

VULCANS AND JUTES: CUBAN FRATERNITIES AND THEIR DISAPPEARANCE

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ABSTRACT

Formation of gangs usually has involved two themes: lack of opportunities for youth and cultural context of youths' activities. Although practically all studies of gangs address how they form and attract new members, none have addressed how gangs disappear. Formation of Cuban youth gangs, or "fraternities" exemplifies how gangs may form and disintegrate as immigrants establish resources for channelling youth into positive roles. Cuban exiles in Miami between 1959 and 1980 experienced difficulties similar to those experienced by other immigrant groups arriving in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Family disruption, arduous work schedules, friction with neighbors of contrasting ethnicity, and struggles with a new language characterized their stresses in exile. Formation of gangs followed, as it often does, but these gangs died out by 1978. Reasons for disappearance of Vulcans and Jutes included establishment of true economic power and prosperity within the Cuban exile community and provision of productive roles for youth who otherwise would have been involved in gangs. This experience provides suggestions for addressing gang related problems in other ethnic minorities.

INTRODUCTION

During the last two centuries in the United States, young men and sometimes young women have formed groups often called gangs under various conditions and for various purposes. Formation of adult gangs may have begun as early as 1820, and that of ancillary youth gangs, usually attached to the adults' groups, began shortly thereafter (Goldstein 1991). Since late in the nineteenth century, youth gangs, either as sub-groups of adult gangs or as autonomous organizations, have received extensive sociological and criminological attention, and the analyses of gang related phenomena have focused on how young people become involved in gangs. This attention has given rise to a number of theories of gang formation and maintenance, which follow roughly the sociological theories of deviance: Strain (Cloward, Ohlin 1960; Cohen 1955), Subcultural, or Differential Association (Johnson 1979; Miller 1958; Sutherland, Cressey 1974; Voss 1963), Social Control (Elliott, Agerton, Canter 1979; Hirschi 1969; Nye 1958), Labeling (Krohn, Massey, Skinner 1987; Tannenbaum 1938), and Radical Theory (Abadinsky 1979; Meier 1976). The literature on gangs during the last century yields descriptive and empirical evidence in support of all of these theories to one degree or another, and in fact all have their uses in explaining how and why gangs form and persist.

Two consistent themes emerge from the different theories of gang formation and perpetuation. One emphasizes acute lack of opportunities for youth to participate in institutions that inculcate young people into legitimate adult roles. Theories that emphasize this theme include strain, social control, and radical theories. The other theme defines the influence of

cultural context on how gangs develop, and its theoretical correlates include the subcultural, labeling, and radical theories of gang formation. Both themes may apply in a given community's history, partially explaining why gangs form and under what conditions they are perpetuated.

This paper attempts to reverse the perspective on gang formation by asking why two particular gangs died out. Rather than pointing out a community's lack of well defined roles for youth, the case examined here shows that in circumstances where youth initially lack institutions that channel them into positive, productive adult roles, they may form gangs. Nevertheless, these circumstances may change over time; if productive roles await them when they become adults, gang members mature into former gang members (Goldstein 1991; Vigil 1988); if the community develops effective institutions that re-channel, or re-direct the adolescent energies that contribute to gang activity, gangs die out. Furthermore, whatever tendency youth may have had to form gangs will be restricted to populations that continue to lack mechanisms for tracking youth into productive roles. These complementary perspectives on the formation of youth gangs will underlie the entire narrative of this paper. The following report will also draw on the fact that no published studies have, to my or my colleagues' knowledge, ever chronicled the processes involved in the disappearance of a gang. Gangs observed in Miami during the late 1960s through the late 1970s provide examples from Miami for comparison with ethnographic and other research on gangs in the literature.

PERCEPTIONS OF GANGS

Young people between the ages of nine and nineteen often form close networks of informal relations based on friendship, common interests such as sports, music, or hobbies. This tendency is not cross-culturally universal, but rather it has occurred primarily in urban, industrial and post-industrial societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Miller (1982) attributes the emergence of gangs in part to industrial societies' division of labor in the inculcation of youth, involving family (primarily parents), formal institutions (schools and organizations), and age-peers. Boy scout troops, high school bands, baseball teams, chess clubs, and dance hall cliques all reflect some of the socially acceptable varieties of the institutional peer group. The need to belong to a group in which peers play a major role appears to be universal in industrial and post-industrial societies, but in order to receive the endorsement of parents and the rest of the community, most of these groups have the participation of parents, teachers, scoutmasters, coaches, bandmasters, and the like. Street gangs are usually dominated by peers in the total absence of supervision by parentally approved adults, and therefore they automatically attract the distrust and opprobrium of parents and other adults.

