

Some aspects of urban anthropology: a case study

The word community is often heard in discussions of urban affairs. However, there is seldom any real definition of community given. Rather, it seems to be assumed that "everybody knows" what is meant by community. Furthermore, it seems to be implicit that there is some sort of cohesion involved or even created when the word community is invoked. During the course of this study it became abundantly clear that as far as Greater Miami is concerned, few people are at all clear as to what the Miami community is. Instead it became apparent that there most certainly is not just one community, and that in many respects there is no monolithic community structure to be found in any of the three major population sub-groups, the native white, the native Negro and the Cuban, which compose Greater Miami.

This study is an attempt to examine some of the dynamics of Metropolitan Miami's community social structure. For this purpose we will look at community in two different ways. First, Greater Miami will be examined from the point of view of community as a place; in other words the spatial arrangements, attempting to

point out some of the implications of those arrangements. Second, the community of Miami will be examined in terms of process, involving social system boundaries which will give quite a different picture of community than will a territorial description.

When one refers to the community of Greater Miami as a place, one is automatically setting the outer limits to coincide with Dade County. This has the effect of separating Greater Miami from the growing megalopolis-like sprawl which is rapidly becoming characteristic of the South East Florida coastline, from South Miami north to Palm Beach, and in this sense is a legitimate use of the word community. Dade County is coincident with the census bureau Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, and in 1960 was the twenty-fifth largest in the nation. The size of Dade County is 2325 square miles, of which 1372 square miles are devoted to conservation areas, Everglades Park and Bay and Ocean, leaving a total of 930 square miles available for human occupation. The inhabitable area is, then, only slightly smaller than the State of Rhode Island. Dade's population in 1960 was 935,047. Its estimated population at the present is approximately 1,250,000.

Of considerable interest regarding community as place in Metropolitan Miami are the various political-administrative-residential forms which occur. Within the boundaries of Metropolitan Miami there are 27 separate, incorporated, municipalities, or cities. These cities each have their own charter, city name, and their own elected government. Each of them provides public services, collects taxes and so on. Some are very small, and in effect function as exclusive "clubs", the corporate charter serving a primary function of "screening" residents of the municipality. Thus they are in effect nothing more than high priced, protected real estate developments. The other extreme is represented by the Cities of Miami, Miami Beach, Hialeah, Coral Gables and others. These larger units have not only city charters, elected governments, etc., but also have parallel organizations of city managers and city planners. These constitute, in effect, highly organized, modern, sophisticated approaches to city government.

In addition to these 27 municipalities, there are large unincorporated areas, part of which lie to the west and south of the major population concentrations, and which are devoted to agricultural producer in the State of Florida, a state whose principal income is derived from agriculture. However, not all the unincorporated areas are agricultural. A sizable portion of the unincorporated areas lies in the interstices of the heavily populated incorporated municipalities, adding to the metropolitan aspect of Greater Miami.

In terms of residence, the citizens of Metropolitan Miami live either in an incorporated area (a city) or in the unincorporated

area. It is important to note that the suburb as such plays little or no role in Metropolitan Miami. The reason for this probably lies in the second interesting phenomenon regarding the political-administrative organization of Metropolitan Miami.

After several years of effort, in 1956 the establishment of Dade County Metropolitan Government via a state-wide referendum became a fact. As a result the county became somewhat more independent of state control. However, more important legally and practically, was the conferring on the county of all residual powers that had not been delegated to the cities. This is one of the unique features of Metropolitan Miami, at least in contrast to most of the State of Florida, as well as to other large cities such as Nashville, Tennessee. Here we are not dealing with a central core city reaching out and "incorporating" or annexing rapidly growing suburban areas. In fact, it can be seriously questioned whether or not Metropolitan Miami has a "core" area at all, in contrast to most other large U. S. cities.

In effect, the various municipalities gave up certain of their rights to a larger "community" form of government in the interests of the creation of a greater community. As a result, Metro-Dade government has responsibility for some aspects pertaining to the already incorporated municipalities, total responsibility for the un-incorporated areas of the county (territorially much greater than the incorporated areas), plus functions which are supra-city and supra-unincorporated. In other words, it has functions for the greater community as a whole. In addition, the Metro-Dade government also has a parallel institution of county manager and county planning.

