344) to gain deeper understanding of what divides the Cuban exile community and what could help advance reconciliation. This chapter presents the results of these interviews. It describes the design of the Circles of Reconciliation including the components, the sessions, and the questionnaire devised to measure progress in reconciliation of the participants of the Circles. This chapter corresponds to the planning and action stage of the practical theological method, which seeks to respond to the questions: What needs to be done to respond to this situation in light of the Christian tradition? What practices need to be implemented?

¹²⁰Expert interviews are used to generate theory in a specific research context (Bogner, Littig, and Menz 2009). They “focus not just on specialized expert knowledge but also on the tacit and subjective interpretative and background knowledge gained through (professional) experience” (Littig 2011, 1344).

Witnesses of Reconciliation

The expert interviews identified factors that promote or hinder reconciliation, particularly in terms of reconciliation within the Cuban exile. Based on their personal experience and journey of reconciliation, the exiles who were interviewed identified values and suggested strategies that could help advance the work of reconciliation in the context of South Florida.

Reconciling Values

For Eduardo¹²¹ one thing that has helped him to reconcile is sharing with those who have a “compassionate vision of reality, people who model reconciliation.” He sees Jesus as the supreme example of reconciliation. Similarly, both Lorenzo and Pedro Pablo identify the historical practice of Jesus as their main source of understanding reconciliation.

Lorenzo thinks that Christians are to model reconciliation: “first, there needs to be a personal reconciliation, and then you can begin to reconcile yourself with others who think differently... It is important to listen with humility to those who do not think like you...one cannot wait for them to accept us, we need to go to them.” For Pedro Pablo, his commitment to non-violence is key: “they [referring to people who mistreated others in prison] want you to become an aggressor; they want you to respond with violence so they can justify their violence.” He continues: “it is sad to see how people are filled with hate. Here and there, my grandfather taught me that those who hate are the ones that really

¹²¹ Throughout this section, only the first name of interviewees will be used. These persons have already been introduced in an earlier chapter.

suffer, not those being hated.” Lorenzo distinguishes between the “need to refrain from hating” from forgiveness. This is similar to Worthington’s understanding of the difference between letting go of unforgiveness—sometimes as result of the passing of time or the desire to feel better—and forgiveness. Forgiveness needs to be understood as a decision to grant forgiveness, rather than simply letting negative emotions dissolve with time (Worthington 2006, 49). If one only lets go of unforgiveness, there is the possibility that similar events may trigger these buried emotions again.

Rosario and Iliana mention more general secular values. Rosario says that what hinders reconciliation is lack of “openness to acknowledge the need for reconciliation” and “placing political issues above humanitarian and spiritual values.” She cannot understand why people criticize those who go to Cuba to help others (as she does). Iliana would like Cubans “to embrace their vocation for democracy,” which requires capacity for “tolerance for those who hold different opinions.”

Thus, the exiles who were interviewed identified the values of humility and understanding as critical in the process of accepting others who have different views. The historical practice of Jesus is central to their understanding of reconciliation, since reconciliation is best learned from witnesses who embody it and live it. Jesus models that spirit of non-violence, which is another value exiles underscored.

Reconciliation Strategies

The interviewees offered many suggestions as to how to advance reconciliation. Eduardo indicated a need to “create spaces of reconciliation where people can share their experience and listen to the experience of others... to encourage values of compassion

and mercy with a methodology that can help achieve this.” According to Lorenzo, “it is important to learn about the reality of Cubans on the island in order to be able to distinguish myth from reality.” People need to accept that “they cannot return to a Cuba that does not exist.” This may be done through contact with the newly arrived exiles and visitors, but, above all, by going to Cuba. The experience of going to Cuba made the difference for Lorenzo and Rosario, who are part of the earlier waves of exiles.

The way to advance reconciliation for Rosario is to do something for others who are back in Cuba. Lorenzo also feels that it is important to be “available to the needs of others.” For Rosario “the hope of reconciliation for Cuba has to come from the church, from faith, and conversion.”

For Eduardo it is important to have a conversation about the church in Cuba and to gain a balanced perspective on its role. According to Eduardo, the other topic that Cubans need to discuss is the embargo: “there are many misunderstandings and this divides the exile.” Pedro Pablo recommends creating discussion forums and adds that “the church in Miami has also been a pioneer in this area.”

These insights confirm the importance of faith and the example of forgiveness and reconciliation in Jesus. They highlight the value of encountering those who think differently. These responses also underline the value of creating safe spaces to share experiences and discuss issues related to Cuba, showing the need for realism and contact with today’s Cuba to promote personal healing. For these exiles, reconciliation was envisioned as a mission and a service to others. Specific attention was given to these concepts in the design of the Circles of Reconciliation.

The Design of the Circles of Reconciliation

The Circles of Reconciliation borrow some elements from the Circles of Trust (Palmer 2004), but are mainly modeled after the Peacemaking Circles (Pranis, Stuart and Wedge 2003). These two types of processes have many things in common. The Circles of Trust seek to “create safe space for the soul” (Palmer 2004, 73), where “people of diverse beliefs can explore issues” with an awareness that pluralism will be honored (80). There are three key principles underlying the Peacemaking Circles. The first principle is that “every human being wants to be connected to others in a good way” (Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge 2003, 9). The second principle is that “everybody shares core values that indicate what connecting in a good way means” (Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge 2003, 9). The third principle assumes that conflict will arise, which leads to the fourth principle: providing a safe space where people can rediscover or uncover the desire to be connected in a positive way to others (Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge 2003, 10). From this perspective, conflicts are opportunities for growth, “for creating understanding, respect, and a better founded connectedness” (Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge 2003, 19). These principles are also very similar to those endorsed by theories of conflict transformation in that they highlight the importance of relationships and connectedness for any work of reconciliation (Lederach 1997, 2003). Like the Peacemaking Circles, these Circles of Reconciliation are designed to be fundamentally relationship-centered.

Inspired by traditions of the indigenous people of North America, Peacemaking Circles have been used for over thirty years in multiple community settings¹²² to bring

¹²² The Circles were introduced by the Minnesota criminal justice system to bring together victims, perpetrators, and community representatives to determine (in

people together to make decisions, share difficulties, explore disagreements, and build community (Pranis 2005, 7-8). The Circles are based on values of “respect, honesty, humility, sharing, courage, inclusivity, empathy, trust and love” (Pranis 2005, 25). They effectively promote these values in practice. Cuban exiles, coming from very diverse experiences of exile, are divided over a variety of issues related to Cuba. Furthermore, this exile has taken place over a tumultuous fifty-plus year period. The experience of living under different political systems¹²³ has led to sharp differences among Cubans. This contributes to an experience of mistrust “based on an ignorance that comes from no personal contact or the misunderstanding that accompanies myths and stereotypes” (Porter 2007, 89). They need this space to explore their disagreements and build respectful relationships among themselves.

The physical format of the Circles provides for shared leadership, equality, connection, and inclusion (Pranis 2005, 11). It is intended to help Cubans from the different waves of exile see themselves on equal terms by sharing their story and points of view. The goal is not to reach agreement on issues related to Cuba, but the sessions do include exploring issues related to Cuba in greater depth and in light of the Christian tradition. Instead, the Circles provide the opportunity to exercise tolerance in accepting plural views, which may be a necessary step in the process of feeling more united as a community. The reconciliation sought is more than intellectual or political. An important

partnership with the justice system) “the best way to respond to the crime in ways that would promote safety and healing at the same time” (Pranis 2005, 9).

¹²³ Members of earlier waves lived in pre-Castro Cuba and later in the United States, while recent arrivals have lived under communism most of their lives.

aspect of the sharing is to allow personal truth to give way to a communal dialogical truth and thus help forge a new narrative that includes all sides of the exile.

Components of the Circles of Reconciliation

Ritual

The Circles of Reconciliation are faith-based and situated within a believing community of Cuban exiles connected to Catholic parish life in the United States. Faith is a positive factor in the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation processes (Helmick 2001; Volf 1996). Rituals in the Circles of Reconciliation evoke meanings that are deeply rooted in the Christian experience of faith and Cuban culture (symbols, values, and music). The opening and closing prayer of each of the four meetings of the Circles are designed to help participants reflect on their experience from a faith perspective and to express themselves at a deeper level that engages “spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental” experience (Pranis 2005, 12). At the opening, participants become aware of the sacredness of the sharing about to take place, and the prayer helps foster this climate of respect. In the first session, the Scripture passage used for the opening prayer seeks to awaken in the participants the desire to share the exile experience. In the remaining sessions, the theme of the opening prayer reflects back to each previous session and thereby creates a sense of continuity. The prayerful reflection of Scripture facilitates a mutual correlation between the understanding of Scripture and the understanding of their situation (Tracy 1981, 80). The closing activity ritualizes through symbolic actions and words the theme of the session, letting a graced experience of reconciliation emerge (Schreiter 2000, 92). Closing activities will be described below with each session.

The Talking Piece

The “talking piece” is an object passed around from speaker to speaker to ensure that the person talking is not interrupted and the group honors what is being said. It also “creates space for people who find it difficult to speak in a group” (Pranis 2005, 12), although no one is required to speak. This technique helps organize the interaction and prevent anyone from dominating the conversation. The talking piece may have a symbolic meaning related to the theme and purpose of the Circles. In the Circles of Reconciliation, the first two sessions use a small souvenir keychain with a Cuban-style drum. Since the first two sessions deal with personal reconciliation and healing, the drums are chosen to evoke memories from Cuba. Many recognize this typical souvenir. Drums in African culture—a critical source of Cuban culture—represent self-expression, communication, joy, and freedom. The second object to be used as a “talking piece” is a map of Cuba with the provincial subdivisions of present-day Cuba. Until 1976, Cuba was divided into six provinces. In 1976 fourteen provinces were formed and in 2011 the number rose to fifteen (Núñez Betancourt 2011). The subdivision into more than six provinces is usually rejected—or simply unknown—by those who left Cuba earlier. For Cuban exiles, holding a map of Cuba with present day subdivisions is a way of coming to terms with the reality of Cuba today.

Facilitator or Keeper¹²⁴

The role of the facilitator in a circle process is to “assist the group in creating and maintaining a collective space in which each participant feels safe to speak honestly and

¹²⁴ The researcher acted as facilitator of these sessions.

openly without disrespecting anyone” (Pranis 2005, 12). The facilitator of the Circles of Reconciliation provides the topics, organizes the opening prayer, closing activity, and offers questions for discussion. The role of the facilitator or keeper is not to find solutions or “[control] the group” (Pranis 2005, 36), but rather to monitor the quality of the interaction. The keeper may offer thoughts, ideas, or stories. Thus, while the keeper does not need to have a neutral role, he or she should avoid trying to influence or impose his or her thoughts on the group. The keeper acts as “first among equals in creating and protecting a space where everyone feels safe” (Palmer 2004, 77). An important part of the Circles is to give Cuban exiles the opportunity to exercise mutual respect and listen to others who may hold opposing views related to Cuba. The outcome and the direction of the conversation during the sessions are allowed to take their course, as long as everyone is respectful.

Discussion guidelines are defined by the group. They describe the “behaviors that participants feel that will make the space safe for them to speak the truth” (Pranis 2005, 13). These are agreed upon during the first session. After an introduction to the purpose of these sessions, participants are asked to define the guidelines to ensure sessions will run smoothly. The facilitator does not have to remind participants of how the group has to operate, since the guidelines—approved by consensus—make the whole group responsible in enforcing them (Pranis 2005, 37).

Third Things

Parker Palmer suggests the use of “third things” (2004, 92) to speak about difficult and personal issues instead of a more direct approach (first things). This way of

approaching truth “in a slant,” allows “soul truth” to emerge and enables discussion to occur. As Palmer explains, “we achieve *indirection* by exploring that topic metaphorically, via a poem, a story, a piece of music, or a work of art that embodies it” (92). In the Circles of Reconciliation, the use of songs and symbols closely associated with the experience of exile and the Cuban culture is designed to engage participants at a deeper level.

Implementation of the Circles in Hialeah

Preparation for the Sessions

A practical challenge for this study was how to present it to people without conditioning the results. Announcing it as “Circles of Reconciliation” could predispose people in a favorable or negative way. Some might think it was not applicable to them, others might seek to avoid these issues altogether, and still others might try to respond to the expectation of reconciliation. For some, revisiting the experience of leaving Cuba would inevitably open up wounds. Others feel that reconciliation within the exile is not necessary. Therefore, the challenge is to help people “recognize that reconciliation is needed” (Isasi-Díaz 2004, 232). For these reasons, the invitation was described in general terms, as seeking to explore the exile experience in all the different waves and reflect on this experience in light of faith.

The site for the study was San Lazaro Parish in the city of Hialeah, Florida. As mentioned earlier, this is the city with the highest proportion of Cubans of any city in the United States and even more Cubans than most cities in Cuba.¹²⁵ Hialeah was originally

¹²⁵ See Chapter Two for demographic and other information on Hialeah.

an industrial city with many factories and small businesses. Cubans arriving could likely find work there and move around easily using public transportation. Even though many of these factories were relocated overseas after the 1980s, the Spanish-speaking environment has continued to attract immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, primarily Cubans. San Lazaro Parish is located in an area with a high concentration of low-cost apartment buildings that attract recent arrivals and the less wealthy. However, the parish community also includes more established exiles. Hialeah is ideal for this project because it contains so many Cubans from so many waves of exile.

The call for study participants at San Lazaro Parish was met with considerable interest. The request was posted in the parish bulletin for two weeks and the researcher personally invited the community at the end of three Sunday masses. As a result, twenty-six people signed up. Two groups were formed, representing exiles from 1960 to 1999. One group (Group A) met on Wednesday nights and the other one (Group B) on Thursdays. Two of the participants did not return after the first session, resulting in a total of twenty-four participants who completed the Circles. The following section presents the design, framework, and components of each session. It also describes how sessions developed and changes were made to the original design to optimize its effectiveness.¹²⁶ They were conducted in Spanish, since almost all participants, especially those recently arrived, felt more comfortable speaking their native language. Another compelling reason for conducting the sessions in Spanish is that the experiences shared were originally articulated in that language, either in Cuba or after their arrival in the United States. For

¹²⁶All sessions were digitally recorded.

these reasons, the emotional content of these stories is best expressed in the language participants spoke at the time of the trauma.

Session One: Personal Story (Insertion and Listening Stage)¹²⁷

The purpose of the first session is to help participants recall and share their experience of loss and displacement. The session's focus is on personal reconciliation, specifically in healing memories. It also seeks to help participants gain greater understanding of the experience of other exile waves and practice empathic listening. Participants are invited to share an experience that particularly affected them in the process of leaving Cuba or any part of that story they care to share.

Framework

This first session is based on the understanding that story-telling has a healing potential. For this reason narrative therapy is often used with those who have experienced trauma (Witty 2002). Retelling the story of the trauma suffered before another or others who listen with respect helps heal the harm caused (Herman 1997, 181). Healing also comes from giving testimony to the wrongs suffered in the hope that it will not happen again and that the reality of past suffering will be acknowledged. Bringing to light these injustices is a way of dealing with the “standing victory of the perpetrator’s injustice” (Philpott 2012, 39). Naming these wrongs can heal the wound of indifference inflicted by the lack of validation of this suffering up to this point in the exile’s life (Philpott 2011, 37). Naming these wrongs provides an opportunity for such validation. Such testimony

¹²⁷This session corresponds to the Insertion and Listening Stage of the practical theological method, which seeks to explore the experience or reality being studied.

thus has a confessional and spiritual meaning as well as a public dimension that is often political (Herman 1997, 181).

Story-telling also helps people become engaged emotionally, creating the possibility of empathy. It leads to understanding between people at an affective level, which surpasses intellectual exchange. When a person chooses to become vulnerable by revealing his/her struggles, it is easier to connect to them (Pranis 2005, 40). This session creates space where different stories of exile are shared and all sides of the Cuban saga may be recognized.

The Circles of Reconciliation take place in the context of a faith community. This setting makes it more likely that participants refer to God or relate their personal story to salvation history. Telling one's story "is a process of self-reflection" (Pranis 2005, 40), whereby the person has the opportunity to articulate what happened and to interpret the experience. A retrospective reading of one's story from the perspective of faith helps advance the moments of grace or God's presence along the way. In this way, one can discover salvation history in one's personal history, because "history is one" (Gutiérrez 1996, 88). This new understanding helps advance grieving and healing processes (Herman 1997). As a result, the narrative forged in this way has a dimension of hope.

In the first and subsequent sessions, Our Lady of Charity is referenced in different ways, through prayer, music, and by placing her image next to a candle in the Circles. The goal is neither to impose nor promote this devotion, but to offer it and explore how participants respond to this devotion as well as its connection to Cuban reconciliation.

Session Opening

For the opening session, the room was set up beforehand with chairs in a circle. A candle was placed in the center of the circle, symbolic of the community to be gathered. Participants were informed that sessions would be video recorded. Participants voiced a preference for this form of recording rather than voice-only recording. They found it to be a more powerful way of conveying their experience. They wanted their video-recorded memories to function as living testimonies of the suffering caused by the Castro government. After giving an extra few minutes for late arrivals, the session began with a brief welcome followed by a reading from Scripture taken from Genesis 12:1-2. In this reading, God calls Abraham to leave his land and go to an unknown place. God's promises give Abraham hope. After the reading, the participants shared the connection between the reading and their experience.

Upon the conclusion of this opening reflection, a more formal introduction took place. The facilitator invited the participants to introduce themselves. They spent about five minutes completing a brief questionnaire about their experience of reconciliation and the Cuban situation, which was later used to measure their progress in reconciliation. After all the participants completed this questionnaire, the facilitator explained the design and rationale of the Circles of Reconciliation. They were invited to develop guidelines to ensure a positive group experience where everyone would be heard with respect. They agreed on four guidelines. First, everyone will have a chance to speak without interruption. Second, no one can speak without the "talking piece." Third, every person will be listened to with respect and one may express an opinion even if others do not agree with it. Four, personal stories shared will remain confidential.

Session Development

This first session was oriented toward the participant's recounting of their stories of exile. Since there were about twelve people, the group was subdivided so that they would have more time for sharing their story in depth. The facilitator divided the group in two, balancing wave representation and gender as much as possible.¹²⁸ Each participant took about ten minutes to share an experience that particularly affected them in the process of leaving Cuba. Many of the stories awakened an emotional response within both speakers and listeners.

Session Closing

After everyone had the opportunity to tell their story, participants filled out a written anonymous evaluation consisting of brief sentence completion statements: "Tonight I learned..." "Tonight I experienced..." and "My take-away tonight is..." In addition, participants were asked to say one word that would sum up the night, thus giving all an opportunity to voice a simple evaluation. The facilitator read selected statements from the written evaluations back to the group. Both forms of feedback proved to be very affirming of the process, and as a result, people left with a positive regard for the process and felt encouraged to continue coming.

Participants from both subgroups came together for final prayer. They recited the prayer used by John Paul II at the coronation of the statue of Our Lady of Charity during the mass celebrated in Santiago de Cuba (1998). It invokes Mary as "Our Lady of Reconciliation." The night ended with a little social time in which participants shared

¹²⁸ This proved to be time consuming, so the following group (Group B) was divided before the meeting.

Cuban pastries and refreshments. During this unstructured time, people continued sharing their stories, and some participants remained up to an hour.