The street gang in North America has taken on many meanings, and these meanings have shifted over time. Early in this century (Furfey 1926; Thrasher 1963) gangs were associated with "mischief," but they later took on more association with conflict, including criminal activity and violence. The term "gang" is a gloss generally applied to groups of urban youths anywhere from eleven to 30 years old who form a recognizable organization for purposes including, among others, self-protection, defense of ethnic-identified territory from other ethnic groups, procurement of material goods, making of fashion statements, and using the group's resources to deal with the vicissitudes of life. School disruption, revenge killing, drug trafficking, demands for respect (and sanctions against disrespect), and community activism all have received attention in cinema, television drama, and news media as activities and themes of street gangs.

Attempts to define "gangness" tend to dwell on urban origins (Bloch, Niederhoffer 1958), youth (Kodulboy 1994), establishment of a directive hierarchy and code of conduct (Arnold 1965), marginality (Huff 1990;

Jankowski 1991; Spergel 1990), criminality (Curry, Spergel 1988; Fagan 1989), ethn homogeneity (Spergel 1990; Vigil 1988), and display of group-identified symbols (Kodulbc 1994).

The definition of a gang needs some flexibility, but also some properties that discourage over-inclusion. Stress-response may prove useful in defining gangness. For populations of adolescents and young adults who become gang members, sources of stress usually abound. First, and possibly foremost, they are culturally and often physically distinct from the surrounding population. Whether they are Hispanics living in East Los Angeles (Vigil 1988) or African Americans living in Minneapolis (Hagedorn 1988), they are sufficiently different from schoolmates and neighbors to attract routine teasing and perhaps harsh treatment on the part of their non-Hispanic or non-black peers. Second, they are often poor although this may be related primarily to recency of arrival. Third, their relationship with their families may be disrupted by factors such as differential acculturation and low wages, and fourth, their realistic assessment of what will happen to them in the future may not yield much hope. In many cases the communities that produce gangs have all of these sources of stress, and all communities that have street gangs have at least some of the sources described above.

If we view the formation of a gang as a response to some kinds of stressors specific to youth from a particular ethnic background, we begin to ask how many stressors and which kinds of stressors must be removed in order to prevent the formation of gangs or to cause them to disappear in places where they have already formed. If we minimized prejudice in the surrounding community, would that help to reduce the likelihood of gang formation? If we prevented breakup of nuclear families? In most cases, we cannot manipulate the conditions in a given community to test these kinds of hypotheses. Nevertheless, we can look retrospectively at cases of gang development or disappearance and assess what made things happen as they did. This will be the approach taken in the narrative that follows, focusing on two entities called fraternities by their participants, that arose and disappeared during the 1960s and 1970s in Miami, Florida, among the sons of recently arrived Cuban exiles.

METHODS

In the course of conducting a study of polydrug use among Cuban-Americans I established a streetside office in the upper southwest section of Miami known as Little Havana. This location, occupied between December, 1978, and September, 1980 enabled me to observe and make numerous contacts with the people who frequented a drug dealing and using zone (Wiedman, Page 1982). I also collected drug use histories on 80 Cuban polydrug users from the neighborhood. These histories provided the narratives shown later in this paper in order to describe the gangs.

The task of recruiting active drug users from a street setting demands that the investigator take time to establish a benign presence in the neighborhood. This process requires several weeks of regular appearances at key locations in the areas that have reputations for drug related activity. The investigator's eventual goal is to make an extended contact with at least one active drug user who has informal social relations with other users.