In looking at Metropolitan Miami as place, with some understanding of the above forms, there are several points of interest which should be examined. First, in spite of the attempt at the creation of a Metropolitan government, it is evident from the "push-pull" between Metro and individual city governments that there is lacking still any really clear concept pertaining to the future forms which an integrated metropolitan area might ideally take. This ties into the general lack of systematic urban theory in contemporary U. S. society, and more importantly, into an, as yet, ill-defined and non-rural value system. In this respect, Greater Miami is probably not much different than any other U. S. major metropolitan area.

These pioneering efforts, however, have a direct consequence on the living patterns of the population of the city. It appears that the majority of Miami's citizens do not understand nor have much knowledge about the issues at stake in the building of the future metropolis; more importantly, large segments of the population seem unable to deal with the multiplicity of lines of author-

ity and/or agencies in their daily lives. This becomes an important factor in successful urban living in contrast to that of rural life. An urban setting requires that all inhabitants, individuals and families, base the survival on interaction with other people and social institutions. The days of falling back on "mother nature" are long gone. Successful participation in an urban setting requires considerable amounts of education for all inhabitants, coupled with large doses of social sophistication.

At the present time, living patterns in Greater Miami in terms of geographical residence and those activities concerned with family or household living, including to some extent, recreation, tend to be highly local. It might be described as neighborhood living. Several factors are involved here which still require considerable clarification for greater understanding. Some of those factors are: the relative newness of Miami which, it is said, has not yet allowed for the development of loyalties to a larger unit. (An expectation of such a development may be only a reflection of previous rural values. Such a development may indeed never take place in the urban setting due to a pattern of constant residential mobility). What may be much more important here is the linkage between residential area and social status.

There are two other important factors contributing to the neighborhood aspect. One is the residual of legal segregation in residential patterns. (Enforced residential segregation in the metropolitan area ended only in the 1940's). The other is a more recent phenomenon — that of large scale real state developments, including the construction of shopping centers, both small and large, which seem to tend to concentrate considerable activity into smaller geographic units than ever before. This is a phenomenon which also tends to weaken "core" areas, at least as far as living patterns in contrast to work patterns are concerned. Zoning regulation are another facet which require study for their impact on who lives and works where.

There are many other facets of community as place which could be examined which might be profitable for those interested in engineering/planning. However, it is probably more enlightening for a beginning understanding of the whole community to attempt to examine it from the point of view of process, involving social structure and cultural behavior⁽¹⁾.

In discussing *Metropolis and Social Class*, Arensberg and Kimball⁽²⁾ point out that class and urban theory "will be examined as complementary". Furthermore, they state:

... the conception of social classes as a vertical arrangement of subcultural systems must in the future take account of the parallel of public and private social groupings, each with its own cultural

identities and its own logic. Only if we recognize this basic structural dichotomy can we handle analytically the institutional culture of large organizations and professionally trained and oriented workers on the one hand, and the culture of the personal world exemplified in kinship and peer group on the other. The degree to which these two cultural systems are interconnected provides a fascinating problem for future researchers.

Contemporary Metropolitan Miami-Dade offers an interesting case study when looked at from this point of view. The population consists of three major groups, usually referred to as ethnic or racial groups: the native white, the native Negro and the Cuban. It is said that the Cubans compose approximately one quarter the population; Negroes, one quarter, and whites the remainder. (In general, statistical material in this respect is somewhat shaky.) For social and cultural analysis these three groups can be better understood as sub-cultures or social classes rather than ethnic groups which places the emphasis primarily on race or nationality, instead of on internal organization and variation in life ways.

One principal diagnostic feature distinguishing between the three sub-cultures revolves around kinship patterns. Each sub-culture exhibits a basically different form of family and household organization. This form is one of the primary factors permitting individuals to relate with different degrees of success to the institutional culture of the large organizations, of industry, trade, services and government.

The "native white" is characterized by the isolated nuclear family composed of father, mother and children, forming a household. The majority of society's institutions are to a very great extent tailored to this kinship type. In fact, the single person, whether male or female, is to a large penalized by the "system" for his singleness; financially, socially, culturally and psychologically. (One of the interesting facets of Metropolitan Miami is that it has an unusually large population of single, widowed, divorced or elderly people who simply do not fit the dominant patterns for this group.) There is a fairly set sequence of roles for the married female regarding care of children, home, and pets and the family's overall social status. The schools are equipped, and carry out as a basic function, the teaching of the children regarding their respective roles when adult.