Session Two: Forgiveness (Analyzing and Understanding Stage)¹²⁹

The second session of the Circles of Reconciliation process is designed to help exiles get in touch with their experience of unforgiveness as exiles, while acquiring the theoretical and practical tools to grow in forgiveness. Elements from psychology, the Christian tradition, and Cuban culture converge in this process. The emphasis of this session is on personal reconciliation through forgiveness.

Framework

Psychology distinguishes decisional and emotional forgiveness (Worthington 2009, 75-76). Forgiveness is a gift to others, but also a gift to self that allows the forgiving person to be freed from negative emotions by letting go of resentment (Enright, Freedman and Rique 1998, 48). A healing process involves both forgiving others and self-forgiveness (Tangney, Boone, and Dearing 2005). Exercises in forgiveness help forward personal reconciliation.

Forgiveness is central to the practice and message of Jesus (Tilley 2008, 165-174), and as such forgiveness plays an integral role in Christian identity. God's forgiveness is unconditional, and Christians are invited to forgive as God forgives them. Forgiveness does not condone wrong actions; it is always an invitation to conversion. The act of forgiveness may be a catalyst for the conversion of the wrongdoer (Schreiter 2000, 64). Forgiveness is also at the core of Cuban identity, as exemplified in the writings of Cuban

¹²⁹ This stage of the practical theological method uses the tools of the social sciences to analyze, interpret, and clarify the topic of the study.

patriot, José Martí (Fountain 2003). He is known for his conciliatory efforts to unite different views in the struggle for independence from Spain (Tone 2006, 36). His poem, “The White Rose,” shares a Cuban perspective on Jesus’ teachings on non-retaliation (Mt 5, 38-42) and Paul’s exhortation to return evil with good (Rm 5, 21).¹³⁰

Session Opening

For the second session, the room was set up beforehand with chairs in a circle. A candle was placed in the center of the circle, symbolic of the community to be gathered, together with a vase containing a white rose for each participant. The session began with a brief welcome, followed by a reading from Romans 8:28: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Participants were invited to connect the reading to the experiences shared in the previous week. After a few participated, a song was played to tie the verse and the reflections together. Written by Tony Rubí, a well-known Cuban Catholic composer and musician who has been in exile since 1989, the song *Cristo que se da* (“Christ gives himself”) speaks of how Jesus walks with the disciples on their journey and shows them his wounds to encourage them in their struggles.

¹³⁰ Romans 5:21: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Session Development

After discussing the previous week's meeting for about ten minutes, the facilitator presented a summary of the responses to the questionnaire related to forgiveness and healing (items 4, 8, 15, 16, 19, 20).¹³¹

Table 5.1. Questionnaire items related to forgiveness and healing

4. I have no resentment towards those who hurt me in Cuba.
8. There can be no forgiveness for those who have not repented from their actions.
15. I do not wish anyone, not even Fidel, bad things.
19. I pray for people who have hurt me (us) in Cuba.
20. The memories from Cuba continue to hurt me.

The results demonstrated the need for forgiveness and healing. The following questions opened the sharing session: How do we understand forgiveness? Should we forgive even if there has not been any repentance? What helps us forgive? What is most difficult about forgiveness?

Sharing about forgiveness went on for about an hour. After everyone had the opportunity to speak, the keeper summarized some of the ideas presented and offered some clarifications on the concept of forgiveness, particularly the distinction between decisional and emotional forgiveness (Worthington 2009). Towards this end, the keeper explained how forgiveness, first of all, benefits the forgiver, and why forgiveness is not dependant on the wrongdoer's repentance. Perhaps most importantly for the Cuban exile

¹³¹ A copy of the complete questionnaire and the results is available in the Appendix.

context, there was a discussion of how forgiveness and reconciliation differ. Questions regarding the relationship between justice and reconciliation came up, but were intentionally postponed to the following week.

The group then participated in a forgiveness exercise.¹³² Participants were given three options for this exercise. The first option was for participants to write a letter to a person who had hurt them. The letter told of the consequences of hurtful actions, but also—if the participant felt ready—granted those persons the gift of forgiveness.¹³³ Participants could also choose to thank someone who had hurt them for how those events contributed in a positive way to their lives. A third option was that participants could make a drawing expressing their experience of being hurt and or granting forgiveness. These papers were placed in a manila envelope, sealed, and kept by the facilitator.

Session Closing

To close, participants were invited to pray. The reading chosen was Matthew 5:43-44 (“Love of enemies”). This teaching of Jesus, which he practiced throughout his life, is a challenge to Cubans struggling with unforgiveness. The facilitator introduced the final ritual by saying that forgiveness is not only part of our identity as Christians, but also as Cubans. Participants were invited to recite together the poem “The White Rose” (Martí

¹³² Using the method proposed by Worthington, participants were guided through the steps of the *REACH* model: Recall the hurt, Empathize with the one who hurt you, offer the Altruistic gift of forgiveness, make a Commitment to forgive, and Hold on to forgiveness (1998, 2009).

¹³³ In Group A, some participants did not do the exercise, because they felt they had no one to forgive. Taking this into account, when the exercise was done with the second group (Group B), other options were given.

1972, 78-79). Each took a rose home to remember and pray for the person they had lifted up in their memory during the exercise.

Session Three: Social Reconciliation (Correlation and Confronting Stage)¹³⁴

The third session focuses on social reconciliation. It explores the participant's understanding of reconciliation and presents social science definitions of social reconciliation in correlation with theological understanding of reconciliation found in the Christian tradition. One of the purposes of this session is to help participants become aware and identify what divides the Cuban exile community. The participants then explore their understanding of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation in light of the Christian tradition.

Framework

Justice is necessary for reconciliation, but love surpasses justice (John Paul II 1980). Justice must be sought within the overarching framework of reconciliation whose goal is the transformation of both oppressor and victim (Volf 2000, 169). This kind of justice is also known as restorative justice (Avruch 2010, 36). In some contexts—particularly in transitional politics—justice may be considered a precondition for reconciliation. However, justice is often the result of the work of reconciliation (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 167). The relationship between forgiveness and repentance is analogous to that of reconciliation and justice. As the gift of forgiveness can lead the wrongdoer to repentance

¹³⁴ This stage of the practical theological method seeks to establish a correlation between the experience or situation under study and the Christian tradition. Although such correlation is the focus of this session, it is embedded in the whole process, in prayer moments, and the discussions at different sessions.

(Schreiter 2000, 64), the will to reconcile—expressed in efforts of reconciliation—help build a more just society (Volf 2000, 170).

Divisions in the Cuban exile community can be addressed from the perspective of conflict transformation (Lederach 1997, 2003), which privileges the interpersonal encounter as an opportunity to embrace pluralism experiences and ideas and restore relationships. The practice and message of Jesus is the foundation of a theology of reconciliation.

Session Opening

For the third session, the room was set up beforehand with chairs in a circle. A candle was placed in the center of the circle, symbolic of the community to be gathered, together with an image of Our Lady of Charity. The opening song was a peace prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace” (Spanish version). Participants shared how the song connected to this process.

Session Development

The session began with a small review of the meeting of the previous week, as participants shared some thoughts about it. They commented on the symbol of the white rose and how it had remained beautiful all week. Many shared that it served as a powerful image of their will to forgive. In the first group one person asked for the opportunity to share what it meant for her to forgive the person who hurt her. She explained in detail a deeply hurtful and traumatic experience. The group listened with respect and empathy. The safe space they created allowed for what became a sacred moment of disclosure. The keeper then returned to the question posed the previous week by one of the members: Is

justice a prerequisite of reconciliation? In other words, how is reconciliation related to justice? After a few participants offered their opinions, the facilitator presented different understandings of justice (retributive *versus* restorative) and various ways to relate justice and reconciliation. The facilitator then invited the group to reflect on John Paul II’s teachings on the subject¹³⁵ as a source of correlation with the Christian tradition. Copies with some of these teachings were handed out and read in silence. The group then discussed these teachings for about thirty minutes. After this, in order to introduce the topic of reconciliation in the exile, the facilitator presented a summary of the results from the questionnaire on questions related to reconciliation (items 5, 7, 11, 18).

Table 5.2. Questionnaire items related to reconciliation

5. Reconciliation is needed among Cuban exiles.
7. In mutual respect Cubans in the diaspora and the island need to seek solutions for Cuba.
11. Those who are against the embargo have the same right to their opinion as those who favor it.
18. All Cubans are brothers and sisters, even if we think differently.

The survey results showed that most participants agreed that reconciliation among exiles is needed. Next, participants were asked: What does reconciliation mean? What divides the exile and what kind of reconciliation is needed? Such questions provided the grounding for a particularly engaged discussion.

¹³⁵ The teachings referenced during the session were John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980) and John Paul II, “No Peace without Justice, No Justice without Forgiveness” (2002).

Session Closing

This intense session closed with a song that most Cuban Catholics know: *Virgen Mambisa*.¹³⁶ Written by Rogelio Zelada and Orlando Rodríguez (both now in exile), the song is a prayer to Our Lady of Charity, which asks her to intercede for unity among Cubans. The genre of the song is *lamento-Afro* (African lamentation), a sung prayer that incorporates African rhythms (Carpentier 2001, 256-267). The text and translation follow:

Madre, que en la tierra cubana	Mother, who in the Cuban soil,
riegas desde lo alto tu amor,	Shower your love from above
Madre del pobre y del que sufre,	Mother of the poor and the suffering
Madre de alegría y dolor.	Mother of joy and pain.
Todos tus hijos a ti clamamos,	We, your children, cry out to you
Virgen Mambisa, que seamos	<i>Virgen Mambisa</i> , let us be brothers
hermanos.	
Madre, que en tus campos sembraste	Mother, in your fields you sowed
flores de paz y comprensión,	flowers of peace and understanding
da libertad a tu pueblo,	give freedom to your people,
siembra, amorosa la unión.	plant loving unity [among us].
Madre, que el sudor de tus hijos	Mother, by their sweat your children
te ofrezca su trabajo creador.	offer you their creative work

¹³⁶ *Mambises* were those who fought for Cuba's independence from Spain. This song has become very popular among Catholics in Miami as well as Cuba.

Madre, que el amor a mi tierra
nazca del amor a mi Dios.

Mother, may the love for my land
Be born of love for my God.

Session Four: The Work of Reconciliation (Planning and Action Stage)¹³⁷

The last session continues the work of social reconciliation begun in the previous meeting. It does so by exploring shared values among Cuban exiles and Cubans in general. If the Cuban exile is divided by opposing, polarized views on how to deal with the past and present reality of Cuba, a process of reconciliation needs to be especially attentive to identifying a common ground or vision (Isasi-Díaz 2001). Participants are, therefore, asked to explore a number of critical issues within the Cuban community today. The group discusses the “Pillars of *Consenso Cubano*,”¹³⁸ a list of statements agreed on by a number of Cuban leaders and organizations—based on the process known as *Consenso Cubano*.¹³⁹ Through this discussion, participants exercise their capacity to respect different opinions and explore a common ground on issues related to Cuba. However, exploring these areas is not in itself sufficient for planning action and taking action. Thus, a major portion of this final session involves an evaluation of the Circles so as to permit the Circles to better function in their work of reconciliation.

¹³⁷This last session corresponds to the Planning and Action Stage of the practical theological method. It serves to motivate the participant to continue the work of reconciliation.

¹³⁸ See Appendix.

¹³⁹ *Consenso Cubano* includes “Cuban political, social, labor, cultural, intellectual, religious and human rights organizations, committed to reconciliation and to a non-violent transition in Cuba to a sovereign state under the rule of law” (*Consenso Cubano* 2012).

Framework

Social reconciliation is often viewed as a “joint commitment to a common purpose” (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 199). The task of social reconciliation involves fostering mutual understanding and respect for difference in the process of finding a common ground as community (Botcharova 2001). Reconciliation from a theological perspective (Schreier 2010, 2000) is part of the mission of the disciple as one who is called to be an “ambassador of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:17-21).

Session Opening

For the final session, the room was set up as in previous session, but the map of Cuba with the recent distribution of provinces was placed in the center of the table with the candle. The session opened with prayerful reflection on a selected Scriptural passage (2 Cor 5:17-21). Participants were invited to share their reflection on the reading.¹⁴⁰ From the initial moments of the session, participants expressed a desire to share in the work of reconciliation. They also suggested that this work continue by replicating the Circles in other places and with more people.

Session Development

The session was introduced with a review of the discussion of the previous week. This included affirmation of the need for reconciliation within the exile community. The need for reconciliation within the exile community was described in terms of the need for awareness of existing prejudice between the different groups of exiles and that there is

¹⁴⁰ The text is a bit complex and it had to be read more than once, so in Group B, copies of the Scripture reading were provided.

the need for mutual understanding. Discussion was structured around a simple, critical question: What can be done to promote reconciliation within the exile community?

At this point, critical issues that were identified for the Cuban community were introduced.¹⁴¹ Each person read aloud one of the statements of the “Pillars of *Consenso Cubano*.” The intent of this exercise was to open the conversation on difficult issues and practice respectful discussion. The discussion provided a fresh look at divisive issues within the exile.

Session Closing

This session—and the Circles themselves—closed with ritual and commissioning. Participants went outside,¹⁴² where they a bonfire pit was prepared. Each participant received an unlit candle and joined in singing *Una Luz en la Oscuridad* (A Light in the Darkness) by Tony Rubí. This song speaks of the church’s vocation to be the light, hands, and voice of Christ in the darkness. The facilitator related the paschal mystery to the experience of reconciliation. Through the paschal mystery Christ transforms darkness into light and calls everyone to share that light in the world. The facilitator placed the manila folder containing the letters written on the second session in the fire and from that fire everyone lit their candle. After this, each participant was invited to share a prayer. Many expressed gratitude for the process and asked God to help them continue working towards reconciliation within and around them. Participants expressed how the symbol of

¹⁴¹ The facilitator presented the “Pillars of Consensus.”

¹⁴² Participants went in front of the building where there is a cross.

light—as they held the candle during this prayer—deeply connected to their sense of mission as “ambassadors of reconciliation.”

The final portion of the last meeting was a social time, which was culturally essential and constitutive of the overall process itself. Participants shared snacks and refreshments they had brought. Through this contribution, they expressed their desire to take an active role in the process, even in this small way. The suggestion was made that both groups (A and B) gather on a later date to share, eat, and celebrate together. They had created bonds and felt the need to continue and gather in a *fiesta*. This gathering was followed three weeks later with a *fiesta* at one of the participant’s house. The house was decorated with Cuban motifs including the flag and image of Our Lady of Charity. It was a potluck dinner of Cuban food. After the meal, they gathered in a circle to introduce each other, since members from Group A did not know members from Group B and vice versa. The group felt very comfortable sharing and these introductions were therefore quite extensive. Afterward, these participants, who were now strengthened and formed by *fiesta* as well as the Circles, were also ready to be more deeply engaged as agents of reconciliation within the Cuban Catholic community.

Questionnaire

One way to evaluate the effectiveness of the Circles of Reconciliation is through a tool that can measure whether the participants advance in reconciliation as a result of their participation in the sessions. A close-ended questionnaire¹⁴³ was designed to measure the effect of the Circles on personal and social reconciliation. The criterion to

¹⁴³ See Appendix.

measure personal reconciliation is defined as the ability to forgive, to be free of resentment from past hurts, and acceptance of personal history. Social reconciliation refers to the ability to respect diverse views within the exile and to be open to policies regarding Cuba that promote encounter and tolerance. A questionnaire was administered in the first and last session of the Circles to measure progress in reconciliation using a summated rating or the Likert scale (Kumar 2005, 145). Though it is anonymous, there was a need to compare results of the pre and post tests. Therefore, participants were asked to write their date of birth (month and day only).

The questionnaire consists of statements that reflect positions of reconciliation and non-reconciliation. Statements of non-reconciliation are based on the stereotypical rhetoric of intolerance and intransigence reflective of the “exile ideology.”¹⁴⁴ Half of the twenty questions explored topics of personal reconciliation, including forgiveness of others and self, healing of memories, and resentment. The others addressed social reconciliation or issues dividing Cuban exiles (e.g., embargo, travel to Cuba, remittances, dialogue, prejudice towards other waves, and also recovering properties in Cuba). The social reconciliation questions also measured openness to dialogue and plurality. The following table lists each question, the type of reconciliation (personal or social, indicated by a “P” or “S”) measured, the number that represents the highest score possible in terms of reconciliation,¹⁴⁵ and the underlying attitudes being measured. The questionnaire

¹⁴⁴ Exile ideology is characterized by a commitment to an uncompromising struggle against the Cuban government demonstrating a lack of tolerance for debate and diversity of views towards Cuba (Perez, 1992, 1-17).

¹⁴⁵ When the score is 1, it will be inverted for tabulation.

measures five areas in particular: integration of past history, freedom from resentment, tolerance for diversity, prejudice towards a particular wave of exile, and openness on typical views of the “exile ideology” (e.g., remittances, travel to Cuba, embargo). The first two areas reflect personal reconciliation, and the last three are more tied to social reconciliation. In some questions, more than one of these areas coincides.

Table 5.3. Questionnaire items and rationale

QUESTION	P/S	SCORE	ATTITUDES MEASURED
1. I am very interested on what is going on in Cuba.	P	5	Integration of past history: Manifested in participant’s connection or interest in things related to Cuba
2. If there is a change in Cuba, families should be allowed to keep the houses in which they live.	P	5	Integration of past history: Manifested in exiles’ willingness to let go of family property
3. Cubans who are arriving now come only for economic reasons.	S	1	Prejudice towards a particular wave of exile
4. I have no resentment towards those who hurt me in Cuba.	P	5	Freedom from resentment
5. Reconciliation is needed among Cuban exiles.	S	5	Tolerance for diversity
6. The majority of Mariel exiles had committed crimes.	S	1	Prejudice towards a particular wave of exile
7. In mutual respect Cubans in the diaspora and the island need to seek solutions for Cuba.	S	5	Tolerance for diversity: Willingness to collaborate with others who are still in the island and think differently
8. There can be no forgiveness for those who have not repented from their actions.	P	1	Freedom from resentment
9. I am at peace with the decision taken by me or my family to leave Cuba	P	5	Integration of past history
10. There is no good communist.	P	1	Tolerance for diversity

11. Those who are against the embargo have the same right to their opinion as those who favor it.	S	5	Tolerance for diversity
12. The persons that came during the first years of exile are intransigent	S	1	Prejudice towards particular wave of exile
13. One should not enter into dialogue with the enemy.	S	1	Tolerance for diversity
14. Sending remittances to Cuba is a way to collaborate with the regime.	S	1	Openness on “exile ideology” issues
15. I do not wish anyone, not even Fidel, bad things.	P	5	Freedom from resentment
16. I have not healed from everything I had to go through in Cuba and upon arrival here.	P	1	Integration of past history
17. We should not travel to Cuba until the system changes.	S	1	Openness on “exile ideology” issues
18. All Cubans are brothers and sisters, even if we think differently.	S	5	Tolerance for diversity
19. I pray for people who have hurt me (us) in Cuba.	P	5	Freedom from resentment
20. The memories from Cuba continue to hurt me.	P	1	Integration of past history

When the questionnaire was administered for the first time, demographic questions were included. The resulting information provides additional factors for the interpretation of individual and group results. The first question asked for gender information. This is critical because it allows for some exploration on the impact of gender towards attitudes of reconciliation, including relative openness to reconciliation. The year and age at the time of departure from Cuba were also asked, since these factors have been established as key determinants affecting the lived experience of exile and its later integration. The questionnaire also asked about circumstances that may compound the trauma of

departure, including whether the participant left with their family, whether they came via a third country, or whether they left legally. Another area of inquiry related to the ideological history of the individual, including whether the respondent was sympathetic to the revolution at some point or if they or family members were imprisoned because of opposition to the revolution. Participants were also asked if they had ever returned to Cuba. Finally, participants were asked a question about levels of church participation in Cuba and in the United States. This question was designed to explore possible links between reconciliation and church participation.

