

FOCUS ON

Calle Ocho

For many of Miami's Cuban-Americans, Calle Ocho, or Southwest Eighth Street, is sacred space. In fact, it is a long thoroughfare that connects Miami in Florida's southeast corner with Tampa on the state's northwest coast. So for most of its route across Florida it is called the Tamiami Trail, and only the small portion of the street that runs through Miami's Little Havana neighborhood is referred to as Calle Ocho. But Calle Ocho is the name that locals and outsiders alike are most familiar with. In the early 1960s, the first wave of Cuban refugees came to the United States on the heels of Castro's communist revolution on the island. Some went north, to places like Union City, New Jersey, where today there is a sizable Cuban-American population. Others, however, came (or eventually relocated) to Miami. Once a predominantly Jewish neighborhood called Riverside, this neighborhood became the heart of early Cuban immigration and was renamed Little Havana. Shops along Calle Ocho reflect the Cuban origins of the residents: grocers such as Sedanos and La Roca cater to the Spanish-inspired culinary traditions of Cuba; cafés selling small

cups of strong, sweet *café Cubano* exist on every block; and famed restaurants like Versailles are social gathering points for Cuban-Americans.

Because ethnicity and its expression on the landscape are fluid and ever-changing, the landscape of Calle Ocho reflects the current demographic changes under way in Little Havana. While the neighborhood is still a Latino enclave, with a Hispanic population in excess of 95 percent, not even half of its population identified as "Cuban" in the 2000 census. More than one-quarter of Little Havana's residents are recent arrivals from Central American countries, particularly Nicaragua and Honduras, while more and more Argentineans and Colombians are arriving—like the Cubans before them—on the heels of political and economic chaos in their home countries. Today you are just as likely to see a Nicaraguan *fritanga* restaurant as a Cuban coffee shop along Calle Ocho. This has prompted some to suggest that the neighborhood's name be changed from Little Havana to The Latin Quarter.



Cultural Diffusion and Ethnicity

How do the various types of cultural diffusion—relocation, hierarchical, and contagious—help us understand the complicated geographical patterns of ethnicity? Do ethnic homelands, islands, ghettos, and neighborhoods result from different types of diffusion?

Migration and Ethnicity

Much of the ethnic pattern in many parts of the world—including North America, Australia, and virtually all urban neighborhoods on every continent—is the result of *relocation diffusion*. In fact, ethnicity is often created by the migration process itself, as people leave countries where they belonged to a nonethnic majority and become a minority in a new home. Voluntary migration has accounted for much of the ethnic diversity in the United States and Canada, while the involuntary migration of political and economic refugees has always been an important factor in ethnicity worldwide and is becoming ever more so in North America.

Chain migration may be involved in relocation diffusion. In chain migration, an individual or small group decides to migrate to a foreign country. This decision typically arises

from negative conditions in the home area, such as political persecution or lack of employment, and the perception of better conditions in the receiving country. Often ties between the sending and receiving areas are preexisting, such as those formed when military bases of receiving countries are established in sending countries. The first emigrants, or "innovators," may be natural leaders who influence others, particularly friends and relatives, to accompany them in the migration. The word spreads to nearby communities, and soon a sizable migration is under way from a fairly small district in the source country to a comparably small area or neighborhood in the destination country (Figures 5.15 and 5.16). In village after village, the first emigrants often rank high in the local social order, so that *hierarchical diffusion* also occurs. That is, the *decision* to migrate spreads by a mixture of hierarchical and contagious diffusion, whereas the actual migration itself represents relocation diffusion.

Chain migration causes the movement of people to become *channeled*, a process in which a specific source region becomes linked to a particular destination, so that neighbors in the old country became neighbors in the new country as well. This process was at work three centuries ago and still operates today. The recent mass migration of Latin Americans to the United States provides an example.