This sub-culture is also characterized by a complex series of value-belief clusterings, not all of which are internally compatible⁽³⁾. One of the more interesting incompatibilities in regard to this study is that of humanitarianism and that of racism and related group superiority. The Kerner⁽⁴⁾ report played up to considerable extent the white racism as essentially responsible for the

explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II, without pointing to the counter-currents of integration and other steps. (For a clear criticism of this point, see a recent article by J. Milton Yinger, Recent Developments in Minority and Race Relations, *The Annals*, May, 1967.)

There are many different "social strata" within the sub-culture of the native-white. These can be categorized on the basis of the usual criteria used for determining such things: education, income, occupation, family history and so on. The important thing, however, about this sub-cultural group as a whole is that regardless of the social position of any given member; access is open to participation in all aspects of the organization world of the larger society, depending upon measurable variables such as age, sex education or professional training. In no uncertain way the native-white sub-cultural group in Metropolitan Miami is "upper class" as a whole, in relation to the two other sub-cultural groups, and is therefore dominant in many respects. It could only be thus, since the larger society, its organization and values, grew out of this particular sub-culture.

In recent years Miami has witnessed the arrival of large numbers of Cuban immigrants who represent another sub-cultural group of considerable size in present day Metropolitan Miami.

The Cuban sub-cultural group presents organization characteristics, roles and values which are quite distinct from those of the "native white", but which are not incompatible with the dominant system. They are, in fact, sufficiently flexible while at the same time retaining their own identity to have permitted approximately a quarter million Cuban immigrants to adapt with an amazing degree of success to the larger societal super-structures of contemporary U. S. culture, in the short space of less than ten years.

It is often pointed out that upper and middle class Cubans have constituted the bulk of the immigrants, and this is probably true. As a major class diagnostic here, I follow Lowry Nelson⁽⁵⁾ who points out that it is attitude toward manual labor which was responsible for the basic two class system in Cuba before the Castro regime. With this criterion in mind, undoubtedly, it was upper class Cubans who until recently formed the bulk of immigrants.

One of the principal features of upper class Cubans, as it is with most such Latin American groups, is the notion of the extended family. The nuclear family, consisting of father, mother and children, is essentially a reproductive and child-rearing unit. It is embedded, however, in a series of such nuclear families, both collateral and generational, combined with sociological extensions of kinship through godparenthood. This forms the primary social unit, or extended family. Although, due to the nature of the exodus

from Cuba it is unlikely that extended families were transplanted as wholes, certainly the strength of this form of social organization has been a source of major support to Cubans in their new environment.

Two factors which were revealed during the period of this study relative to Cuban family organization are important indicators of the continuing strength of the family. One was the mention on questionnaires of fear of disintegration of family ties, a disgrace in the family or some other family tragedy. The other fact was stated negatively — that is, little interest in “community” affairs. This can be translated as interest in community as place, i. e. preoccupation with housing, sanitation, etc., but not with community as “process”, for process social and cultural, takes place within the extended family and not in the public community. Private life is kept much more separate from public life than among the native whites and takes place within a much larger group.

Roles in these families are somewhat different than those in the native white. The married male is charged with dealing with the world outside the immediate family circle. That is, he is the “breadwinner” in the same fashion as the American male. Within the home, however, he is the authoritarian father and husband, but whose social activities tend to be determined by his wife and other females of the extended family. Under the stress of transplantation, other activities have been added to his role, mainly that of helping to create further economic activities, and also apparently that of engaging in a series of politics of hopeful return to Cuba. Likewise, due to the new environment, outside employment has been added to the role of many Cuban women who otherwise would not engage in gainful work.

The extent to which values among the Cubans are essentially different from those of native whites, in features other than those relating to family, is difficult to determine. Pre-Castro Cuba was a highly developed nation presumably with value systems not too different from other developed nations. They are, and will continue to be, reinforced by the dominant value system of the new environment. The important point here is that the kinship system lent great force to the adaptation to American life at the time when the Cubans needed it. In fact continued new arrivals from Cuba each day are predicated upon the presence of family members already in the U. S.

The third sub-cultural group is that of the native Negroes. In terms of kinship two forms predominate: the independent, nuclear family of father, mother and children, and the mother-centered family. Statistics regarding the second type of family, which has created so much heat in the past three years since the publication of the Moynihan Report⁽⁹⁾, are extremely difficult to come by

and probably not too reliable. Elizabeth Herzog(?) cites U. S. census figures for 1964 showing 23% of non-white families headed by a woman, a rate which she points out has been more or less constant over a long period. The study of the Negro in Miami carried out by the *Miami Herald* recently indicated that approximately one half of the Negro families in the Central Negro District (in the City of Miami) were "fatherless families". The same survey indicates an "invisible population" of 23,000 males in Miami. School case workers indicated that approximately four out of five households visited by them are fatherless. Other informants from the Negro community indicate that this form may go as high as 80%.