The design of the Circles is the theologically-laden, practical product of this work. It represents the intersection of social science research, theological reflection, and lessons learned from expert interviews. This particular design of Circles of Reconciliation combines group process, primarily based on general circle design (Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge 2003) with pastoral insights that address the human and spiritual as well as the personal and social dimensions of reconciliation. The Circles of Reconciliation take into account Cuban culture and popular religion as the *locus* for an experience of reconciliation¹⁴⁶ and advancing such experience within a Cuban exile context. Music, ritual, and symbol, therefore, play an important part in the process of the Circles of Reconciliation. Formal and informal evaluations take place during the four sessions. Such constant communication with participants is key in participative action research (Herr and Anderson 2005, 94). For this reason, in-depth personal engagement has been

¹⁴⁶ Reconciliation is an experience of grace, and “grace, as it is for and within us, *which is the only grace we experience*, can only show itself as cultural because *we are cultural*” (Espín 1999, 123-124; emphasis in the original text).

intentionally built into this work from the beginning. The next chapters analyze the qualitative and quantitative results of the Circles.

Chapter Six

THEMES FROM THE CIRCLES OF RECONCILIATION

*The past is past, we have overcome, we have been able to forgive with the love of Christ,
we can now move forward and share a word of reconciliation.*

—Mercedes (Circle participant)

The sharing that took place in the Circles sessions contributed to a deeper understanding of the Cuban exile experience and the suffering of those who make up this community, their sources of healing, the role of faith, and their understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. Thus, the Circles serve a double function: they are a tool for advancing reconciliation and a source of data for understanding the Cuban exile experience, especially as it relates to reconciliation and the theological interpretation of such an experience. This chapter presents an analysis of the qualitative data¹⁴⁷ gathered while conducting the Circles of Reconciliation sessions described in the previous chapter.

The first theme is the experience of suffering and trauma, one evidenced throughout the four sessions as participants told stories of their exile experience and related their hurts. In the process of sharing their stories, the participants revealed areas in need of healing. The second theme is the role of faith in reconciliation, including the capacity to recognize God's presence in one's life, and being able to interpret personal and communal history from a faith perspective. The third theme is forgiveness of self and others, including the question of justice. The fourth and final theme is reconciliation

¹⁴⁷This sharing took place in Spanish and was transcribed and translated by the author of this work. The names of participants have been omitted to protect their identities. Aliases have been used in place of real names.

itself: both with Cubans on the island and those in exile, including pathways to reconciliation and the call to serve as ambassadors of reconciliation.

Suffering and Trauma

The experience of suffering and trauma permeates the data gathered during the Circles. An important element of the personal healing process is being able to share one's story in a safe space while exploring the meaning of that experience (Botcharova 2001, 257-279; Lapsley 2012). The fact that their stories were acknowledged and validated, even within this small group, was important to the participants. Acknowledgement is one of the practices that redress the wounds of political injustice (Philpott 2012, 181-189). Knowing that they were being recorded added value to their sharing because they hoped that it would expose a side of Cuba many ignore. It also led to self-discovery, as emotions that had been buried resurfaced. Suffering has taken different forms for different groups and this became evident in the sharing.

Testimony and Validation

In the first session, participants shared their experience of departure from Cuba and arrival in the United States. Participants saw this as an opportunity to testify to the abuses and injustices they experienced. One participant pointed out how important it was for her to be able to tell her story.

When I was in the eleventh grade, we were at a school gathering and the school posted a sign with the following phrase: *University education is only for revolutionaries*. This motto of the revolution was telling us that if we were practicing Catholics or our parents were in disagreement with the revolution, we had no option

or hope...ironically, the majority of those with the highest GPA were precisely the most religious....For me, it is very important that someone, somewhere, can describe the errors of the revolution and how that impacted us. (Maribel)

Another participant shared the story of his family, all of whom were sent to prison for conspiring against the revolution:

I believed in the revolution [when it first occurred], I thought it was going to save Cuba. But I was mistaken, and I have spent the rest of my life trying to make up for my mistake. At age thirteen, I began to conspire; when my father revealed that he was going to the Escambray Mountains to fight, I said: "Daddy I am going with you." I was fifteen at the time; but rather than going to the mountains, we ended up making our house a center of counterrevolutionary operations. They found out and we were all sent to prison: my father, my mother, my brother, and I. My mother was sentenced to twenty years, my father to thirty. I was released in 1966, but in fifteen months I was back in prison. In total, I spent seventeen years there. I even married in prison. I was free. They were the ones in prison. This has left such a mark on my life, that after living in Hialeah for thirty-three years, I still have the feeling that "they" are going to come for me again. I teach history so I can offer an alternative view to my students. I do not impose my views. I am here because I believe in freedom of opinion. I have no hate, but I do carry the pain of how my mother was beaten in prison and spent two years in a hospital with tuberculosis. (Orlando)

Their stories serve as witness to the memory of those who were examples in their journey.

I left in 1998 with my husband and daughter. It was hard because I had to leave the rest of my family behind. I had grown up with my two aunts, who introduced me to Christianity. They were always in church and helping people in whatever ways they could. Behind my father's back, they taught me the Catholic faith.

When I turned sixteen, I told my father that I wanted to be baptized, and I joined Catholic Church. I became active in the youth group and the choir. Dissidents often came to my church to mount protests against the government, and I saw how they were beaten [by government people]. I tried to stand up to what I believed and refused to go to marches and openly said in the university that I was a believer and that I was Catholic. The hardest thing for me has been never seeing those two aunts again, but they told me to leave and to take my daughter out of Cuba. I have the memory of them saying good bye to us through the living room window as we left [participant broke down crying]. (Araceli)

As participants shared these intense stories, they affirmed and learned from each other; sometimes they even learned from themselves in unexpected ways. For some participants, the sessions were a process of self-discovery, as the following section illustrates.

Self-discovery: Need for Healing

Sharing stories helped some participants realize that healing still needed to happen for them. Traumatized individuals protect themselves from the memory of suffering by a

mechanism called “constriction,” which blocks such memories from consciousness (Tabak 2011, 13). One participant became very emotional as she shared her story and commented on her own reaction: “I thought I had already healed from this experience” (Carolina). At a later session, she discussed the effect of the white rose ritual within the Circles process: “There is something that I did not even know was there in my memory, but with the rose you gave me...it did not open. It remained stiff, which was strange, since the roses I put in a vase at home always open. But I placed it in my room and after my daily prayer, I would look at it and it brought me many memories...” (Carolina). At that point, she began to share a story of betrayal, which was at the heart of her experience of reconciliation. In this case, ritual helped her get in touch with these buried emotions. The rose represented how she felt (“stiff”) about that wounded part of her past, which had not been healed. She identified with the stiff, unopened rose.

The Faces of Suffering of the Cuban Exile

In a healing process, memories of loss and pain emerge, leading to the resurfacing of trauma in a way that allows for healing. As the person mourns the loss, the pain is felt more vividly (Herman 1997). Many participants thus came to terms with experiences that they could now face in this safe space.

Participants described their experience as “painful” (Victoria), “sad” (Ines), and even more emphatically, “horrible, horrible trauma” (Mabel) and “tremendous trauma” (Ivette). One participant referred to his experience of leaving Cuba as an “odyssey” (Fernando). The main factors behind their trauma while in Cuba were: living in constant

fear, never knowing what to expect, struggling to get out of the country, and, most especially, leaving loved ones behind.

One participant shared the story of how he spent sleepless nights because his sons, in their twenties, wanted to leave the country on a raft because there was no legal avenue through which to emigrate at the time. Another participant shared the story of how he was in agony because his son was about to reach the age of fifteen, the age at which young men are drafted for compulsory military service and after which they could no longer leave the country until they turned twenty-six. The family's exit permit finally came, only ten months before that date. A participant shared how he received his visa to come to the United States, but could not leave because he had not completed military service.

After a two year wait, I received an exemption from military service. As we prepared our trip, I felt constant anxiety, because they could turn me back any moment. When the plane landed in Miami, people clapped, but I did not feel safe until I went through the immigration check point. (Luis)

This feeling of anxiety and sense of powerlessness, or being at the mercy of those in power, is common to all the narratives of departure gathered during the Circles. A participant who left Cuba in 1970 on one of the "freedom flights" said:

This trip finally came after seven attempts. I told my husband: "If they stop you, I am leaving with the girls." When we arrived in Varadero [beach town from where the flights departed], we had to wait for a couple of days. My daughter became sick because of the lack of food and dreadful living conditions. They took away our

jewelry, including my wedding ring and, at that time, it hurt me a lot, but now I realize that nothing mattered, as long as we could leave. (Blanca)

For others, family break-ups hurt the most. Even a temporary separation was difficult in the case of women who emigrated alone with their children. As one shared: “I felt so lost and confused, alone with my children at age twenty-three” (Julia). Separation from loved ones created deep wounds, particularly since many of these loved ones would die before those in exile could see them again. Most left the island with the sense that they might never see their loved ones again. Some stories brought tears to the eyes of the others in the group. One participant shared the story of how her sixteen-year-old son was picked up by the police in the days of the Mariel boatlift. For a month, she did not hear from him. She searched everywhere, until she received a phone-call telling her to come to Mariel and bring a change of clothes for her son:

When I got there, they told me to put his name on the bag and leave it there. A military officer was calling the names of the prisoners being sent to the United States on the boatlift. I begged the officer to let me see my son. I asked him if he had family. If he did, he would understand. I begged him to please let me see my son. He called me to the fence and I saw my son. He was all dirty. I gave him some food for the trip and told him to contact his father, who lived in the U.S., as soon as he got there. This was the last time I saw him. He died eight years later. I was unable to come until six years after that. (Mabel)

The suffering caused by this loss was compounded by the lack of information about the circumstances surrounding his arrest. Philpott refers to this as the “wound of ignorance of the source and circumstances of political injustice” (2012, 36).

The participants also spoke of the pain of leaving their parents behind in order to give their own children a better life, and the possibility of growing up in a different political system. Those who came as children understand this retrospectively: “Now we understand what our parents did when they brought us here, not for their benefit, but thinking about us” (Ramiro). A participant who came to the U.S. at age seven voiced that:

Contrary to what most people think, children suffer a lot. I knew there was going to be a change. I was told to give my toys away, because we were leaving. The hardest part was when I started school here in the United States and I could not understand anything, because I was placed in regular classes. I did not even know how to ask for permission to go to the restroom. I missed my grandparents and my friends, I would dream a lot about them. (Julio)

One of the stories that came up in both groups was the trauma children experienced in Cuba when they were harassed in school for practicing their faith:

When my oldest daughter did her first communion, she went to school and told her friends about her experience. Her teacher heard this and immediately reprimanded her for being a believer. She came home crying, but I told her that her teacher had no right in doing that. So I reported the teacher to a high official who was my friend. I went to the school and told the teacher what I had done, and she was surprised—and afraid—that I had such connections. You could not let them intimidate you. (Matías)

Others spoke of how they were denied access to higher and/or college educations because they did not sympathize with the government. Some recounted the suffering they felt knowing that many in the world continued to think “Cuba is a paradise,” (Maribel) which meant that political injustices continued to be ignored and wrongdoers remained victorious (Philpott 2012, 33-41). One participant commented on the obstacles faced by medical doctors who desired to leave Cuba, since the government wanted to retain certain professionals.

In order to leave Cuba, my grandfather, who was a doctor, had to escape through the Swiss embassy. We were given permission to leave in 1972, but someone *nos chivateó* [“blew the whistle”] about what my grandfather had done, so we had to wait another eight years. We suspect the informant was my aunt’s best friend, because she was the one who came—dressed as a militia woman—to confiscate our property.¹⁴⁸ As a punishment for not participating in government marches, my father, who is also a doctor, did not have vacations for five years. What hurts me the most is that people today still cannot speak their minds, are constantly watched,...the injustices hurt me, lack of freedom hurts me...it hurts me. (Victoria)

These stories reflect the reality that personal reconciliation for Cuban exiles is more about healing the hurt created by familial separation, loss of homeland, and disruption of life as people knew it, than forgiving particular people responsible for these hurts and events. The experience of being in a safe space, exploring experiences of suffering and forgiveness, led some participants to share other traumas that were indirectly related to

¹⁴⁸ People who left Cuba had to turn in all their properties to the government, their houses and all they contained.

their experience of exile. One shared her experience of being raped by an uncle at age six and forgiving him on his death bed when she met him again in exile. Another shared her ten year relationship with a man she later came to believe was spying for the Cuban government. She introduced him to prominent people in the exile community and he made many connections, but was always critical of the United States. One day, he left her and returned to Cuba. She felt used and betrayed. A third participant told the story of her father's infidelity to her mother. The group responded by respectfully listening to these stories, appreciating the trust bestowed on them by these participants' willingness to share such intimate and difficult experiences.

The Role of Faith in the Experience of Reconciliation

Faith plays an important role in the lives of those who participated in the Circles. Some came to the United States precisely to be free to practice their faith. They report that in Cuba they were not allowed to practice their beliefs freely without being watched. Many were excluded from opportunities to advance at work and school as a result of their religious commitment.

Recognizing God's Presence in their Lives

Most participants made references to God while telling their stories. They even thanked God for some of the difficulties, since "God brings good things out of bad ones" (Saúl). One woman explained how she was able to raise her two sons on her own while her husband was in the U.S.: "God has given me the strength," she said (Mabel). Reflecting on the stories shared during the first session, participants often made reference to faith and belief in God; making statements such as, "it helped me recognize the

miracles God had done in one's lives," and "it made me realize that God always provides." After sharing the obstacles he overcame in order to leave Cuba, one participant said, "God showed the way; I would like, on another opportunity, to share the whole story as a testimony of faith, without him nothing, with him everything is possible" (Fernando).

Reading Experience through Eyes of Faith

The hermeneutical lens through which people interpret the events that make up their lives influences how these experiences are embraced. Faith, as a basic trust in life, helps people to maintain a positive attitude in spite of suffering. This basic trust undergirds the optimism evidenced in many of the exiles. A participant who spent ten years in jail, thanked the revolution because it "providentially" led him to the series of circumstances through which he met his wife. He laughed as he shared stories of his struggles in jail. He related how prisoners formed strong bonds among themselves, often communicating via tiny, handwritten notes. If anyone was caught trading these notes, they were sent to solitary confinement. He had many other stories, which he always told in humorous way: "There were a lot of rats, but they were "well-behaved" and did not bother me... I had such luck, others were less lucky and had to work in the stone quarry. I saw how some were practically beaten to death, but I got spared" (Arnaldo).

Some participants shared faith readings of how different events in their lives related to their exile. A participant told the story of how he and his wife were hoping to have children in Cuba, but "thanks to God" his wife did not get pregnant. They finally left via Panama and spent several days crossing Central America, enduring many hardships and

dangers, until they reached the Rio Grande and crossed it to enter the United States. He concluded, “That would have been impossible with a small child, God had it in his plan that it all occurred this way” (Saúl).

Participants reported that faith and the will to move on and start a new life was critical in overcoming difficulties faced in coming to the United States. They were referring to faith as a basic trust, but also religious faith: “We sometimes do not understand why these fifty years, only God knows” (Jairo). The theological concept most often used by participants to explain God’s role in their experience was “God’s plan.” This understanding of suffering as part of God’s plan comes from the classical Augustinian theodicy, which argues that “God allows suffering in order to attain a greater good” (Zaccaria 2010, 112). Espín claims that Latino communities explain suffering in terms of God’s will, who allows it, but they do not remain passive (as in the classical view), but rather seek to actively change what is causing the suffering (1997, 168). This seems to reflect the data. These exiles interpret their experience within the overarching notion of God’s plan, but they do not passively accept negative events as God-sent. Rather, they struggled to overcome their situation.

A certain consensus may be seen among the exiles who participated in the Circles. They tend to see God’s plan as calling for them to “grow in freedom, fraternity, forgiveness, reconciliation” (Maribel). In their understanding, God’s plan for them is neither that they suffer nor that they blame God for what has happened. They place the blame on human actions and choices. Nonetheless, they see God as having placed them in exile for a good purpose: “I am here because God wanted me to come” (Mabel). Another participant wondered if God allowed all this as “punishment,” because Catholics were not

very active and committed in Cuba: “Men would not go to church. If they went, they would stand in the back” (Javier). Immediately, he retracted his statement, saying: “maybe we had to abandon our own land to come here because Florida needed more Catholics” (Javier). This same sense was shared by another participant who referred to Bishop Boza-Masvidal’s¹⁴⁹ answer when a reporter asked him: “Has God forgotten the Cuban people, sending them into exile?” and he replied, “Maybe God wants us to be missionaries” (Matías). Such reflections reveal a strong sense of how God’s providence has guided their journey.

Another interpretation of their suffering was expressed in terms of God’s corrective action: “God, as a good parent, allows this and that so that we grow. All this historical process with so many trials, but also joys, even if we don’t understand, has allowed us to grow in charity, wisdom...we need to continue to let God enter and heal us” (Maribel). In this interpretation, suffering is understood as God’s therapeutic intervention “to promote growth and development by teaching and strengthening the sufferer” (Zaccaria 2010, 125). This interpretation arcs back to classical Augustinian theodicy illustrated in Pope John Paul II’s 1984 encyclical on the salvific meaning of suffering:

Suffering must serve for conversion, that is, for the rebuilding of goodness in the subject, who can recognize the divine mercy in this call to repentance. The purpose of penance is to overcome evil, which under different forms lies dormant in man

¹⁴⁹ Bishop Boza-Masvidal was expelled from Cuba in 1961 and lived most of his life as an exile in Venezuela, encouraging Cubans to remain in the faith, to forgive, and to reconcile.

[sic]. Its purpose is also to strengthen goodness both in man himself [sic] and in his relationships with others and especially with God. (*Salvifici Doloris*, 12)

Classic theodicy understands God as apathetic to human experience. However, Cuban exiles do not experience God as apathetic or distant from them. On the contrary, the understanding of God that stood out the most during these sessions was the idea of a God that journeys with them, accompanies them: “God showed the way” (Fernando). This reflects the inverted metaphor of Goizueta’s *Caminemos con Jesús*, in which the people accompany Jesus and each other (1999, 206).¹⁵⁰ Thus, while Cuban exiles offer theoretical explanations for suffering, which reflect classical theodicy, their experiential explanations reflect a God who is provident and caring (Espín 1997, 26), whose actions do not invite passivity but challenges them to cooperate in the transformation of life’s contradictions and injustices.

Our Lady of Charity in the Experience of Faith and Reconciliation

The experience of divine accompaniment also includes the presence of Mary as reflected in the image of Our Lady of Charity.¹⁵¹ She represents the “maternal face of God” (Boff 1987). As Miguel Díaz puts it, “*La Virgen de la Caridad* offers a praxis for imaging who God is” (1999, 165). As one participant noted, “reconciliation needs to be based on forgiveness, justice, and the *care* [author’s emphasis] of Our Lady of Charity”

¹⁵⁰According to Goizueta, the image of Jesus that stands out the most in U.S. Hispanic popular Catholicism is the crucified Jesus. Especially during Holy Week, Hispanics accompany Jesus on the way to the cross through different devotional practices (2009, 34). In the suffering of Jesus, they see their own suffering and that of their brothers and sisters who they feel called to accompany. This is the theological grounding of their option for the poor (173-211).