In the study's Little Havana setting, I had to "hang out" for about three months before I was able to make the first contact. From a distance, I had on one occasion observed an individual who staggered from shop to shop in a small shopping center across from one of my key observation post. Several days later, I encountered this individual in the same zone and opened a conversation with him about how he had acted "strange" on that earlier occasion. He quickly agreed that his behavior had been odd, and he admitted that he had spent the days after the incident going to each shop owner and asking forgiveness for his outrageous behavior. He explained that he had drunk a fruit drink into which someone had put some sort of drug (he was unable to identify it other than to say that it was a kind of flower). I explained to him that I was in the neighborhood to study drug use among Cubans, and he took an interest in my work, introducing me to twelve drug users in the neighborhood. In my other ethnographic studies, the first contact has not been particularly useful, but this individual not only introduced me directly to twelve drug users, but he also had been a member of a local gang, the Vulcans.

The initial breakthrough led to additional contacts and the eventual recruitment of a wide variety of drug users in Little Havana. The individuals studied there were predominantly male, as is often the case with people who use

street drugs, and they ranged in age from eleven years to 55. All participants under eighteen years old obtained verified permission from parents to take part in the study. Each participant responded to a structured interview schedule and then to an open-ended interview that was tape recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded for retrievability. The interviews contained reviews of migration history, drug use history, and general life history for each respondent, focusing on how they had become active drug users. These materials, along with two years of field notes based on observations of drug using behavior in the street setting, provided the data presented in this paper.

Although only five of the 80 interviewees recalled the Vulcans and Jutes, they each provided extensive narratives in the mode of the anthropological key informant. They also spent time with me in street settings, interacting with other former gang members and engaging in informal conversation about the gangs' activities. In some cases, I was able to talk to the participants' parents about gangs. This configuration of perspectives on gangs, although not replete with numbers of respondents, nonetheless provided a fairly broad perspective on what the Vulcans and Jutes did, who they were, and how their community reacted to their presence.

LITTLE HAVANA AND ITS ORIGINS

The neighborhood's background sets the scene for the cultural conflict that helped bring about the formation of the two gangs described here. Located on the northern edge of the prestigious Coral Gables municipality, Little Havana was settled between 1926 and 1959 by white non-Hispanic lower middle class families, predominantly from the Shenandoah valley in Virginia and Ohio. They built and occupied modest, closely spaced houses that usually mimicked the stucco Spanish colonial style of their more affluent neighbors in Coral Gables. Some remnants of that time, embodied in the continued presence of the name Shenandoah for a middle school and a Presbyterian church persist there, even though the original families have long since moved to less Hispanic surroundings.

The massive influx of Cubans that began with Fidel Castro's revolution in late 1958 and continued throughout the next three decades tended to settle in Dade County into two places, Hialeah, to the northwest of Miami

proper, and along Southwest Eighth Street in Miami. The comfortably dense spacing of houses in the latter area, and the modest costs of living there proved especially attractive to Cuban families struggling to establish a life in exile. In these relatively dense neighborhoods, children could form large groups of friends and play safely without much supervision, a very common circumstance in households where both parents often worked full time (Gonzalez, Page 1981; Page 1980, 1990). The neighborhood's layout also gave adults the opportunity to sit on front steps and greet their promenading neighbors, or to promenade themselves.

Their arrival in what is now Little Havana was not always well received, despite the Cubans' hard-working, law-abiding behavior. The cultural contrast between Cuban and Shendean ways of doing things led to friction, especially in motor traffic encounters, situations where Spanish was spoken in the presence of English speakers, cooking smells, and business transactions. As parents offended each other's sensibilities, children heard and acted on the friction in their own way, teasing, criticizing, and picking fights. Vulcans and Jutes formed as gangs at least partly in response to these kinds of stressors.

GANGS AT THE TIME OF THE STUDY

At the time of the study there was almost no evidence of gang activity, but some of the participants, especially those older than twenty but under age 30, recalled the peak popularity of two Cuban gangs, the Vulcans and the Jutes, which seemed to have disbanded at least a year before 1979, when the first interviews were elicited. Five key informants had been members or otherwise associated with three gangs, and they provided details about the activities, leadership, and criminality of the Vulcans and the Jutes during their time of greatest membership. As they presented it, people joined these gangs primarily for self-protection, amusement, and self respect.

The only mention in the *Miami Herald* of the gangs cited by study participants occurred in 1977 during the span of a week in which gang members were tried and convicted of violent crimes in association with the activities of the Vulcans (Buchanan 1977; *Herald* 1977a, 1977b). A full search of *Herald* articles between 1962 and present yielded only these three mentions, all referring to Vulcans, and all related to the same sequence of events.