Whatever the exact figures are, we are dealing with a phenomenon of human social organization which has a long history in the United States, throughout the Carribean and lowland South and Central America. It presents a familiar pattern of urban households consisting of women and children, often, but not always, three generations, that is, grandmother, mother and grandchildren. No husband-father is permanently present. Many reasons have been advanced for the existence of this family type. (I submit that this can be called and should be treated as positive form of social organization — a family type — and not a breakdown or disintegration of a previous nuclear or other type). Reasons advanced for its existence run from cultural retention from matriarchal African cultures to the impact of slavery, through the period following slavery to fear of competition with Negro men by white men in the job market, to welfare agency restrictions which force unemployed Negro men to abandon their families so that the mother with dependent children will qualify for welfare payments.

Local informants say that in Miami the reasons for this family form are almost purely economic, explaining as follows: the family is poor, and therefore as soon as male children are old enough to work they drop out of school and seek employment, using their wages to help keep their sisters in school. After a while "he is not there any longer". The family is by then composed of women and children and the males are "floating".

In relation to these female families, the *Miami Herald* survey showed that one half of the Negro women in Dade County are employed as follows:

- 39% household
- 24% service
- 15% laundries, etc.
- 5% professional, including school teachers
- 13% white collar workers
- 3% in sales where they are paid a commission.

The other half are presumably "on welfare", if they have been proven eligible for it, or have no means of support.

The degree to which this particular type of kinship system is interconnected to "the institutional culture of large organizations and professionally trained and oriented workers" is essentially nil. One half of these families are linked only to welfare programs if at all, which in turn are subject to the political and administrative vagaries of municipal, metro, state and national forms of governments. Thirty-nine percent of the other half who work as household cleaning women are linked by that tenuous thread to another kinship group, and not at all to the corporate superstructure of public life.

Income statistics show 22% of the Negro families live on less than \$2500 a year; another 28% have less than \$5000. (Only 14% earn more than \$7500.)

Statistics are not available on the degree of unemployment among Negro young men, other than indications that it is at least twice the rate as that of young white men. More important, however, than mere employment or un-employment figures concerns the place of these approximately 23,000 males vis-a-vis social structure. They are "dropped out" on two counts: out of the private world of kinship and out of the public world of institutional life. The only organizational or structural form left to them is the peer group, whose nodule points seem to revolve around street corners and pool halls. These men have no "place" in society, other than the neighborhood gangs which they form. While such gangs are structured to a considerable degree, they do not form a community since they lack members of both sexes, do not include the reproductive functions, nor the socialization of the young. Consequently, they constitute a large reservoir of tension, distrust and frustration.

Despite all indications that this family type is disfunctional for both males and females within the overall social context in which it finds itself, it continues at a fairly constant rate. The major role is that of the female, who is not only mother, but also "father"; authoritarian and disciplinarian as well as breadwinner of the family. She is the dispenser of all to her children, both boys and girls. At a somewhat later period in her life she may be taking care of grandchildren in exactly the same way.

Recently a number of authors investigating this type family, have pointed to the strength of the Negro female within this setting, suggesting that perhaps this form continues for other than economic reasons, namely because of the overall strength of the female⁽⁸⁾. Abrahams⁽⁹⁾ goes so far as to postulate a male-female dichotomy with the female the stronger. One of our informants in Miami tossed off "mother nurser - nurser controller" in the

course of a conservation. It may be in fact... that young men are put out by their mothers as they reach puberty, as Abrahams suggests rather than that they go to work to help support their sisters. At any rate, economic strength is undoubtedly on the female side, but psychological, social, cultural and sexual strengths appear to be of equal importance.

It is curious to note that in leadership studies carried out during this investigation, the same individual was named by Negroes as the principal leader of the Negro community. In each case it was a woman.

Another indication of the female role was immediately after the riots of the first week of August, 1968. At that time two citizens groups were formed, one "adult group" and one "youth group". The "leader" of the adult group was a woman. The leader of the youth group was a man about 30 years old. At a joint interview before newspaper reporters, the woman did most of the speaking, and in fact, referred to the youth group as children!