¹⁵¹This mainly applies to Catholics, but the devotion to Our Lady of Charity extends beyond the Catholic Church, as noted later by some participants.

(Matías). This *care* reflects the closeness of God in the presence of Our Lady, as she embodies the unity of the Christian and Cuban identity. The caring function of Our Lady of Charity points to her maternal role in the healing of the Cuban people. Thus, she is a source of healing as well as cohesiveness in the diverse experience of the Cuban exile.

When asked what would help Cubans move towards reconciliation, one participant said that he had seen how devotion to Our Lady of Charity brings together “Catholics, *santeros*, even atheists” in both Cuba and Miami (Matías). He continued, saying, “in the future, this devotion is going to be very important here and there.” Others reiterated this idea and repeated the slogan from the commemoration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the finding of the image: “Charity unites us.”¹⁵² To prepare for this celebration, the church in Cuba organized a pilgrimage that involved taking the image of Our Lady across the entire island. Participants in the Circles had followed news of this pilgrimage and saw videos from these events in Cuba. They shared the impact of this pilgrimage: “When the image arrives in the poorest “bateys” (impoverished villages), people come out to greet her as they are, offering flowers, songs, barefooted children dance for her...everyone follows the “*Virgen*” or “*Cachita*”¹⁵³” (Mabel). This devotion has been passed on from generation to generation, and the participants in the Circles could see the potential it has to unite Cubans everywhere. Cultural symbols that resonate with people on all sides of the divide help advance reconciliation (Daly Sarkin 2007, 100). As a cultural symbol, Our Lady of Charity functions as source of unity.

¹⁵² This term refers both to the virtue of charity—the practice of love—and Our Lady of Charity.

¹⁵³ Cubans commonly use *Cachita* as a term of endearment or nickname for *Caridad*.

Divided Views on the Church in Cuba

The church's relationship with Cuba's government is a topic of much debate among exiles. This was reflected in the discussion within the Circles. Participants who had been actively involved in the church in Cuba were more inclined to defend its actions and its leaders. Those who had not had this experience were much more critical and negative. Such critics of the church in Cuba argue that it is not loud enough in speaking out against injustices committed against human rights, and that it collaborates with the government, rather than challenging it.

Speaking in favor of the church in Cuba, one participant referred to the hardships endured by the church.

They had to teach catechism while outside there was the *Plan de la Calle* [a recreational program to lure young people away from church], but they kept on evangelizing. It is easy to talk against the church in Cuba from this side, without knowing what they have been through. (Saúl)

Then, they shared more than one story about government infiltrators who joined church groups to spy on the church.

In the parish of La Caridad in Havana, a young man joined our youth group. He was very poor and we all tried to help him. One day he came to say that he was leaving...we thought he was going to the United States...but he confessed that he worked undercover for the government. The clarity, transparency, and charity we practiced, made him react and repent. We never saw him again. (Maribel)

Another person defended the role of the church saying:

People want the church to be a political party, but the church has to accept everybody and cannot take sides. Most of the people who criticize the church [for not challenging the government more than it already does] were never there to support it. The church was reduced to nothing after the revolution, but today it is very strong and respected, because all they do is serve others, the poor, the elderly. (Matías)

One member was critical of how the church acted during Pope Benedict XVI's recent visit to Cuba, but refrained from elaborating further, and simply said: "I will stop there, because I am Catholic" (Orlando). Others seemed to agree with him, but none commented further.¹⁵⁴

Some members defended the much-criticized Cardinal Ortega, saying that "all he is trying to do is to gain spaces for people to practice their faith in freedom...the church is walking on a mine-field" (Javier). As a participant who left Cuba in the 1980s put it, Catholics who remained in the church after the 1960s were truly committed because they were willing to take risks (Ines). For her, those who remain Catholic in Cuba today stand up for their faith even if it means paying a price for doing so.

Forgiveness

The topic of forgiveness was discussed in the second session, since it is such a central theme in personal and social reconciliation. This work argues that there is a direct

¹⁵⁴This participant may have felt conditioned by the fact that the group met in a church, some Circle participants were very supportive of the church in Cuba, and the facilitator was a religious sister. However, throughout the sessions, participants freely expressed other "un-Catholic" or "un-Christian" views without inhibition, such as not forgiving, being involved in terrorist actions, etc.

relationship between personal healing that involves forgiveness and the ability for Cuban's to be tolerant and open to diverse views regarding Cuba.

Forgiveness of Others

When asked: "What do we understand by forgiveness?," participants were eager to share their views. "It is a decision that allows you accept that others make mistakes as one makes mistakes, and not to see the person with resentment, but rather pray for the person" (Victoria). In both groups, participants discussed the saying: "I forgive, but cannot forget." Some agreed that to forgive was to "remember [things that hurt us] without pain" (Jairo). For one participant, forgiving is "a feeling of healing that does not depend on the person who hurt you; it comes from inside" (Maribel). Forgiveness "benefits above all the person who forgives; those who hurt you may not even know, and you are the one with the high blood pressure and other health issues as a result" (Javier).¹⁵⁵ As another put it, "if you don't forgive, you are trapped; resentment controls you" (Maribel). Forgiveness was seen as "a decision to let go in order to move forward" (Victoria). The hardest part of forgiveness is "not what others have done to you, but [forgiving what others have done] to the ones you love..." (Orlando).

Participants were very honest about their opinions and experiences of forgiveness. One participant publicly acknowledged that he could not forgive: "I am one of those who has not learned to forgive. Because of a certain government official, and the regime, I had to leave Cuba by myself as a child. My passport was annulled. They took away my *patria* [homeland]" (Ramiro).

¹⁵⁵ This participant is a physician and was very aware of how not forgiving affects one's health.

Others shared how they were able to forgive in spite of the harm done to them. One participant told the story of how she forgave someone who refused to help her in her time of need.

When my mother died in Cuba, I called the only neighbor that had a phone to try to speak to my sister, but my neighbor would not accept the call. Fourteen years later, I was able to go back, and that person came to greet me, and without any resentment, I spoke to him. I try not to keep a grudge, because it is very damaging. (Mabel)

One person shared that, in order to forgive, she imagines that the issue or person is placed on a boat and sent adrift at sea: “There is feeling of liberation that comes from that.” (Julia). These were all therapeutic arguments for forgiveness. Forgiveness was seen as a personal benefit.

On the relationship between forgiveness and repentance, one said, “one should forgive, and if the other person does not repent, it is up to them, they will have to face God at some point” (Araceli). This reflects an understanding of the divine as God of justice, “likely to exact divine justice on humans...reducing their drive to take justice into their own hands” (Worthington 2006, 135). Four participants described forgiveness as “letting go” (Mabel, Mabel, Victoria, Carolina). As one put it, “you have no right to judge others or hold back forgiveness” (Mabel). “We need to place our hearts in God’s hands, so God helps us have a big and soft heart” (Ines). This comment reflects the interconnection between divine forgiveness and human forgiveness. That is, God is the enabler of human forgiveness. In this case God is experienced as a God of mercy (Worthington 2006, 135).

One participant expressed some concern about Cubans' capacity to forgive if there is no faith:

I am concerned about what will happen in Cuba, because parents have turned in their children, and children reported their parents and brothers, and that affects not only them, but the following generations...how will relationships be restored with those who hurt others? We have the advantage of having faith. We know that the Gospel tells us to forgive seventy times seven, but will it happen there? (Matías)

Such comments show that theological arguments are also important incentives for forgiveness among exiles. Another participant pointed to values inherent in the culture, arguing that Cubans are “naturally forgiving people and when the time comes they will be able to forgive” (Jairo). However, there may be circumstances where forgiveness will be very hard.

Applying the call to forgive to her current life situation, a participant shared that she had a judgmental and unfair grievance against someone who lives in her apartment building. This person is a Eucharistic minister in her parish. Because of her grievance, she refused to receive communion from this person. After thinking about what was discussed in the session, she realized that she was not acting correctly and publicly apologized for rejecting this person. Thus, discussing the meaning of forgiveness leads to the practice of forgiveness, not only in terms of historic wrongs experienced long ago, but in terms of present situations.

Self-forgiveness

One participant said that she has been working on “personal healing” for seven years, trying to forgive herself: “Why did I do this, why didn’t I do that?” (Mabel). She did not disclose the particular situation to which she referred, but was very emotional about the topic of self-forgiveness. Another expressed her struggle to forgive herself for abandoning the church in Cuba “that needed us so much” (Maribel). She continued:

I felt tremendous guilt. It was hard to leave; I had to go through a process of spiritual direction to learn to forgive myself, to understand that God took us from there and brought us here for a reason. It is also hard to forgive those who caused all this. I experience resentment at times, because my father died without seeing Cuba as he wanted it. He could not forgive, and I pray for him every day. (Maribel)

Forgiveness and Justice

Exiles see forgiveness and justice in an intrinsic and complicated relationship. A participant asked: “Is it just to forgive?” (Norma). She went on, “I have no problem with forgiveness, but justice needs to be served first. One does not require the other, but they need to coexist.” Another participant concurred: “the Pope [John Paul II] forgave the man who tried to kill him, but the man stayed in jail. Forgiveness cannot erase bad deeds” (Orlando). “If a person does not suffer the consequences of his or her actions, they never mature” (Victoria). These comments reflected an understanding of forgiveness that includes punitive action and “justice-as-vindication” (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 177). While most participants understand forgiveness at a personal level as demanded of Christian practice, many operate out of a retributive paradigm. However, not everyone does, as in

the case of a younger participant, who has some theological background: “When Jesus forgave us on the cross, he did not require anything from us, he carried our sins. God has *mala memoria* (poor memory), not like us, who ruminate on the offenses. God remembers with love. God wants us to forgive in the same way.” (Julio)

Another participant prays daily for people who hurt her and for divine justice for Cuba. Though she forgives, she also says that “if Cubans prayed the holy rosary with faith, conversion would come” (Araceli). She trusts in God’s justice and does not feel it is up to her to bring about justice.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation with Cubans in Cuba

Discussion within the Circles of Reconciliation would constantly drift towards the topic of reconciliation with Cubans on the island, especially those who had caused personal harm to the participant. Dealing with the past in this way proved to be integral to personal reconciliation. One participant, who came to the U.S. about ten years prior, said: “There is a lot of hatred there, people have been hurt, and those who caused it know they are at risk if there is a change in government” (Armando). He cited the case of someone who had reported his sons as counterrevolutionaries and acted as a government informant. This person later came to the United States. The participant speculated that it was out of fear that he would have to pay for his actions if change occurred within the government

For most participants, reconciliation has to include truth and some degree of justice. That is, acknowledgement of the harm done, and some kind of reparation or punishment are both critical. Everything must start with the truth.

The first thing that is necessary is to expose the truth. We have learned history in the wrong way. The system has led us to believe that nationalism and patriotism is the same as revolution. As a generation, I feel we have been violated. Many of the young men who died fighting against Batista were moved by Christian ideals of social equality. I always thought they were communists until I met their families here. (Maribel)

Along the same line, another participant said: “My students [in the high school where he teaches] who have arrived recently think that Martí was communist. Martí lived in the United States and was critical of this system, but also said that communism was intrinsically evil” (Orlando). Ideally, “people who have done wrong will acknowledge it, so that those who follow will not make the same mistakes” (Ines). Others consider that the problem with seeking truth is that “those in the government know that what they are doing is wrong and they just want to stay in power. They think that they are above the truth” (Arnaldo).

In spite of this passion to see wrongdoers punished, the participants do not want that punishment to be excessively punitive. They agree that capital punishment is not acceptable, “because it does not give the person the opportunity to repent” (Luis) and does not allow for “God’s mercy” (Maribel).

Reconciliation in Exile

In reference to reconciliation within the exile community, a participant said that such reconciliation was about coming together on certain points to contribute to the future of Cuba. Reconciliation within the exile community is something that needs to happen *for the sake* of Cuba: “those of us who have faith have great responsibility to work on this” (Matías). Several participants attributed the division in the exile community to the generational divide and the different waves of the exile experience. One who came to the U.S. some fifteen years ago made the following observation:

Reconciliation is difficult because we lack understanding and do not share the same feelings. The people who came in the beginning worked hard to achieve what we have today. They not only helped build the material infrastructure of Miami and South Florida, but also made a major contribution in the area of faith. We need to be thankful. They love Cuba so much. By the same token, you also have to understand the young people who grew up under the revolution. They come here and want nothing to do with Cuba, while the children of Cubans born here love Cuba without ever having stepped foot there. (Matías)

Lack of mutual understanding is related to poor communication, as one participant said: “We don’t even understand each other, because we speak differently. Besides the new slang, they have developed a coded language to operate clandestinely in Cuba” (Maribel). An example of this code language was given by one of the participants: “Since

sometimes I was able to get ground beef in the black market, my neighbor would call to ask if I had ‘red nail polish,’ instead of saying ground beef (Mabel).¹⁵⁶

After acknowledging that “we think differently depending on the year we came,” one participant elaborated further: “You cannot generalize, though. I have met young people who have arrived recently and are already in college, working two jobs, while others look like *jineteras*¹⁵⁷ (Julia). A participant recognized that the climate is changing among Cubans. He said: “In the past we would not let artists from the island perform here¹⁵⁸ or accept artists who went to Cuba. Now they are coming to perform in theaters and on TV” (Ramiro).

Participants reported that listening to others’ stories helped them understand and appreciate others better. Before they experienced the Circles, some felt misjudged by the members of the other waves. In the first session, a participant recounted how she had spent most of her adult life trying to find a way to leave Cuba and now felt misunderstood by others upon arrival in the United States.

Some people here say that Cubans on the island have not been strong enough, and we have allowed Castro to be there for so long, but what they do not understand is the degree of repression and vigilance we have experienced. Those who came earlier only lived it for a little bit. You have to experience it to know. (Mabel)

¹⁵⁶ Buying food on the black market is considered a counterrevolutionary action and punished severely.

¹⁵⁷ The term *jinetera* is a recently developed slang for prostitutes. It is derived from the Spanish word for “jockey.”

¹⁵⁸ Many exiles argue that since the arts are under government control, “official artists” endorse and promote the communist ideology. Their contracts are made by the Cuban government and their payments go to the state.

The richness of the exchange between members of different waves was evidenced from the beginning of the process. After the first session, participants were asked to evaluate the experience using the following questions: “Tonight I learned....,” “Tonight I experienced...,” and “My take-away tonight is....” The responses¹⁵⁹ emphasized a sense of mutual understanding. As one put it, “I learned to know others with love and understand them.” Along the same thought one wrote: “Tonight I experienced that... there is diversity in experiences, but the same spirit of love for the *patria* [homeland].” Another one wrote: “I learned to listen without judging.” The take-away for one was “a new view of others.”

At the conclusion of the Circles project, some expressed how the experience helped them change their ideas and misconceptions about members of the other waves of exile. In the words of one of the participants: “This process helped me realize how wrong I was in judging others” (Norma). Another participant acknowledged the need to understand Cubans who have just arrived in the country:

The ones who are here cannot go around criticizing those who come now, because they have not had the same formation. They come with the mentality that has been created by the revolution. We need to understand them and accept them because they are our brothers and sisters. (Matías)

Pathways to Reconciliation

Asked how to promote reconciliation, one participant acknowledged that in his younger years he thought that violence was the answer and became involved with anti-

¹⁵⁹This was an anonymous evaluation.

communist terrorist groups: “I am repentant for my actions and for thinking that violence was the only way. Killing others will not fix things” (Ramiro). This participant’s admission reflects a shift in exiles’ approach to change in Cuba.¹⁶⁰ Since 1901, after Cuba won its independence from Spain, Cuba enjoyed a democratic form of government. However, on more than one occasion changes in government only happened after a violent *coup d’état*. This is how Batista reached power, how he was overthrown, and how those who opposed communism (mostly former revolutionaries) tried to oust Castro. The most basic step towards reconciliation is renouncing violence as a method to establish justice.

Participants affirmed that the work of reconciliation has to start with each individual and cannot wait until later or for others. For one participant, the key to reconciliation is “testimony and example, to share our love and our knowledge” (Maribel). For another, the important thing is to start now, “even if we have different visions” (Matías).

More than one participant insisted on the importance of prayer to promote reconciliation: “The first thing has to be inner reconciliation which comes with prayer. People are very hurt” (Victoria). For one participant, “reconciliation has two parts: First, my personal reconciliation with God, then with others. We can facilitate that encounter with our prayer and our example. I do not hate those who mistreated me in prison” (Arnaldo). More than dialogue with God in prayer, most participants cite the crucial need for dialogue and contact between Cubans. Although one clarified, “dialogue implies that

¹⁶⁰ In 1991, 76 percent of Cuban exiles supported military action by the exile community to overthrow the Cuban government. In 2007, 70 percent of exiles still supported military invasion of Cuba (FIU Cuba poll 2007).

things have to be both ways. If we allow Cuban artists to come to play here, they should allow our musicians to go there and many have died without this opportunity...Celia Cruz, Olga Guillot..." (Norma). Some participants were doubtful that true dialogue could be established with the existing Cuban government because, in their words, "we are dealing with a system that does not respect human rights and uses dialogue to buy time" (Norma). As another participant put it, "those who have tried to improve things and sought dialogue have been eliminated, look at what happened to Payá"¹⁶¹ (Araceli). Younger participants made similar observations: "maybe the only way to change things is like the *mambises*, with machetes" (Luis). This was countered by an older member: "the days of the machete are over, son" (Javier). Another one added, in reference to the *mambises* who fought against Spanish armies for the sake of Cuban independence, "they were fighting the Spaniards, but we would be fighting our own; we cannot return to the machetes" (Ines). Support for violence from a young participant who arrived recently, and the rejection of violence by an older member, contradicts the typical assumption that older members from the historic exile are more inclined to support violent tactics. The experience of the Circles illustrates the complexity of the current situation.

"Contact with people on the island is important," one person said, "because they have all sorts of myths about the exile. They think that we [all] want to take away the

¹⁶¹ Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas was a Cuban political activist and a committed Catholic. He founded the Christian Liberation Movement in 1987, a peaceful organization to oppose the one-party rule of the Cuban Communist Party. In July of 2012, he died in a car accident that was blamed on the driver, a human rights activist who was visiting Cuba. The driver was judged and sentenced, but allowed to return to Spain, his home country, to fulfill the sentence. He has declared that the accident was provoked, and he was forced by government officials to sign a false testimony admitting guilt.

properties we left behind” (Mabel). This conversation led to a point of debate among the exiles: do those in Cuba who live in houses that once belonged to the exiles have a right to these properties? Interestingly, the participants in the Circles say that exiles should give up any legal claim to their former homes and properties. From a practical perspective, they agree that “by now those properties are so deteriorated that it would cost more to repair them than their actual value.” Besides, “we left thinking we would not return. It was a radical decision” (Ramiro). Some participants, arguing from the perspective of Christian values, concur that “it would be inhumane to ask the new residents to leave the houses in which they have lived all their lives” (Javier).

With respect to other properties, there were different opinions. One person pointed out that those businesses are also worthless by now, and that the people who originally owned them are now probably dead. However, others argue that “people there are not equipped to run some of these businesses, which explains their lack of success. So they should be returned to the original owners; the same with land which was confiscated and is now barren” (Norma). Clearly this remains an emotional topic, tied as much to feelings over Cuba’s present condition as property rights *per se*. Another offered a middle way: “We need to promote dialogue, but without making a total concession, because what people had was earned with much effort. In any case, God has given us much more here” (Araceli).