The parents who talked about these

particular gangs felt that they represent another effect of the immigration process which children distanced themselves from their parents' heritage. They particularly disliked the drug using behavior of some gang members, because Cuban adults perceived marijuana smoking as something that respectable white people did not do (Page 1982, 1990).

Cuban study participants who had not joined gangs still had used drugs, but they had various reasons for not joining. In the case (shown later) of a Vulcan who dropped out of the gang, the individual did not want to jeopardize his trafficking activities by keeping company with a group under constant scrutiny by the police. In other cases, the violent activities put them off of gang membership. Different acculturation or marginalization did not help distinguish between gang joiners and non-joiners among youthful Cuban drug users. Both joiners and non-joiners tended to have predominantly Cuban friends as teenagers and they learned how to use drugs from other Cubans.

VULCANS

For reasons that have remained undocumented, the young people who formed the Vulcans in Little Havana called their group a fraternity. This apparently had its origins in the group's formation for the purpose of pooling resources to throw parties, as one informant articulated (translation):

I) And why do you think that they formed these fraternities among these boys? Do you have some idea?

R) Yes, because, well because they were friends and wanted to do things together, right? Parties, and they went always together, and they wanted...to be tough (uses English word), you understand me? The tough group, and I don't know.

I) And why do you think that they wanted to go around so much together and wanted to be like you said, so tough (also in English)?

R) Because they felt good that way...

Because they lived near the University of Miami's campus, the organizers of Vulcans may have had some familiarity with the Greek letter organizations' activities. Especially in the 1960s, these organizations would have provided models for the pooling of money for parties and the sharing of alcoholic beverages. The interviewer and respondent he

both Cubans recalling the fraternities, describe motivations for their formation (translation):

I) ...because there are people that say that the fraternities were a form of defending yourself.

R) Exactly.

I) Other people say that fraternities...like you say...that they were a way of organizing [parties]...

R) ...There were fraternities that were ...like...a club that they have in High School, so as not to say it was a fraternity, it was a club, but in reality it was a fraternity...It was a bunch of guys...they would skip...they would buy their beers, and that's the way they would entertain themselves.

The speakers allude to the defensive purpose of fraternities, but they also talk about the fraternities' strategy to be partly sanctioned by the schools.

In keeping with the bellicose, fiery connotations of their mythological namesake, Vulcans had a reputation as brawlers. One non-Vulcan who attended one of the high schools in which they operated described them this way:

The arrival of Vulcans was like the arrival of the Huns; one minute you're at a normal party, and the next minute chairs are flying through the air. They came to a quinceañera (girl's coming out party) I was at and completely broke the place up.

The choice of a name for this gang of Cuban boys cannot be clearly linked to the god of fire in Greco-Roman mythology, and could just as easily have its origins in the process for making rubber for tires. The lore of the gang did not indicate how they arrived at the name. Either source of the name would connote toughness. Although my informants could not describe the origins of the gang or its name, they had strong ideas about why Vulcans organized in Little Havana in the 1960s. They reported that the non-Hispanic boys picked on Cuban boys mercilessly if they did not have gang affiliation.

Informants offered various explanations for how and why a boy came to join Vulcans. First, a non-Vulcan who used street drugs since early adolescence, explains why he did not join the Vulcans (translation):

But that...It was bad to be in that, because they

had [matching] pullovers and ...Then the police would see you and would grab you right away ...No... because they killed so-and-so and they were dressed in white and it said Vulcans on the back...So they went looking for you and there were even fights here, riots and it was said...this name...this Vulcans or Jutes or whatever...then they would look for those people...And for people that dressed alike; that way they had them marked, and they gave them numbers. And they would say it was 7, it was 13, it was 12...

I) Did they ever question you about the fraternities?...Some policeman said, "I know that you know something about the fraternities; talk to me about that."

R) No, never. But always I would be hanging with a group of them and [the police] would stop them and would make them get in the police car, and they couldn't do anything to me because I didn't have a pull-over or...I hung with them, nothing more, but they were all dressed in the same pull-over and all, so [the police] hassled those people.

I) Why didn't you join one of [the fraternities]?

R) Because they were between drugs and that, and brawls, and I never was into any of that.