The other form of Negro family in Miami is the nuclear family, similar in form to that of the native white, often found in integrated areas of middle-price housing, as well as in other, formerly segregated areas. Numerically this family form is less than the mother-centered form. They are usually composed of Negro men who are professionals, doctors, lawyers, ministers, and a growing number of successful businessmen. They *seem* to have adopted the value system of white middle class Americans almost *in toto*. However, specific research on the status and role of the female of this group would likely turn up some interesting data as to where control lies. They belong to professional associations as well as the usual run of community associations, including home owners associations. There is some evidence even of the adoption of a form of group superiority towards other Negroes, based primarily on economic reasons. They also seem to have developed a middle class attitude of non-involvement in social movements. Members of this group seem to have considerable access to the major superstructures of the larger society, although discrimination against them on the basis of skin color does take place, both in Miami and outside it, but this is a phenomenon which is lessening. Thus, structural assimilation is taking place, based primarily on education. Whether cultural assimilation will occur remains to be seen.

In the near future in Miami, the differences in kinship patterns within the Negro sub-culture will take on real meaning in relation to the Model City program. The former "Ghetto" area of Miami has been fairly well dispersed by the engineering solution of expressways and interchanges, which caused a very pressing problem for the former residents who had to move. Presumably the Model Cities program will relieve continuing tensions among

them regarding housing and other facilities. It will be unfortunate if the Model City program does not take into account the very real differences of family forms in its planning program. It is time that value judgements such as illegitimate, broken, disintegrated and others be dropped, and the larger society learn to tolerate a different form of family organization. At the same time, provisions should be made for the large numbers of individual males who do not have a specific place in either of the two parallel social systems, public life and private kinship worlds.

In summary we have had a brief glance at Miami as community from two modes of analysis. Miami as territorial community is different in several ways from many other large urban centers. It is not a case of a "core" city reaching out and annexing suburbs or parts of the county. The tendency is for the county as Metropolitan-Dade to have responsibility for the entire area. It is also doubtful that Metropolitan Miami has a true "core" area, either for public life or private life. It is a widely dispersed, longitudinal settlement pattern. Furthermore, it does not have true suburban areas, due to the large number of incorporated municipalities. It also does not have a single "ghetto" area, since the former traditional one has been largely razed. Rather, it has eight or nine smaller such areas. Although there is some degree of concentration of businesses and other occupational activities on the part of the Cuban sub-culture, there is much less in terms of residential patterns, so that it is difficult to say there is a "Latin Quarter".

Metropolitan Miami examined as urban process in terms of social structure and cultural behavior can be viewed as being composed of three major sub-cultural groups, the native white, the native Negro and the Cuban interacting in various degrees with each other on the vertical axis of social class in relation to public life, and maintaining considerable separation in terms of private life.

There is a ranking system within each of the sub-cultures, based on the usual contemporary American criteria for ranking, such as income, education, occupation. Little attention has yet been paid to the meaning of these criteria in terms of private life social systems; that is, how are these factors used by kin groups? There is also an overall ranking system, involving the three sub-cultural groups which is based primarily on kinship forms, and the degree to which these forms permit individuals to participate in the various sectors of public life social systems. It is evident that the citizenry of Miami is gradually working toward more and more equal participation for all in the public sectors, but that there are still barriers, based on intolerance of sub-cultural forms which do not fit a "normal" pattern. Of the three sub-cultural groups, it appears that the family form of the native Negro is satisfactory in

intimate kinship terms only for females and children, and is largely dysfunctional as a basis for relating to the social structure of public life, not only for women and small children, but particularly for young men, who have no place in either of the two parallel systems.

Much more research is necessary here if anything is to be done to alleviate this situation. At the present time two alternatives present themselves, and their possibilities need to be investigated. One is to change the family organization, the other is to find ways to change the overall society, making it tolerant of social and cultural forms other than the nuclear family, and to accept variations in values and roles.

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1 Arensberg & Kimball. *Culture and Community*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965. p. 1.

2 Ibid., p. 196.

3 Williams, Robin M. Individual and Group Values. *The Annals*. May, 1967.

4 U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. *Report*. New York, Bantam Books, 1968.

5 Nelson, Lowry. *Rural Cuba*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1950. p. 159.

6 *The Nyrs Family: the case for national action*. Washington, D.C., U.S. Dept. of Labor, Office of Planning and Research, 1965.

7 Herzog, Elizabeth. Is There a 'Breakdown' of the Negro Family? *Social Work*. New York, 2: 3-10, jan. 1966.

8 Ibid.

9 Abrahams, Roger D. *Deep Down in the Jungle*. Hatboro, Pa., Folklore Associates, 1964.