Another related topic that also divides the exile community is travel to Cuba. One person who arrive during one of the earlier waves of the exile expressed how she now¹⁶²

¹⁶² It was unclear if it was as a result of the experience of the Circles.

has a better understanding for people who travel to Cuba to visit families, but she would not visit herself (Norma). She further adds that not all travel is justified: “Some go to boast of their achievements in exile and mislead people into thinking that life here is what it is not. Others go to find prostitutes. Those who go to promote relationships with people on the island and those in exile are the ones who can help open the way” (Norma). Thus, she accepts travel to Cuba as means to foster reconciliation.

After reading the text used for the opening prayer of the fourth session (2 Cor 5:17-21),¹⁶³ participants emphasized that reconciliation with God needs to be first priority:

The first thing is reconciliation with God there and here [Cuba and exile]. There, God was taken out of their lives, and in their homes people replaced their pictures of the Sacred Heart and the Last Supper with pictures of Fidel and the other leaders.

Here, people who were active in the church come and forget about God. (Saúl)

Participants in the Circles discovered that personal contact, dialogue, and openness to diversity are critical for reconciliation. Most importantly, personal conversion and the experience of reconciliation with God were found to be positive elements in the effort to advance reconciliation.

¹⁶³ “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The Call to be “Ambassadors of Reconciliation”

As the sessions concluded, one woman said: “I pray that this light we have received may spread to others, so this is understood and when we sit down to talk to someone who has a different reality or history we have the capacity to listen” (Maribel). Participants encountered a sense of mission as reconcilers: “The past is past, we have overcome, we have been able to forgive with the love of Christ, we can move forward and share a word of reconciliation” (Mercedes). Another one commented: “Christ left us the burden, it is heavy, but we have to do the same, even if it is hard, it can be done” (Matías).

“We need to open ourselves. This helps us prepare, putting aside whatever is in the way, so we can contribute to what needs to be done when the moment arises. It is great that you are doing this, hopefully it can continue; here we are a little group, but it can grow” (Mabel).

One participant expressed that “God does not need us, but gives us the privilege of participating in God’s plan, so that by collaborating we grow. God’s plan is that we grow in freedom, fraternity, forgiveness, reconciliation” (Maribel). Participants expressed their desire to collaborate in the work of reconciliation: “I want to be that light, so that each Cuban receives a light of love and hope, hopefully this can help us come together... That this be a project that starts right away with the help of Our Lady” (Mabel).

The Circles served the purpose they set out to accomplish. They did not pretend to help participants reach full reconciliation, personal or social, but to point the way towards reconciliation. These different themes reveal the exiles’ understanding of forgiveness, reconciliation, their struggle to integrate past suffering and the demands of discipleship,

and their ability to reinterpret their history through the lens of faith. The reflection generated by the experience of the Circles enriches the theological understanding of reconciliation for Cuban exiles. The next chapter will offer an evaluation of the Circles as a tool to advance reconciliation, both personal and social, and analyze the results of the instrument used to measure individual reconciliation.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.

—Antonio Machado¹⁶⁴

From the beginning, the purpose of this work has been to develop a practical theology of reconciliation for Catholic Cuban exiles, which includes the design and test of a process of reconciliation adapted to this context. This chapter evaluates the experience of the process of the Circles of Reconciliation from the perspective of healing. It uses criteria drawn from the phases of trauma healing identified by Herman (1997) and stages of forgiveness (Enright 2000; Worthington 2009), both of which were presented earlier in this work. The effectiveness of the Circles is also measured by the questionnaire developed for that purpose and administered at the beginning and the end of the process. Taken as a whole, the Circles pose a critical question: What ought Cuban Catholics do to practice reconciliation? A final section will articulate an ethic of reconciliation for Cuban Catholics.

This conclusion cannot exhaust the reflection on reconciliation nor the understanding of its praxis. Each person must make the journey and each journey is unique. This work can explore the issues, suggest a direction, and propose praxis, but it cannot make people move forward on the road to reconciliation.

¹⁶⁴ “Traveler, there is no road; you make your path as you walk.” Antonio Machado was a Spanish poet of the literary movement known as the “Generation of ’98.” He died in 1939 at the end of the Spanish Civil War.

The Circles as Part of a Healing Process

The success of the Circles of Reconciliation was beyond expectation. It produced highly fruitful data for the exploration of a practical theology of reconciliation. It also demonstrated the effectiveness of this model of reconciliation. While participants' ongoing commitment was to four meetings of at least two hours, their actual involvement suggested that, as the process developed, their engagement only grew. Many of them would stay after the meeting ended, sharing "the rest of the story." Every week they came with high expectations as to what would happen in the meeting.

If evaluated according to criteria of "outcome validity"¹⁶⁵ (Herr and Anderson 2005, 55), the success of the theoretical elements of the research can be demonstrated because this research led to the creation of the Circles and the Circles positively helped participants advance in reconciliation. This section will assess how the Circles contributed to personal and social reconciliation of the participants.

To address the question of success of the Circles, it is helpful to review the stages of trauma theory. Trauma theory identifies stages in the process of recovery. Three shifts need to happen for the process of recovery: the shift "from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory, and from stigmatized isolation to restored social connection" (Herman 1997, 153). The Circles created an environment of safety and support that encouraged participants to share their stories. The ease with which they participated—and the fact that some felt compelled to share "other

¹⁶⁵ The outcome validity criteria asks if the action occurred and if such action responded to or resolved the problem that motivated the study. This often implies reframing the problem and identifying new dimensions that problematize the issue further (Herr and Anderson 2005, 55)

stories” of trauma beyond those related to the experience of exile—suggests that the group was able to create an environment of hospitality and trust where healing could happen. This reflects the first shift to an experience of “reliable safety” (Herman 1997, 153). The intolerant attitudes within the larger exile community regarding Cuba instill fear of discussing some of the issues that emerged in the Circles. In the safety of the Circles, participants could express opinions as exiles with other exiles without the fear of being criticized.

In telling their stories, participants often remembered things that had been buried or repressed. This is typical in cases of trauma (Herman 1997, 42-45). Victims of trauma disassociate or push painful memories out of their consciousness. This phenomenon, called “constriction” (Tabak 2011, 12-13), serves to protect the individual, but it also impedes the integration of these experiences (Herman 1997, 47). Some participants became quite emotional, particularly one who said: “I thought I had already healed from this experience” (Carolina). Participants report that memories continued to surface after the session. In so doing, they revisited their painful past experiences and often addressed unresolved grief. Such expression of affect is crucial for a healing process (Herman 1997, 177). With the support of the participants, they were able to consolidate previously fragmented memories as they wove their memories into a coherent narrative of their departure or other painful experiences. This helped further the shift from “dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory” (Herman 1997, 155). People found healing in the love

and understanding of others and were able to put words to their experience. Being validated by others who had experienced similar things had a positive impact.¹⁶⁶

Such reconstruction and sharing of memories helped the exiles “review the meaning of the events” (Herman 1997, 179). They came to see their past in the context of faith, which gave new meaning to their experiences. Their story of suffering became a story of hope. Faith touches the deepest realm of the human experience, where the wounds of trauma are engraved and where healing can take place. Through their experience in the Circles, participants were enabled to see a transcendent purpose in the decision to leave Cuba, whether they made this decision by themselves or their parents made the decision. Reinterpreting and reframing their story in light of the Christian message and the paschal mystery connected faith to the traumatic events of their lives and helped the healing process. The Christian narrative of God’s triumph over evil in the resurrection of Jesus (Schreier 2000, 18) provided the power to transform a narrative of suffering and trauma. Nonetheless, the participants still see leaving the island as a deeply painful event, even when they can now reframe it with humor: “maybe we had to abandon our own land to come here, because Florida needed more Catholics” (Javier).

Reinterpretation and acknowledgment are essential aspects of the healing process (Yoder 2005, 55). The “goal of recounting the trauma story is integration, [based on the] belief in the restorative power of truth-telling” (Herman 1997, 181). Telling trauma stories has a testimonial function. Studies of survivors of political persecution show that testimony functions both as a ritual of healing and as a condemnation of injustice. In

¹⁶⁶ The video of the sessions allows one to clearly see the response of the group in words or body language to the stories shared by the participants.

those situations, “the use of the word testimony... implies that the subjective, private pain is to be seen in an objective, political context... Private pain is transformed into political dignity” (Agger and Jensen 1990, 116).

One impediment to some exiles moving toward reconciliation is the “fantasy of compensation” (Herman 1997, 190). Many imagine a time when they might be compensated for their economic losses. However, discussion about the value of properties in Cuba today quickly leads to the realization that most houses and businesses are not worth recovering. Facing the reality of what was lost, exiles can arrive at a new place. For many Cubans, nurturing nostalgia of the Cuba that was prevents them from imagining the Cuba that can be. When there is no possible compensation, “mourning is the only way to give due honor to loss” (Herman 1997, 190). This is precisely what the Circles offer: a space to mourn and give closure to the experience of loss so as to permit people to move forward.

A major aspect of personal reconciliation is forgiveness. As participants struggle with memories of the wrong that was committed, they experience a renewed desire for restitution. Sometimes they become angry as they recall the violation of their dignity, the abuse of power by those who separated them from their families, who impeded their access to higher education, and who even imprisoned them. One participant spoke of his frustration with the lack of changes in Cuba and suggested that the only way to bring about changes in Cuba is through violent action (Luis). This opinion did not find support in the group, who helped him see that violence is not an ethical or even effective option. These reactions are common in the uncovering stage of a process of forgiveness (Enright

2000, 68-76). Conversation continued as the process of the Circles of Reconciliation deepened. Participants came to express their understanding of forgiveness as a gift they gave first to themselves and then to others. Theological reflection on forgiveness correlates with psychological warrants: the choice to forgive is what matters. Participants' rationale to forgive was initially self-interested and mostly for therapeutic benefits, but their reflection evolved into a theological argument: forgiveness is what Christians do if they want to be disciples of Jesus. Even though some participants continue to insist they cannot forgive until wrongdoers acknowledge their mistakes and justice is done, many made the decision to forgive¹⁶⁷ within the process of the Circles. Their decision to forgive was expressed in the letter they wrote to someone who had hurt them.

One of the insights participants shared about forgiveness is that they could not hold back from forgiving those who hurt them because they too needed to be forgiven. This reflects the deepening stage of a forgiveness process (Enright 2000, 85-88), whereby those who have been harmed find new meaning in the suffering. Those experiencing this stage often experience a need for forgiveness and gain a new sense of purpose and direction in their lives. One participant described forgiveness this way: "It is a decision that allows you to accept that others make mistakes as one makes mistakes and not to see the person with resentment, but rather pray for the person" (Victoria). This does not mean that this participant or others achieved complete forgiveness. For many, the process of forgiveness started long before and the Circles only reinforced their efforts to forgive by

¹⁶⁷This is the second stage of Enright's model of forgiveness (2000, 76-84).

providing clear arguments in favor of forgiveness based on Christian tradition and Cuban identity. Emotional forgiveness is a long path that requires time, but it is first a decision. Participants know and understand that it is an ethical demand of the followers of Jesus and his teachings: “The Lord taught me how to forgive” (Jairo).

Reconnection is the last stage of recovery (Herman 1997, 197-213; Yoder 2010, 63). It results from a personal encounter that allows people to rehumanize each other. In this sense, it is part of social reconciliation. The Circles helped all participants regardless of the waves of exile they represented. It led to greater understanding of the diverse experiences of exile and helped correct mutual misrepresentations. This was affirmed by one participant who stated, “We have learned to listen to each other. There are different realities depending on the year we came. There are things that I did not know about others who came later” (Jairo).

The experience of the Circles correlates well with theories of trauma and forgiveness. This shows the positive effects of the Circles of Reconciliation. The following analysis of the questionnaire data gathered from the participants of the Circles of Reconciliation also shows how effective the Circles have proved to be for deepening the experience of reconciliation.

The Reconciliation Questionnaire

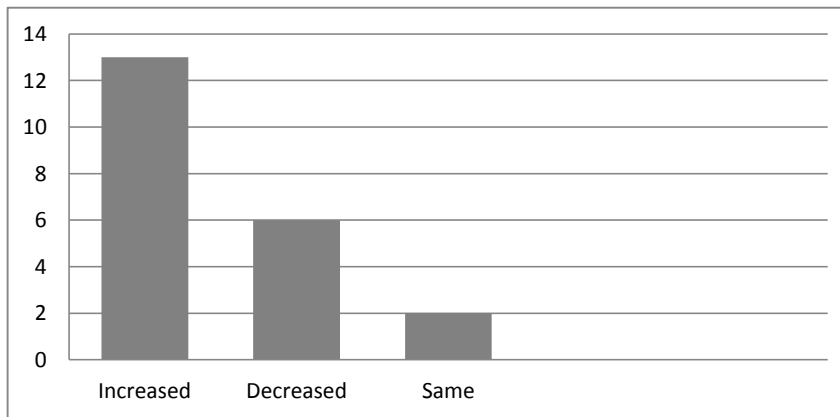
The reconciliation questionnaire was designed for the Circles of Reconciliation. Like the process itself, this questionnaire was intended to both test the Circles of Reconciliation process and provide greater insight into a practical theology of reconciliation. Questions targeted key issues in personal and social reconciliation among

Cuban exiles. The tabulation of the responses from the two different Circles may be found in the Appendix. In Group A, fourteen people began the process, but only twelve finished. Of these, eight participants improved their score, three lowered their score, and one showed no change.

In Group B, twelve people participated in the process, but one missed the last meeting, and two submitted invalid questionnaires.¹⁶⁸ Of the nine who completed both a before and after questionnaire, five improved their score, two showed no change, and two lowered their score.

In total, thirteen valid participants improved their score, two stayed the same, and six participants lowered their score. Almost two-thirds of participants improved their index of reconciliation as a result of their four week experience.

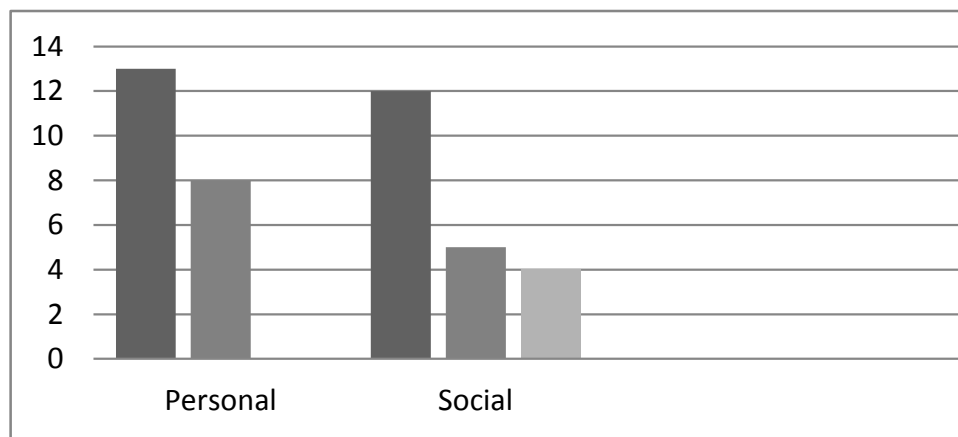
Figure 7.1 Change in reconciliation total score after the Circles



¹⁶⁸ Validity may be questioned because before the Circles, these participants responded to a question with a “5” and, after the Circles, marked it with a “1.” Such drastic decrease in the reconciliation index suggests that the participant may have been confused as to what was the highest and lowest value.

The fact that some participants had a lower score on the second test was puzzling. While most people improved both social and personal reconciliation, eight had a lower personal reconciliation score the second time and five had a lower social reconciliation score.

Figure 7.2 Changes in personal and social reconciliation



The decrease in personal reconciliation may indicate that the Circles helped awaken awareness of the need for healing. As a result, some of the participants may have had a surge of painful memories, resentment, and lack of forgiveness, which results in a lower score on the second test. Thus, what seems as a negative result may be interpreted as the beginning of a healing process.

The five measures that received the lowest relative scores—the ones that respondents most tended to reject—are quite revealing. As the table below shows, respondents who completed the Circles were most likely to reject the idea that Cubans arrive only for economic reasons. The stories of the participants of recent waves who were in the group contested that view. There is an openness to accept the other regardless of their ideological orientation, even communists. The much-debated issues of

remittances and travel to Cuba was somewhat resolved for this group. Prioritizing humanitarian assistance of family members and contact with the island over and above its impact on national economy reflects a reconciliatory stance and a departure from the divisive “exile ideology.” The majority of participants do not think that the memories of Cuba continue to hurt them. However, this seems somewhat contradictory compared to what they actually said and their emotional response in sharing their stories. It is unclear as to whether this reflects how they feel or how they want to feel.

Table 7.1. Lowest score items

Cubans who are arriving now come only for economic reasons	49%
The memories of Cuba continue to hurt me	52%
Sending remittances to Cuba is a way to collaborate with the regime	57%
We should not travel to Cuba until the system changes	58%
There is no good communist.	59%

The following questions obtained the highest reconciliation scores. This shows the areas where participants were positively disposed to reconciliation.

Table 7.2. Highest score items

I am at peace with the decision taken by me or my family to leave Cuba	96%
All Cubans are brothers and sisters, even if we think differently	94%
I am very interested on what is going on in Cuba	92%
Reconciliation is needed among Cuban exiles	92%
In mutual respect Cubans in the Diaspora and the island need to seek solutions for Cuba	91%

The strong interest in “what is going on in Cuba” demonstrates that participants continue to identify with their homeland. This data alone does not show personal reconciliation. Rather, lack of interest is more revelatory. Lack of interest would suggest a certain level of rejection of the past or the suffering connected to it. Further, recognizing the need for reconciliation in the exile is the first step to start doing something about it. A likely sign of intolerance is a self-righteous attitude that no change is needed. Accepting diversity is the basis of the reconciliation among the exile community. The majority of participants seemed to be at peace with their decision or their family’s decision to come to United States. This represents a positive retrospective reading of their history, which is suggestive of personal reconciliation. The following series of evaluative questions were asked at the final meeting. The responses to these questions provide a very affirmative assessment of the process of the Circles.

Table 7.3. Final evaluation

Responses based on 1-5 score	1	2	3	4	5	% with maximum score
The process helped my inner healing and reconciliation.	1	1	2	3	16	70 %
The process helped me understand better other exile groups.	1	1	2	3	16	70%
The process helped me understand the meaning of Christian forgiveness.	2	1	2	2	16	70%
The process helped me in my efforts to forgive concrete individuals or experiences	3		2	5	13	57%
The process is a valid tool to promote reconciliation in the exile			3	1	19	83%
Total	7	3	11	14	80	

Seventy percent of participants reported that the Circles helped their inner healing and reconciliation. A similar proportion said that the process helped them better understand other exile groups and that the Circles helped them understand Christian forgiveness. However, gaining a better understanding of Christian forgiveness does not necessarily produce immediate results. Only fifty-seven percent were able to say that this experience helped them forgive concrete individuals or experiences. Since the question did not distinguish between decisional and emotional forgiveness, participants may be referring to a lack of change in emotional response towards those individuals or experiences. Such findings are consistent with the notion that emotional forgiveness requires more time (Worthington 2006, 174). More respondents agreed that the process is a valid tool to promote reconciliation in the exile than agreed to any other statement presented (83 percent). While the data suggest that the Circles made a considerable impact on the lives of the participants of the Circles of Reconciliation, the Circles are not the end of the road or the only instrument to foster reconciliation. Rather, they only point a direction and offer a model to advance the process of reconciliation in each person and in the community. The work of reconciliation is ongoing until reconciliation becomes a way of life, a way of understanding the past, present, and future, and until it becomes *habitus*.¹⁶⁹ Such a habitus of reconciliation comes about through the practice of virtues of reconciliation.

¹⁶⁹Bourdieu defines *habitus* as “the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations [that] produces practices which tend to reproduce regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle” (Bourdieu 1977, 78).

The Road Ahead: An Ethic of Reconciliation for Cuban Exiles

Reconciliation in the context of divided communities is a moral choice (Isasi-Díaz 2004, 223) that requires particular virtues. Reconciliation itself is considered a religious virtue; reconciliation is “a specific form of love” (Isasi-Díaz 2004, 228). As a social and civic virtue, it imposes “the duty to overcome what separates human beings, what turns one against another, in order to be able to live the sociability that is characteristic of humanity” (Isasi-Díaz 2004, 229).

U.S. Hispanic theologians have critiqued virtue ethics¹⁷⁰ as abstract and removed from every day people’s moral dilemmas because these ethics emphasize virtue and not praxis (De La Torre 2010, 71). Reconciliation is something a person becomes, not only something a person practices. The virtues needed for reconciliation are practical virtues that flow from a spirituality of reconciliation. From the perspective of virtue ethics, love has been identified as the “fundamental source for all subsequent morality” (Harrington and Keenan 2002, 77). This understanding is rooted in the practices and words of Jesus (Lk 6: 27-36; 7:36-50; 15: 1-32; 23:34), the reflection of the first Christian communities (I Jn 7:11, 16-17, 19-21), and the tradition of the church. Aquinas’ view of charity as the mother of all virtues has been retrieved in contemporary moral theology (Gilleman 1959, cited in Harrington and Keenan 2002, 77). The virtue of charity, or love, as the response

¹⁷⁰ Protestant and Catholic theologians have retrieved the emphasis on virtues as a resource for theological ethics in direct contrast with the emphasis on rules and natural law (Curran 2008). Virtue ethics or ethics of being (vs. ethics of doing) are about whom one should become, not only what one should do (Gula 1989, 7). This approach has its roots in Greek philosophy and Scripture, and was later developed by Augustine, Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard, and especially by Aquinas. For more on contemporary Catholic virtue ethics, see Harrington and Keenan (2002) and the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (2007).

to the experience of being loved by God, finds expression in corporal and spiritual works of mercy. An ethic of reconciliation calls for the following spiritual works of mercy: to “admonish the sinner, forgive offenses, and bear wrongs patiently” (Keenan 2005, 65). The last two practices are not meant to be acts of surrender to evil, but transforming initiatives which deliver the wrongdoer from the cycles of bondage and “open the possibility of a peaceable future for both” parties (Stassen and Gushee 2003, 341).

Love has a social dimension (Mott 2011, 36). It has the capacity to create community. When community encounters conflict and division—as often occurs—communitarian virtues are needed. Relationality expressed in community is very important for Hispanics: “For U.S. Hispanics, the entire cosmos—including the earth below and the heavens above—is an intrinsically relational reality, whereas in an organism, each member is necessarily related to every other member” (Goizueta 1999, 50).

Community building is central to the work of reconciliation, which is relation-centered. Virtues related to community building are not reserved for extraordinary situations, but *lo cotidiano*,¹⁷¹ because reconciliation begins in the everyday efforts and graced moments. This is what practical theology is about. Practical theology “requires a ‘way of life,’ living it, testing, seeking it, treasuring it, daring it” (Veling 2005, 244).

¹⁷¹ The notion of *lo cotidiano* or every day, ordinary activity is at the core of Latino theology as a primary theological source (Isasi-Díaz 2004, 66) and has been introduced into U.S. Hispanic ethics (De La Torre 2010, 70-72). For a development of *lo cotidiano*, see Carmen Nanko-Fernández (2009).

Hospitality

The virtue of hospitality implies welcoming and accepting the other without prejudice. It requires listening to the other with the heart (Boff 2011, 91), realizing that the other has something to contribute that can be profoundly enriching. Through this dialogue, people enter into a relation of reciprocity and exchange, which at times requires “renouncing one’s interests in favor of the common good” (Boff 2011, 93). This is a precondition to reach consensus by prioritizing what is important to all. Hospitality creates the space where “reconciliation may happen” (Schreiter 2000, 89). Jesus was the recipient of hospitality in many instances and his presence brought about reconciliation. When a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat at his house, a sinful, but repentant woman welcomed Jesus and anointed his feet (Lk 7:36-50). Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully in his house (Lk 19:1-10) and thus, salvation—as a result of this conversion—entered Zacchaeus’ house. Jesus felt welcome and often visited Martha and Mary’s house (Lk 10:38-42; Jn 11: 1-31). Jesus also practiced hospitality on the shore with the apostles after the resurrection (Jn 21:1-17). He prepared breakfast for them, shows kindness, and offers peace to the fear-filled apostles. The story of Juan Antonio Blanco Gil’s¹⁷² reconciliation with Cubans in Miami described below illustrates how hospitality engenders reconciliation:

After leaving Cuba, I had no particular desire to live in Miami, because while I was already a Cuban exile in Canada, I still shared some prejudices regarding the Cuban exile community here. While still living in Ottawa, I was invited to collaborate with

¹⁷²Blanco Gil is a historian and human rights activist. He directs the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Initiatives at Miami Dade College.

the birth of the project *Consenso Cubano*. So, I started to come regularly to some of the meetings in Miami. One of the members, who infiltrated from the U.S. to fight in the Escambray and spent 17 years in prison, found out that I was staying at a hotel and handed me a key to his home and said that I could stay there anytime. So, I took him at his word, and for the following meetings I went to his house. We began sharing personal stories and stayed until very late hours in the night talking about our visions for a future Cuba. I soon discovered that even though we have had different ideological approaches in the past, we both wanted the same thing for Cuba. His open attitude towards me and first-hand knowledge of the personal stories of all those who took part in these meetings had a great impact on my perspectives. They generated a dramatic change in my vision of Miami and the Cuban exile community in this city. (Interview, Miami, May 15, 2012)

Reconciliation in Blanco Gil's case was initiated by someone from the historic exile giving a sign of welcome to someone who holds very diverse views. Welcoming attitudes, personal sharing, and identification of common ground brought about reconciliation.

Ileana Laucirica's capacity to understand the early waves of exile comes from her experience of receiving hospitality when she came from Cuba with her teenage daughter who needed medical treatment. A family took Ileana and her daughter in and she spent two years with them. The hospitality and help she received from members of earlier generation of exiles helped her understand and appreciate their attitudes and suffering.

Receiving hospitality creates and heals relationships. Practicing the virtue of hospitality, as part of the ministry of reconciliation (Schreiter 2000, 88), furthers personal healing.

Engagement

The virtue of engagement is rooted in the courage to take the initiative to approach the other, even if one perceives oneself as the wronged party. This initiative on the part of the victim is an act of empowerment that shows that the person is no longer at the mercy of the offender (De la Torre 2007, 108-9). If such initiative does not occur, reconciliation can come to a standstill because both sides are waiting for the other one to be willing reach out: “In conflicts with a longer history, each party, sees itself as the victim and perceives the rival as the perpetrator” (Volf 2000, 163). As Schreiter says: “Experience shows that wrongdoers are rarely willing to acknowledge what they have done or to come forward of their own accord. If reconciliation depended entirely upon the wrongdoer’s initiative, there would be no reconciliation at all” (2000, 14). The Christian virtue of engagement requires a person to do what God has done. Engagement means taking the initiative and approaching the other, even if the other is closed to alternative views or if the other claims to have the truth, whole and entire. This encounter helps bring down barriers and dissolve prejudices. It helps humanize and see the other in a different light. By entering the world of the other, one comes to know a different symbolic universe; one even comes “to know the other’s soul” (Boff 2011, 133). This encounter produces what Gadamer has called a “fusion of horizons” (2004, 306).¹⁷³ Entering into someone else’s horizon does not mean leaving behind one’s own. This

¹⁷³ Horizon is “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (Gadamer 2004, 302).

process of communication does not eliminate differences but does make kindness and empathy possible. Communication—dialogue—is key for communities whose members have grown apart. They need to begin by “approaching each other to get to know each other” (Isasi-Díaz 2001, 21). The following exile is aware of this abyss between different waves of exiles and of his responsibility to overcome it.

I do not avoid meeting with people that disagree with me. On the contrary, I seek them out. I think that it is my way of presenting myself to the other, of getting to know them. The Cubans arriving now are different from us who have lived here for so many years, but we need to get to know each other. (Lorenzo Ferrer, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012)

In contrast, when conflict is approached in an oppositional way, defenses grow on both sides. Taking the first positive step toward another person implies freedom from the power of one’s own wound and from those who inflicted the suffering. This empowering experience may be the only “victim’s triumph” (Daly and Sarkin 2007, 153).

Understanding

To show respect for the other means to recognize the other as other (Boff 2011, 147) and honor that personal dignity. Through such “alterity,” people can “transpose” themselves (Gadamer 2004, 385). They can put themselves in another person’s position without losing their own way of seeing things. This transposition “consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves a rising to a higher universality” (Gadamer 2004,

305). This virtue is exemplified in those who migrated from Cuba recently, but, nonetheless, can understand the experience of earlier waves of exiles.

The fact that we are here is because we think different...I have to understand that those belonging to the historic exile may have a different stance...It really is about one word: *comprensión* (understanding). You understanding my reality, and I understand yours. Before criticizing others, try to understand and get in their shoes...think what the older generation went through. (Ileana Laucirica, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012)

Lack of understanding and mutual exclusion between different exile generations divides the exile community. Even within the Cuban Catholic community recent groups have experienced a difficult time integrating into the community because they feel misunderstood.

Those of us who have been born and lived most of our lives in Cuba feel judged very negatively by the earlier exile. They treat you with mistrust. They blame you for the survival of the regime, and we [who were not part of the historical exile] are all responsible for that reality by action or omission. A few are guilty, but we are all responsible. (Eduardo Mesa, Interview, Miami, July 18, 2012)

Respectful understanding means that a person may not infringe on another person's freedom to think or act according to their conscience. This is affirmed by the Second Vatican Council:

Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we

come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them (*Gaudium et Spes*, 28).

Tolerance

The pluralism that inevitably results from the encounter of cultures, visions, and experiences calls for tolerance. This virtue of tolerance responds to “the need to reconcile, but not homogenize, divergent beliefs and values...It is a response to the fact of moral diversity and multiculturalism” (Schweiker 2004, 112-113). To practice tolerance out of indifference, fear of confrontation, or convenience is not a virtue. Only tolerance that comes from love is virtuous and not just “mere tolerance.”

There is a need, then, to teach people to love one another, to cultivate peace and to live with good will rather than mere tolerance. A fundamental encouragement to this is “to say no to revenge, to recognize injustices, to accept apologies without looking for them, and finally, to forgive,”¹⁷⁴ in such a way that mistakes and offences can be acknowledged in truth, so as to move forward together towards reconciliation. This requires the growth of a pedagogy of pardon. Evil is in fact overcome by good, and justice is to be sought in imitating God the Father who loves all his children.

(Benedict XVI 2013, 6)

True Christian tolerance is rooted in appreciation of diversity, and it is forged in suffering. It often implies bearing wrongs patiently.

¹⁷⁴ Pope Benedict XVI here references Matthew 5:21-48.

I have met political prisoners who have suffered a lot and are very tolerant persons. They are more tolerant and capable of understanding some younger people who are here now and were once members of the Communist Party. The ones who have been victims are more compassionate, because through suffering they have learned to look at life with generosity. (Eduardo Mesa, Interview, Miami, July 18, 2012)

Recently arrived exiles attribute the lack of respect for different opinions on the political system of Cuba, which did not allow views opposed to the official discourse: “The system [of Cuba] has contributed to this uniformity and paternalism, which assumes that the other cannot give me any valid ideas. Everyone has the right to express their opinion and that does not make you my enemy” (Iliana Laucirica, Interview, Miami, July 28, 2012).

The irony is that Cubans come to the United States seeking freedom and find a similar intolerance in some segments of the exile community. Tolerance makes diversity and pluralism a viable building block for a community. Imposition of a single vision and truth enforces uniformity and robs community of its colorful diversity.

Boff asks, “can we be tolerant with the intolerant?” (Boff 2011, 170). The only way to stop the cycle of intolerance is to practice tolerance, allowing others to express their opinion so long as it is not destructive or involve personal attacks. The encounter of the tolerant with the intolerant may be an opportunity for a transforming dialogue.

The Circles of Reconciliation promote the practice of these virtues, but the *habitus* of reconciliation also develops through the practice of reconciliation in a variety of ways: reaching out to others and listening to their stories and different opinions, welcoming the

recent arriving Cubans, understanding those who continue to hurt and cannot overcome past hurts, dispelling prejudice and attitudes of intolerance.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the Circles of Reconciliation suggests that they can work as a positive tool in the reconciliation of Cuban exiles. While conclusions from the Circles are limited because they took place in only one parish, there are good reasons for tentatively generalizing the findings beyond the limits of the participants and parish in which they are located. Having two different groups provided a point of contrast. While both were drawn from the same parish, these two groups integrated individuals representing different waves of exile, chronological generations, and professional background, which permits more extensive testing of the conclusions. Further research will need to apply the Circles in other contexts, yet this further research will also benefit from the preliminary conclusions reached here. Following standard research practice, these conclusions may be “transferred” to another context and tested: “If there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere” (Lincoln and Guba 1985, 298).

The Circles of Reconciliation are designed to be relation-centered spaces where Cubans can revisit their experience of exile, particularly the trauma of being uprooted from their homeland. The goal of these Circles is to find healing in the solidarity of others who have experienced similar trauma and to find healing in the experience of faith that helps transform these experiences into salvific events. Within the Circles, exiles can learn to dialogue, respect diversity, and practice reconciling virtues. The Circles provide

an opportunity for Cubans to share contrasting narratives regarding experiences of Cuba and to explore different views on issues related to Cuba. Replicating the Circles will require trained facilitators, well-prepared to organize and conduct the Circles.

Creating a space where people can come together and take the risk of learning about themselves and others is a critically important practice (Goizueta 2012). As such, it may be the single most important practice for reconciling the Cuban exile and the Cuban people in general. Such an initiative can launch a spiral of reconciliation that can counteract the spiral of violence and build a different future. Such a future was part of Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz's dream and it is a dream that remains valuable.

The future does not rest with a fractured Cuban community, exile groups against each other, or exiles against those who stayed in Cuba. In order to be a unified community, we must forgive even when there is no repentance, praying that our forgiveness may bring forth repentance. But we ourselves must also repent and humbly ask for forgiveness for not understanding from afar, for judging from afar...the liberation and justice we all seek for our country cannot happen as long as there is hate and the desire for revenge (Isasi-Díaz 1995, 159).

This work has identified tasks of reconciliation for Catholic Cuban exiles that relate to the past, present, and future. Looking to the past, reconciliation must involve a continuing work of healing and, as needed, a continuing work of forgiveness to ensure that the wounds of the past no longer harm oneself and others. Such wounds must not continue to determine the exiles' emotions, judgments, and actions: the results are only more trauma and a continuing lack of healing. This commitment to reconciliation

requires intentional efforts to grant forgiveness, to acknowledge loss, and accept that the past of Cuba cannot be retrieved. The starting point for any contribution to the future of Cuba must be its present reality with all its limitations and possibilities. The past is not a starting point, but only an entry into unresolved trauma.

The hard work of personal reconciliation must begin by replacing negative emotions with respect, empathy, and compassion towards those who may have caused suffering. Such transformation comes through personal conversion and the realization that everyone—including oneself—has caused some suffering. Therefore, no one can place demands on others to change or repent, if they are not willing to do the same. Repentance is not a precondition for reconciliation, but rather a consequence (Schreier 2000, 15). Efforts to engage those who are emotionally or ideologically distant can bring about real transformation for the people involved and even ultimately for the whole community. There is no other option consistent with the Gospel—or good social science research. Cuban Catholics simply must respond to the call to transcend their hurt and make an option for re-connection, re-encounter, and re-engagement. Dialogue is critical.

This involves a shift from a retributive paradigm to a restorative vision. The work of the Circles showed that clinging to a retributive paradigm (e.g., notions of justice as punishment) hold exiles back from supporting policies that benefit the people of the island and create reconnection with those in exile. A restorative justice approach does *not* mean promoting “healing of wounds and placating memory of suffering without an enforceable demand for fundamental political change” (Schweiker 2004, 117). A restorative approach instead simply proposes strategies that offer an alternative to

policies of direct attack or isolation, such policies have not led to positive results in the Cuban situation during the last five decades. A restorative approach, on the other hand, has been effective in leading other countries to political transformation (De Gruchy 2002, 22). Political transformation is something Cubans generally agree is needed. The only way to break the cycle of violence is to embrace alternative models that are based on an understanding of justice motivated by love. Such alternative models seek to restore right relationship (just relationships), rather than gain revenge. This approach is consistent with Christian ethics. The future-oriented task of reconciliation calls for education and reflection on the Christian tradition, including Catholic Social Teaching and political ethics. These sources challenge Catholic Cuban exiles to embrace ethical approaches in their efforts to promote changes in Cuba. In this process, exiles can identify a common ground that envisions a shared future as Martí dreamed, “With all and for the good of all” (Martí [1891] 2003, 90).

The task of reconciliation facing the present moment of the exile is to build capacity for dialogue and respect for diversity among exiles and beyond. This implies practicing hospitality for Cubans arriving with many needs. They must be understood and guided to insertion in a dramatically different society. The burden of engagement lies on those exiles that are already here in the United States and have been here for some time. As the data suggest, one way of transcending the painful past is by focusing on the needs of new arrivals—as well as those living on the island—in order to offer hope and assistance in solidarity. Travel to Cuba for this purpose also helps exiles integrate and heal memories. More importantly, it is a way of re-establishing connection with the island’s people, letting them know they are not forgotten. Through this engagement Cubans can work

together to repair the human harm caused by multiple factors on both sides of the Florida Straits during the last five decades.

Cubans who participated in the Circles highly valued the exchange with others from different exile waves. This sharing provided an invaluable opportunity to learn from their different historical contexts and personal stories. This process enabled them to identify what continues to unite them as well as what makes them different from one another. Throughout this process, cultural and religious symbols played an important role in finding common ground. As one participant expressed: “Reconciliation has to be based on forgiveness, justice, and the care of Our Lady of Charity” (Matias). Mary as Our Lady of Charity is the primordial symbol to which participants turned again and again. She is the “mother of all Cubans,” regardless of race, status, or ideological devotions (González-Maldonado 2006, 94). Ultimately, the mission of reconciliation cannot be carried out solely through replicating the Circles of Reconciliation throughout the Cuban exile. As important and helpful as that would be, another task remains for the Circles. They need to find their way to both sides of the Florida Straits. They need to find a way to the island itself. Reconciliation is not just for the exile, but for all Cubans. The task of reconciling as one Cuban people, transcending differences, and working together to build a better Cuba is central to the future of the Cuban nation. It is also deeply practical and deeply theological, rooted in the call of the Gospel.

Appendix A:

Interview Protocol with Witnesses of Reconciliation

The following preliminary interview protocol is for the individual, in-depth interviews proposed in this prospectus as part of Phase One. The people selected for this interview have demonstrated some degree of reconciliation as defined by this work in terms of personal and interpersonal/social reconciliation. They have been able to move past their experience of suffering and have been able to forgive those who hurt them and do not feel resentment. They are able to dialogue with people with different views on Cuba and want to contribute to Cuba's future. The main purpose of the interviews is to seek their wisdom in a process of personal and social reconciliation. It is subject to field testing and on-going review, consistent with a grounded theory approach. The focus groups described in the prospectus will be based in part on questions such as these as well as ones about the experience of the Circles of Reconciliation. Given the grounded theory commitments of action research, the focus group protocol will not be developed until the individual interviews have been completed.

The protocol envisions a semi-structured interview and has five main parts. Sections II and III of the interview deal with personal reconciliation, while sections IV and V explore interpersonal and social reconciliation. The goal is to make sure that certain topic areas are explored while keeping the interview conversation as open-ended and in-depth as possible. It is therefore expected that respondents will provide data on some of these topics, particularly sub-questions, without being asked. Topics envisioned to be a particular priority for the interviews are marked with an asterisk (*). Standard neutral follow-ups (such as "Tell me more") are expected to be used wherever applicable. Questions have been drafted to move from initial rapport-building questions that help put the respondent at ease, toward a sequencing of questions. Such sequences are designed to move from the present toward the past and future, from the impersonal to the personal, and from personal narratives towards opinions or more sensitive questions later. To facilitate use of this protocol by the interviewer, aspects that are not themselves questions or follow-up comments or probes are given in capital letters (instructions), italics (script), or bold (thematic subdivisions).

Introductory Script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As you know, I am interested in understanding your experience as a Cuban exile as part of my doctoral dissertation. I am most interested in your experience of reconciliation and what you can share that would help other Cubans who want to follow this path. In research records and reports, your real name will not be used in order to keep your participation anonymous and confidential. Should it become necessary to use your actual name, your consent will be obtained in advance. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or reprisal. To indicate that

you are aware of these protections and have formally agreed to participate, I need to ask you to sign the Consent Form. One copy is for you and the other copy is for me.

I. Opening

My first question asks you about how you see things today. The word “exile” has many different meanings to people. Some people who left the island identify with the word and others do not. How about you? How much would you describe yourself as an “exile”?

*Why?

*What would you say it means to be an exile?

IF ASKED: This question is meant to focus on how you see yourself today.

II. Exile History

Now I would like to explore a little about how you experienced the time of your exile.

*How did you come to the United States?

IF NECESSARY: When and how did you leave Cuba? Who came with you? Who stayed behind? How old were you?

*What factors were probably the strongest in leading you into exile?

*How did you feel about the decision to leave Cuba?

IF NECESSARY: *How did you get settled when you first arrived?

III. Experiences in Exile

My next set of questions has to do with your experiences over the years. Some people feel divided or hurt themselves, oftentimes remembering the story of how they came to be in exile in very painful ways.

*Could you share with me some of the key aspects of what it was like as you settled into your new life?

IF ASKED: I mean, what sorts of challenges were the most difficult?

IF APPROPRIATE: What was it like during the years since those first ones?

*What sorts of groups or organizations helped you in those years?

IF NECESSARY: For example, organizations of other Cuban exiles or of the church?

*Have you continued in contact with people in Cuba?

IF APPROPRIATE: How would you describe your relationship with people in Cuba?

IV. Reconciliation Experiences

The exile's reaction to the Pope's recent visit to Cuba shows that the Cuban community is divided.

*Have you experienced divisions or felt hurt as a Cuban exile?

IF NECESSARY: Tell me more.

* Do you see a need for reconciliation?

IF NECESSARY: What does reconciliation mean for you?

IF NECESSARY: With whom or with what have you felt a need for reconciliation?

IF APPROPRIATE: *Tell me how you came to experience reconciliation.

IF NECESSARY: *What factors facilitated or hindered this experience?

*Did forgiveness play a role in your experience of reconciliation?

*In what ways would you say your experience of reconciliation is still incomplete?

*What inspired motivated, or helped you in your journey of reconciliation

*In what way might you say that your faith as a Catholic played a role in your experience of reconciliation?

IF NECESSARY: Specifically, how has the Catholic Church in Cuba or the Catholic Church in Miami played a role in your experience?

*How has it affected your understanding of what it means to be a Christian?

V. Final Words

As we conclude, I would like to ask you for a few final words of reflection. Could you share that you might recommend to other exiles in need of reconciliation?

*What sort of process would you say might most help those who are open to reconciliation but who do not know where to start?

IF APPROPRIATE: Specifically, what issues would you say most divide the Cuban exile community today?

*How do you understand and explain divisions among the Cuban community?

IF NECESSARY: What issues might you see as dividing Cubans within the Catholic Church in Cuba from Catholic Cubans outside of the island?

IF APPROPRIATE: How could a process of reconciliation reduce those divisions?

Thank you very much for taking the time for this interview. It has been very helpful and will be a great help in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. All of my contact information is on your copy of the Consent Form.

Appendix B: Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the experience of Cuban exiles. This research project is being conducted by Sister Ondina Cortés, RMI, a doctoral candidate at St. Thomas University, for her doctoral dissertation. There are no risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs for participating in the study. The information collected may not benefit you directly, but this study may help extend our understanding of people with experiences such as yours.

Your participation is anonymous and confidential, and your actual name will not be used in the research, eventual dissertation, or any other presentation or publication resulting from this work. Should it become necessary to use your name, your consent will be requested beforehand, separately from this consent. Without such permission, your name will not be given. All research records (notes, audio, video) will be stored securely and only I and my dissertation committee will have access to the records. Upon the completion of this study, the data will continue to be maintained by the Interviewer. Should the Interviewer entrust the data to an external archive, your name will not be given to the archive without express permission.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time and to refuse to participate without penalty or reprisal. If you choose to participate, please sign this form below. By signing, you are indicating that you are over 18 years of age and therefore of a legal age to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about being in this study, you may contact me, the interviewer, Sister Ondina Cortés, RMI, at (305) 586-6100 or ocortes@stu.edu, or my doctoral advisor, Dr. Bryan Froehle, at (305) 628-6636 or froehleb@stu.edu.

Signature of Interviewer

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Appendix C:

Encuesta Sobre la Experiencia del Exilio (Questionnaire before the Circles)

Este cuestionario es anónimo, pero para poder identificarlo, escribe como clave tu fecha de nacimiento: Mes ____ / Día ____

Estas afirmaciones no reflejan mi opinión, sino posibles posturas u opiniones en el exilio. Expresa tu parecer de ellas.

Marca del 1-5 lo que mejor representa tu opinión o postura respecto a cada afirmación.

**1=Muy en desacuerdo 2=En desacuerdo 3= Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
4=De acuerdo 5=Muy de acuerdo**

- ___ 1. Me interesa mucho lo que pase en Cuba.
- ___ 2. A las familias que habitan las casas de los que se fueron, no se les deben quitar si hay un cambio.
- ___ 3. La gente que está llegando últimamente viene por razones económicas.
- ___ 4. No siento rencor hacia los que me (nos) han hecho daño en Cuba.
- ___ 5. Hace falta reconciliación entre los que estamos en el exilio.
- ___ 6. La mayoría de los que salieron por el Mariel habían cometido crímenes.
- ___ 7. Desde un respeto mutuo, los cubanos de la isla y la diáspora tenemos que buscar juntos soluciones para Cuba.
- ___ 8. No puede haber perdón de las personas que no se han arrepentido de sus actos.
- ___ 9. Estoy en paz con la decisión que tomé o tomaron mis padres de salir de Cuba.
- ___ 10. No existe comunista bueno.
- ___ 11. Los que están en contra del embargo tienen tanto derecho a su opinión, como los que están a favor.
- ___ 12. Las personas que vinieron en los primeros años tienden a ser intransigentes.
- ___ 13. Con el enemigo no se dialoga.
- ___ 14. Mandar ayuda a Cuba es una manera de colaborar con el régimen.
- ___ 15. No le deseo el mal a nadie, ni a Fidel.
- ___ 16. Todavía no he sanado de todo lo que pasé en Cuba y al llegar aquí.
- ___ 17. No deberíamos viajar a Cuba hasta que no cambie el sistema.
- ___ 18. Todos los cubanos somos hermanos, aunque pensemos distinto.
- ___ 19. Yo rezo por las personas que han hecho o me (nos) han hecho daño en Cuba.
- ___ 20. Los recuerdos de Cuba me siguen causando dolor.

Información sobre el participante.

21. ____ 1. Hombre ____ 2. Mujer
22. Año de salida de Cuba _____
23. Mi edad al salir de Cuba ____
24. Salí con mi familia: ____ 1. Si ____ 2. No
25. Salí: ____ 1. Por otro país ____ 2. Directo a EEUU
26. ____ 1. Vía legal ____ 2. Vía ilegal
27. Estuve a favor de la revolución: ____ 1. Si ____ 2. No
28. Yo o alguien de mi familia inmediata fue preso político ____ 1. Si ____ 2. No
29. Mantengo contacto con familia/amigos en Cuba: ____ 1. Si ____ 2. No
30. He regresado a Cuba: ____ 1. Si ____ 2. No
31. Mi participación en la Iglesia en Cuba (misa, grupos):
____ 1. Muy activa ____ 2. Un poco ____ 3. Ninguna
32. Mi participación en la Iglesia ahora (misa, grupos):
____ 1. Muy activa ____ 2. Un poco ____ 3. Ninguna

Gracias por tu colaboración.

Appendix D:

Encuesta Sobre la Experiencia del Exilio (Questionnaire After the Circles)

Este cuestionario es anónimo, pero para poder identificarlo, escribe como clave tu fecha de nacimiento: Mes ____ / Día _____

Estas afirmaciones no reflejan mi opinión, sino posibles posturas u opiniones en el exilio. Expresa tu parecer de ellas.

Marca del 1-5 lo que mejor representa tu opinión o postura respecto a cada afirmación.

**1=Muy en desacuerdo 2=En desacuerdo 3= Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
4=De acuerdo 5=Muy de acuerdo**

- ___ 1. Me interesa mucho lo que pase en Cuba.
- ___ 2. A las familias que habitan las casas de los que se fueron, no se les deben quitar si hay un cambio.
- ___ 3. La gente que está llegando últimamente viene por razones económicas.
- ___ 4. No siento rencor hacia los que me (nos) han hecho daño en Cuba.
- ___ 5. Hace falta reconciliación entre los que estamos en el exilio.
- ___ 6. La mayoría de los que salieron por el Mariel habían cometido crímenes.
- ___ 7. Desde un respeto mutuo, los cubanos de la isla y la diáspora tenemos que buscar juntos soluciones para Cuba.
- ___ 8. No puede haber perdón de las personas que no se han arrepentido de sus actos.
- ___ 9. Estoy en paz con la decisión que tomé o tomaron mis padres de salir de Cuba.
- ___ 10. No existe comunista bueno.
- ___ 11. Los que están en contra del embargo tienen tanto derecho a su opinión, como los que están a favor.
- ___ 12. Las personas que vinieron en los primeros años tienden a ser intransigentes.
- ___ 13. Con el enemigo no se dialoga.
- ___ 14. Mandar ayuda a Cuba es una manera de colaborar con el régimen.
- ___ 15. No le deseo el mal a nadie, ni a Fidel.
- ___ 16. Todavía no he sanado de todo lo que pasé en Cuba y al llegar aquí.
- ___ 17. No deberíamos viajar a Cuba hasta que no cambie el sistema.
- ___ 18. Todos los cubanos somos hermanos, aunque pensemos distinto.
- ___ 19. Yo rezo por las personas que han hecho o me (nos) han hecho daño en Cuba.
- ___ 20. Los recuerdos de Cuba me siguen causando dolor.

Evalúa del 1-5 esta experiencia (1 lo menos-5 máximo).

Las respuestas 6 y 7 pueden continuarse por detrás.

1. Me ayudó a mi reconciliación y sanación interior _____
2. Me ayudó a comprender mejor los otros grupos de exilio_____
3. Me ayudó a entender mejor el significado el perdón cristiano_____
4. Me ayudó a avanzar en mi proceso de perdonar a personas concretas_____
5. Este proceso puede ayudar a la reconciliación en el exilio_____
6. ¿Qué tu cambiarías del proceso? (en general y/o menciona actividades o ejercicios)

7. ¿Qué fue lo que mas te ayudó-gustó del proceso (en general y/o menciona actividades o ejercicios)?_____

Appendix E:
Participants in the Circles of Reconciliation

Name (Alias)	Gender/Year of Arrival	
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Group A:

1. Fernando	M	1996
2. Nora	F	1980
3. Matias	M	1994
4. Julia	F	1962
5. Nancy	F	1960
6. Mercedes	F	1968
7. Saul	M	1986
8. Maribel	F	1986
9. Armando	M	1999
10. Mabel	F	1999
11. Carolina	F	1968
12. Jairo	M	1967
13. Ramiro	M	1963
14. Blanca	F	1970

Group B:

1. Luis	M	1998
2. Araceli	F	1998
3. Norma	F	1960
4. Julio	M	1999
5. Mabel	F	1993
6. Javier	M	1973
7. Cecilia	F	1968
8. Ines	F	1980
9. Orlando	M	1979
10. Victoria	F	1980
11. Ivette	F	1980
12. Arnaldo	M	1980

Appendix F: Sessions

SESSION ONE

Bienvenida (7:45-8:00) (Ambientación: Vela, mesa)

Bienvenidos a este estudio sobre la experiencia del exilio cubano, les agradezco su participación. Para todos vivir en y salir de Cuba ha sido un proceso difícil y creo que hemos trabajado poco esa experiencia, no se recogido para la posteridad esa memoria y a veces entre nosotros mismos hay desconocimiento de lo que vivieron otros grupos.

Presentación: Quisiera que comenzáramos presentándonos, diciendo nuestro nombre, de que parte de Cuba soy y en que año vine.

Mi propósito es comprender mejor toda esta experiencia para ver qué nos podría ayudar a mirar desde la fe lo que hemos vivido y lo que Dios quiere de nosotros como pueblo. Este proceso dura 4 semanas en el que vamos a mirar diferentes aspectos de nuestra experiencia en un ambiente de comunidad. Quisiera comenzar con una lectura de la palabra de Dios.

LECTURA: Gn 12:1-3. ¿Cómo se relaciona la historia de Abrahán a la nuestra?

Esta lectura nos habla como Dios llamó a Abraham a lanzarse a la aventura y el respondió confiado en Dios y en sus promesas. Dios cumplió lo que prometió. Creo que esta lectura se relaciona con nuestra experiencia, como veremos en el compartir de esta noche.

Encuesta (8:00-8:15): Lo primero que necesito es que me llenen la siguiente encuesta. Estas afirmaciones no reflejan mi opinión, es para tomar el pulso de lo opinamos, sean lo mas honestos posible con sus sentimientos e ideas, nadie va a saber quien escribió que. Pero para poder hacer el seguimiento a cada aporte les pido que pongan un numero que ustedes no van a olvidar...su fecha de nacimiento. El 1 es, el 5 es....

Metodología: La metodología que vamos a usar es la conocida como “método de círculos” en el que todos compartimos, en un ambiente de respeto, solo la persona que tenga el objeto que vamos a pasar, puede hablar. ¿Qué otras normas queremos poner para que funcione este compartir?

Compartir (8:15-9:15): A continuación vamos a comenzar compartiendo nuestras experiencias. Tengo que preguntarles si creen que es mejor dividirnos en dos grupos y el otro quedaría grabado en video, así lo puedo ver después. Nos daría mas tiempo para hablar. Podemos hablar 10 minutos de esta manera. Pediría a alguien que sirviera de facilitador-a para que todos tuvieran la oportunidad de hablar y se respeten las normas que hemos establecido juntos.

No tenemos tiempo para contar todo lo que hemos vivido. Quisiera que pensarán en la experiencia que ha sido más impactante en sus vidas en relación a Cuba: Su salida, algo que vivieron allá, o algo que vivieron al llegar aquí.

Terminar (9:15-9:30): Para terminar quisiera que volviéramos a grupo general. Compartir. Pastelitos y refrescos. During this time there will likely be an outburst of sharing of memories that have been evoked and brought back.

Este compartir me ha ayudado a comprender...

Este compartir me ha hecho sentir...

¿Qué sacamos de esta noche?

Oración final (9:30-9:35): Oración del Papa JP II en Santiago de Cuba. Todos juntos la rezamos.

SESSION TWO

Materiales: Biblia, cámara, tablillas, lápices, papeles en blanco, sobre de manila, vela, CD's de música, rosas blancas (una por persona), jarrón, pasteles, refrescos, vasos, servilletas.

Bienvenida-Oración (7:30-7:45): Agradecemos que estén de nuevo con nosotros. Comenzaremos con una oración.

Lectura: Rm 8:28 Recordando lo que compartimos la semana pasada, Jesús aparece a los discípulos y muestra sus heridas ¿qué nos dicen esas lecturas y canción en el contexto de lo que hemos compartido?

Canción: "Cristo que se da." Tony Rubi.

Debriefing (7:45-8:30)

-¿Qué reflexionamos durante la semana sobre lo que compartimos y lo que escuchamos la semana pasada? ¿Cuáles fueron los temas (ideas) que mas salieron en nuestro compartir? ¿Qué sentimientos afloraron? Con una mirada retrospectiva, ¿qué nos ayudó a superar esas dificultades a sanar esas heridas? (si no se ha dicho todavía): ¿Qué papel jugó la fe en esos procesos? ¿qué nuevo sentido tienen esas experiencias a la luz de la fe? (El agradecimiento transforma el resentimiento, la fe no justifica el mal, pero ayuda a ver un sentido al dolor, descubrir la mano de Dios que saca bien del mal... que bien ha salido de todo lo malo que vivi?)

RESULTADOS DE LA EVALUACION...en la pequeña evaluación que llenaron al final de la sesión.

-Varios expresaron que el compartir con los demás era útil y necesario, te ayuda a ser mas comprensivo con los demás que han vivido cosas parecidas o diferentes en otros momentos del exilio, ayuda a conocernos mejor.

-Nueva lectura de nuestros padres y guardianes, orgullo por lo que hicieron, mayor comprensión de sus decisiones queriendo protegernos del adoctrinamiento, pidiéndonos que nos fuéramos aunque suponía no volverlos a ver.

-Nueva lectura desde la fe. Descubrir la mano de Dios en todas las cosas, aun las malas que me pasaron, porque Dios de todo sacó algo bueno. Encontrar sentido desde la fe.

-Tristeza, darnos cuenta que hay heridas que todavía no han sanado. Expresando lo que hemos vivido, vamos sanando y liberándonos de estas heridas. Las cicatrices quedan,

pero no son heridas que sangran. Jesús resucitado muestra las cicatrices, pero la muerte, el dolor ya no tiene dominio sobre él.

RESULTADOS DE LA ENCUESTA EN TEMAS DE SUFRIMIENTO Y PERDON

-Referencia a la encuesta: rencor, perdón, etc. Muchos de ustedes expresaron ...

Perdón (8:30-9:00) ESTO NOS TRAE AL TEMA DEL PERDON.

Q.1: ¿Cómo entendemos el perdón? ¿Debemos perdonar a quien no se ha arrepentido? (teoría)

Q. 2 ¿Qué nos ha ayudado a perdonar? ¿Qué nos cuesta perdonar? (vivencia)

Definición del perdón. El perdón NO ES...aceptar la injusticia, no es disculpar el mal, no es impunidad, no excusar, olvidar, pasar la página...

-Se trata de estar dispuestos a dejar el justo derecho al resentimiento por una injusticia sufrida y reemplazar esos sentimientos negativos con sentimientos de compasión o al menos de buscar el bien del otro.

Beneficio del perdón. La persona que más se beneficia soy yo. Liberación de la atadura.

-No puede depender del arrepentimiento de la otra persona.

-Decisión y emoción: Dios nos pide la decisión y desea que llegue a ser también emocional.

Puede que todavía queden vestigios de esas heridas, vamos a hacer un sencillo ejercicio que ha sido diseñado para ayudarnos en nuestro proceso de sanación.

Proceso de perdón (9:00-9:30)...REACH (se les entrega una tablilla –clipboard- un papel en blanco y un lápiz).

1. Recordar la experiencia: No todos estamos en el mismo lugar en nuestro proceso de sanación por eso vamos a dar dos opciones. Para aquellos que sienten que hay personas que le han hecho daño y no han podido perdonar, imagínense que esa persona que está sentada aquí en medio del círculo. Vamos a decirle a esa persona lo que nunca pudimos decirle por miedo, por no tener la oportunidad...el daño que nos ha hecho y las consecuencias que tuvo, lo vamos a escribir. La segunda actividad es para los que no sienten que tienen que perdonar, pero como todos hemos recibido heridas, pensemos en esa persona que nos hizo daño y que quizá hemos perdonado, Si no tienes que perdonar a nadie escríbele a alguien que te hizo daño de alguna manera. Vamos a decirles los beneficios que sus acciones han tenido en mi vida, acciones o hechos que fueron malas, pero me han traído bien...incluso darle gracias por todo eso.
2. Empatía: Todos hemos sido perdonados en algún momento. Sabemos lo que es sentirnos culpables, reconocer que nos hemos equivocado, pero quisiéramos que entendieran nuestras razones para obrar así. Ahora cambia de sitio con esa persona e imagina que tu eres esa persona. ¿Qué razones darías, como explicarías tus acciones, tus motivaciones? Esto nos permite entender esta acción, a veces las personas actúan por miedo, por ignorancia, porque ellos han sufrido, porque han carecido de oportunidades para crecer con valores, porque creen que es lo que hace falta hacer para lograr una meta. Jesús mismo desde la cruz trató de comprender a

- los que lo crucificaban: “Padre perdónalos porque no saben lo que hacen.” Se trata de ponernos en los zapatos de la otra persona. Comprender nos ayuda perdonar.
3. Altruismo: Practica el altruismo y ofrece el don del perdón. Quizás hayas experimentado el que alguien te perdonara a ti. Un corazón grande puede dar este paso y recibe con creces más de lo que da. Recibir la paz. Lo que el peor sistema no me puede quitar si yo no quiero, es mi libertad para perdonar aun al que me ha hecho daño. No me puedo dejar de contagiar por el mal. Eso sería el triunfo del mal.
 4. Compromiso: Si estás listo-a, haz un compromiso de perdonar, exprésalo por escrito al final de la carta. Todas las cartas se ponen en un sobre de manila y se cierra y sella.
 5. Estos sentimientos pueden regresar, pero podemos renovar nuestro compromiso.
 6. Yo puedo tomar la decisión de perdonar, pero el perdón emocional es un don, no se puede forzar, hay que pedir a Dios esa gracia. Vamos a terminar con una oración-

Oración: Lectura: El amor a los enemigos Mt. 5, 43-48.

El perdón está en el centro de nuestra identidad como cristianos.

El perdonar, el devolver bien por mal está al centro de nuestra identidad como cubanos.

Martí escribió los versos sencillos en su etapa final, mientras estaba en el exilio, vamos a terminar tomando todos una de las rosas y recitando esa poesía que todos conocemos: La rosa blanca.

Durante esta semana todos tendremos esta rosa, para recordarnos de orar por esa persona que estamos deseando perdonar, oremos por ella cada vez que veamos la rosa blanca. Escuchamos el canto de Tony Rubí: Caminar Contigo

SESSION THREE

Oración (7:30-7:45): Comenzamos cantando “Instrumento de tu Paz” recordando a San Francisco que la Iglesia celebra el 4 de octubre.

Justicia y Perdón (7:45-8:15): Grupo A: La semana pasada ustedes expresaron la relación entre justicia y perdón, como las dos cosas eran necesarias e independientes. El Papa Juan Pablo II también aclaró este tema. Leemos en silencio y después comentamos.

Grupo B: La semana pasada quedamos hablando del tema de la justicia y el perdón, la inquietud era si eran excluyentes. ¿Es la justicia un prerrequisito del perdón?
(Compartir)

Documentos del Papa Juan Pablo II nos hablan de la relación entre J / P. Tiempo para leerlos en silencio. La justicia es insuficiente para resolver las divisiones, el perdón es necesario. Cuando la justicia se busca desde el perdón no es retributiva.

Notas: Hay dos tipos de **justicia retributiva** (centrada en el pasado y el castigo del malhechor) y **restaurativa** (se centra en el futuro y las necesidades de la víctima, no se opone al perdón).

El perdón desde la **perspectiva psicológica** se reduce a un proceso interior (privado) se ve como un bien para el ofendido, se busca como sanación del ofendido. Desde esta perspectiva no hace falta el arrepentimiento del ofensor, pues el beneficiado no debe depender del otro para liberarse de esa carga, le da control y lo saca de una situación de víctima. Desde el **punto de vista teológico** el énfasis está en la salvación del ofensor con miras a la reconciliación con una dimensión comunitaria. Por tanto da unos requisitos didácticos para que ese ofensor sea reconciliado, no porque a Dios le hagan falta para perdonar, pues Dios perdona aun sin eso. Hay que distinguir entre **perdón y reconciliación**. La reconciliación es restauración de la relación. Dios me perdona, pero para yo reconciliarme con el tengo que reconocer mi falta, admitir mi culpa y pedir perdón, es la parte que me corresponde para que haya mutualidad.

Reconciliación (8:15-9:00): Encuesta muestra que reconocemos una necesidad de reconciliación entre los exiliados. ¿En que falta la reconciliación? ¿Qué nos divide y en que ya se da?

Terminado el compartir ofrecer puntos sobre de reconciliación.

- La reconciliación en el exilio es un ensayo de la reconciliación nacional, ejercicio de dialogo, tolerancia, respeto mutuo ante las diferentes opiniones, como estamos haciendo aquí. En Miami se acogen a los que fueron miembros del gobierno SIEMPRE Y CUANDO ADMITAN QUE SE EQUIVOCARON Y HAYAN CAMBIADO DE OPINION.
- La reconciliación con los cubanos de la isla es abrazar y encontrarme con aquellos de los que nos hemos distanciado (Uva de Aragón), de pueblo a pueblo.
- La reconciliación implica el poder explorar posibilidades de futuro con aquellos que hemos oprimido y nos han oprimido (Isasi-Díaz 2006).
- Teológicamente hablando, Jesús nos perdona como dice San Pablo “aun cuando éramos pecadores,” (Rm 5) en la parábola del hijo prodigo, Lucas 15, el Padre manda a preparar el banco aun sin saber si el hijo se arrepintió o no. El problema de Cuba es que la reconciliación no puede esperar a que se de la justicia,... parte del proceso de reconciliación es lograr la justicia, pero no es siempre el punto de partida. No compartimos la misma interpretación de los hechos y por tanto hay que empezar por ahí.

Oración final: Canto “Virgen Mambisa”

SESSION FOUR

Oración (7:30-7:45): 2 Cor 5: 17-22.

Introducción/Reflexión (7:45-8:15): La semana pasada quedamos compartiendo que según la encuesta, por unanimidad reconocemos que hay necesidad de reconciliación en el exilio. Nos falta comprensión de unos grupos y otros. Existen prejuicios y estereotipos, todo esto hace que no estemos de acuerdo en algunos temas referente a Cuba porque tenemos experiencias muy distintas y no hemos compartido lo suficiente como para llegar a una comprensión mutua. ¿Quisiéramos añadir algo mas para sobre la realidad de división en nuestro exilio? ¿Cómo entendemos la reconciliación? ¿Cómo lograrla?

El tema de la reconciliación tiene que enfocarse en el futuro, a pesar de las diferencias, en que aspectos podemos llegar a un consenso? Los siguientes acuerdos fueron tomados por los líderes de varias organizaciones de exilio, quisiera que ustedes los discutieran y vieran si entre nosotros puede haber un consenso al respecto.

Evaluación (8:30-9:00): Quisiera que evaluaran esta experiencia para ver en que se puede mejorar y si ustedes creen que pueda ser un instrumento válido para nuestro exilio y el futuro de Cuba. Repetimos la encuesta por si este compartir ha impactado de alguna manera nuestra opinión. (Repiten la encuesta con preguntas adicionales al final).

Evalúa del 1-5 esta experiencia (1 lo menos-5 máximo)

1. Me ayudó a mi reconciliación y sanación interior.
2. Me ayudó a comprender mejor los otros grupos de exilio
3. Me ayudó a entender mejor que significa el perdón cristiano
4. Me ayudó a avanzar en mi proceso de perdonar a personas concretas
5. Este proceso puede ayudar a la reconciliación en el exilio
6. Que tu cambiarías del proceso?
7. Que fue lo que mas te ayudó del proceso?

Celebración Final (9:00-9:15): Salimos fuera cantando “Una Luz en la Oscuridad” y ante la cruz al frente de la Iglesia quemamos los papeles de las cartas que hicimos en la sesión de ese fuego encendemos nuestras velitas y cada uno hace una petición. Terminamos rezando el Padrenuestro.

Appendix G: Pillars of Consenso Cubano

The organizations which subscribe this document have reached consensus on the following points which we believe will constitute essential pillars to underlie the processes of change--political, economic, and social--that will be necessary for Cuba's future:

1. We believe in the integrity of the Cuban nation. Cuba's future must be inclusively crafted by all Cubans, wherever they may live, sharing the same rights commensurate with the responsibilities that they are willing to assume.
2. We uphold the right of all Cubans to determine our future in full independence and sovereignty, without imposition or intrusion by any other nation. Relations between nations must be based on mutual respect, dignity and sovereignty.
3. We demand the immediate elimination of the death penalty, the unconditional release of all political prisoners, and the full respect for the fundamental rights of all Cubans. We advocate the immediate adjustment of the penal, civil, and labor codes to those principles enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and by the International Labor Organization.
4. We favor all political and economic reforms which lead to new opportunities and freedoms for Cubans and which constitute steps towards the establishment of a sustainable development model, based on democracy, the rule of law, and a productive economy framed in social justice.
5. We pursue, promote and are fully committed to a non-violent, pacted transition towards democracy, which devolves sovereignty and rights to the Cuban people. We deem it imperative to seek the start of the transition as a condition precedent to its realization. In the absence of the political will to achieve such an objective, we support other non-violent actions to which the Cuban people might resort.
6. We seek a future based on reconciliation, peace, and harmony, and reject hatred and division. We shall promote reconciliation, fraternal love, dialogue and family reunification. The dialogue we propose shall be among those Cubans who are committed to achieve a non-violent transition towards a fully democratic state, replete with civil liberties under the rule of law. To achieve this end, dialogue must be respectful, honest, critical, substantive and plural.
7. We deem it necessary to seek the truth about history, in order to not repeat it. We propose a general amnesty for all political crimes within the boundaries established by international law, and based on the establishment of a process to document the truth and the preservation of historical memory.
8. We call on all Cubans to avoid bloodshed and acts of violence, especially those directed against innocent civilians.
9. We support the fundamental right of all Cubans to freely leave and re-enter Cuba without any restriction or impediment. We advocate the elimination of all existing restrictions,

regardless of their origin, which restrict the full exercise of this right.

10. We recognize the professional and apolitical role of the armed forces as guarantors of Cuba's sovereignty and national security, subordinated to the will of the people expressed through democratically elected institutions.

11. We reject discrimination and intolerance by reason of race, gender, sexual orientation, creed, ideas, disability, political ideals, or national origin. The dignity, equality of rights and opportunities, and the full participation in society of each and every Cuban shall be exalted, constitutionally protected, and institutionally promoted.

12. We recognize the fundamental right of a person to own property. We advocate for the right of all Cubans to self-employment and to form their own enterprises.

13. We recognize that all expropriated properties present a complex ethical and pragmatic dilemma of multiple rights and claims, which involve issues of equity and justice. Notwithstanding, the specific situation of residential property and small farms require special consideration. Accordingly, we advocate the recognition and granting of clear and unhindered title to those persons who currently occupy those properties. Thus, such families and persons shall finally enjoy full, unhindered possession of those properties as capital assets, without current restrictions and without fear of eviction, claims or levies by former owners. We also advocate for the right of the former owners or their descendants to claim compensation from the state.

14. We feel fully committed to uphold the principle of universal access to healthcare and education as national priorities, and to seek to improve the quality of such services.

15. We seek and ask for international solidarity with the Cuban people in their quest for their fundamental rights. We hold multilateralism as an effective tool to promote change in Cuba. We favor all efforts by the international community to support the Cuban people and to intermeditate in the search for non-violent solutions.

16. We support the right of all Cubans to have access to the information, contacts and resources that are necessary to construct an independent civil society and to enable the Cuban people to have the resources that are necessary to enjoy a full peaceful and plural participation in civil society and in national politics. Therefore, we agree with the words of Pope John Paul II, asking for the world to open up to Cuba and for Cuba to open up to the world, as the way to end the isolation of the Cuban people.

17. We support Cuba's internal opposition in all their manifestations, as well as all Cubans who seek and promote non-violent change. We shall always promote collaboration—never foster division. Within this context, we firmly support the plurality of projects for change.

18. We fully advocate for the free expression and debate of ideas. We energetically reject any form of intolerance, intimidation and exclusionary attitudes

Appendix H: Tabulation Chart of Survey Responses - Group A

Code	Exile Year	P. C. C. P. C. E.	Before (B) After (A)	Questions (Personal Reconciliation in grey)																	Total [100]			
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		18	19	20
08-28	Sex	LITTLE	(B)	4	4	-	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	2	4	4	5	2	3	5	5	3	77
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	4	5	3	4	5	5	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	5	4	3	5	4	4	86	
10-5	1960	LITTLE	(B)	4	4	1	5	5	2	4	4	5	2	5	5	4	5	5	2	5	4	2	78	
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	4	2	1	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	1	4	5	5	82	
5-16	1962	ACTIVE	(B)	5	4	2	5	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	1	4	2	1	4	4	69	
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	4	2	3	4	4	1	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	2	4	1	2	5	4	60	
6-23	1963	ACTIVE	(B)	5	4	1	3	5	5	4	3	5	1	4	2	4	3	2	2	1	5	3	63	
	M	ACTIVE	(A)	5	5	3	2	5	5	4	3	5	2	4	2	4	3	2	2	2	5	3	68	
11-26	1967	NONE	(B)	5	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	5	3	4	5	4	4	5	2	4	5	5	84	
	M	ACTIVE	(A)	5	4	2	4	5	5	4	5	1	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	82	
3-23	1968	LITTLE	(B)	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	5	-	5	4	-	2	5	4	1	5	4	67	
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	3	5	5	3	5	2	-	2	5	1	5	3	67	
4190	1970	NONE	(B)	4	3	2	5	5	5	5	5	1	3	4	5	2	5	4	3	2	-	1	69	
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	3	2	2	4	4	3	4	4	5	1	4	5	2	4	4	3	4	3	3	66	
6-28	1980	ACTIVE	(B)	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	3	5	4	4	2	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	79	
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
7-4	1986	ACTIVE	(B)	5	5	4	5	5	1	5	1	5	4	5	4	5	2	5	1	1	5	5	74	
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	5	5	2	5	5	2	5	1	5	4	5	5	4	1	5	1	4	5	5	76	
9-1	1986	ACTIVE	(B)	4	2	1	2	4	4	5	4	5	2	4	4	2	1	4	5	2	5	5	69	
	M	ACTIVE	(A)	5	4	1	4	5	5	5	1	4	1	5	5	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	76	
08-10	1996	ACTIVE	(B)	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	2	3	3	4	4	3	5	4	4	77	
	M	ACTIVE	(A)	1	5	3	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	3	4	3	5	4	3	5	4	78	
9-5	1996	LITTLE	(B)	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	4	2	2	2	4	5	5	5	1	76	
	M	LITTLE	(A)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
4-14	1999	ACTIVE	(B)	5	1	1	5	5	1	5	4	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	75	
	F	ACTIVE	(A)	4	5	3	5	5	2	5	5	5	4	4	3	5	3	4	4	4	5	4	84	
6-13	1999	ACTIVE	(B)	4	2	3	4	4	3	1	2	4	2	4	3	2	4	4	1	4	5	3	64	
	M	ACTIVE	(A)	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	5	3	4	2	2	5	3	4	5	71	
				111	96	58	111	121	92	114	86	123	78	108	91	90	74	105	87	74	121	106	71	

P.C.C. - Participation Church in Cuba P.C.E. - Participation Church in Exile

Appendix I: Tabulation Chart of Survey Responses - Group B																									
Code	Exile Year	P. C. C.	Before (B) After (A)	Questions (Personal Reconciliation in grey)																	Total [100]				
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		18	19	20	
9-18	Sex	P. C. E.	(B)	4	5	2	1	3	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	1	2	1	5	4	1	69	
			(A)	5	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	3	2	2	3	5	5	5	1	79	
2-23	1968	LITTLE	(B)	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	1	2	2	71	
			(A)	5	5	2	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	3	5	2	2	5	3	1	3	76	
6-3	1973	ACTIVE	(B)	5	3	2	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	2	3	2	5	5	5	1	5	5	2	78	
			(A)	5	5	3	5	4	5	5	5	1	5	3	5	2	2	1	2	1	5	4	1	66	
12-12	1979	ACTIVE	(B)	5	4	2	4	2	5	3	1	5	2	2	2	3	1	4	5	1	4	4	1	60	
			(A)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
01-06	1980	ACTIVE	(B)	5	5	3	5	5	3	5	3	5	3	5	2	3	3	5	3	3	5	5	2	78	
			(A)	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	5	2	3	2	5	4	3	5	5	2	80	
2-8	1980	NONE	(B)	5	4	2	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	3	5	2	4	-	5	2	2	5	3	2	71
			(A)	5	5	2	5	2	1	4	2	5	3	5	3	4	3	4	1	3	5	4	2	68	
9-23	1980	LITTLE	(B)	5	4	1	5	5	5	5	5	-	5	5	2	4	5	4	1	5	5	5	1	77	
			(A)	5	5	2	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	5	1	3	5	5	1	81
11-23	1980	ACTIVE	(B)	5	4	1	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	2	79	
			(A)	5	5	2	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	5	4	2	83	
9-20	1993	LITTLE	(B)	5	5	3	5	5	3	4	2	5	3	4	3	1	4	5	3	3	5	5	3	76	
			(A)	5	5	2	5	5	3	5	1	5	3	4	3	1	2	4	2	3	5	5	3	71	
04-04	1998	ACTIVE	(B)	5	3	5	5	5	2	5	4	5	1	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	5	5	2	77	
			(A)	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	1	5	1	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	5	5	2	76	
05-21	1998	ACTIVE	(B)	5	2	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	1	5	4	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	86	
			(A)	5	3	4	5	5	3	5	1	5	1	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	83	
11-25	1999	LITTLE	(B)	5	3	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	88	
			(A)	5	5	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	3	5	5	5	3	5	5	88	
				114	98	63	105	105	88	110	69	114	67	99	76	83	67	95	74	69	110	102	53		

P.C.C. - Participation Church in Cuba P.C.E. - Participation Church in Exile

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