The wearing of the Vulcan equivalent of "colors" (Kodulboy 1994) came to invite trouble with the police, especially as the Vulcans developed their reputation for violence and criminality. Another informant who joined Vulcans commented on his entry and exit:

I) Was this in New Jersey, when you were little and belonged to a fraternity?

R) No, here in Miami.

I) That was here? What was the name of it?

R) Vulcans.

I) Oh, the Vulcans, you are another Vulcan? Some other Vulcans have done the interview...but you were pretty young.

R) Yeah, I was.

I) Were you like a *Mascota* or something, or...?

R) No, no...I got in in paddling, you know, I was the one who used to give the paddles...

I) And...that was about until you were 14?

R) Yeah, I got in when I was in...14, 13, around that age, around 15...maybe 15, 14...I really don't know. Then...because then it got worse, you know, it got like...shooting....

I) Más bravo, yeah.

R) So I decided to stay by myself.

This segment alludes to another cultural element that links the Vulcans with the college

fraternity concept, initiation by paddling. As the Vulcans' violent activities escalated, this person dropped out, but he continued to use drugs for the next four years until the time of the interview in mid-1980.

Another informant describes the presence of Vulcans in his junior high school:

R) Well, we had a...in school everybody had to respect [Vulcans], or you would get in a fight...we all got in a fight. And besides that, weekends and stuff, you know, like we used to chip in money every time that we had a meeting or something like that...we'd buy some beer and sandwiches and go party to the beach and all this. That's what it was like. A lot of times we had fights with other fraternities and stuff.

I) How do those usually start?

R) Start?

I) One of your members got jumped by another fraternity?

R) Right...or we asked them to play football with us or something and after the game...

Vulcans commanded respect in school, provided resources for parties, and in some cases looked for excuses to get into fights, even with other Cuban fraternities. Use of illegal drugs received attention in the elicited narratives about Vulcans, but it appeared not to have as much importance to the participants as the other aspects of gang life. In fact, the key informants reported that they had learned to use marijuana outside of the fraternity context. They did, however, report extensive use of marijuana and inhalants within the fraternities.

Vulcans also had Cuban female associates, young women described variously as "nice girls" and "not decent type girls" who participated in the group's parties and hung around gatherings of Vulcans. The party girls were considered good company when the group was in a mode of celebration and revelry, but they did not participate in fights or drug trade. They otherwise did not belong to Vulcans and did not go through initiations. The key informants also noted that these girls were not considered eligible for lasting or significant relationships. "Decent type girls' " parents did not permit them to be alone with any boy, and the issue of the chaperoned date remained significant among Cuban young people in negotiating with parents for freedoms throughout the time of the study. Informal interviews with some of these girls revealed that their families

did not have adequate resources for supervision after school. The household had only a grandmother in charge of supervision, or an older child was left in charge. In these situations, there was little to prevent a young girl from consorting with Vulcans if she chose to do so.

The three *Herald* articles cited earlier provide some perspective on the Vulcans' involvement in serious crime. In that particular sequence of events, a reputed gang leader received a sentence of 60 years for attempted murder of two police officers after attempting to evade their pursuit of the vehicle in which he was riding and shooting at them from the window of that car. Twenty-five gang members who attended the trial began a riot when the judge read the sentence, and another gang member received a six-month jail sentence for contempt of court because of his actions in the riot (Buchanan 1977; *Herald* 1977a, 1977b). The Buchanan article also mentions that the original defendant had already begun serving a fifteen-year narcotics charge. The defendant in the contempt case said in a statement that he apologized to the court and its officers, but he was angry because of the heavy sentence "imposed on a friend 'who had stood up for me since grade school'" and "a reaction to his father having been a political prisoner for ten years" (*Herald* 1977b).

The content of the articles provides evidence of the Vulcans' violent behavior, and it alludes to their involvement in drug trafficking. In addition, however, the last (*Herald* 1977b) article mentions a factor that had special importance for Cuban boys growing up in Little Havana. Many of them for various reasons had not much contact with their fathers, who may have still been in Cuba in prison or by political choice, or who may have been absent or killed in the revolution (Page 1990). The absence of a close male role model supervising the boy's behavior may have made gang membership especially important to this particular young man in a life circumstance similar to most of my younger informants in the Cuban study.

The field notes and interview materials from the era of the study do not contain any direct descriptions of Vulcans' organizational hierarchy. In comparison with highly structured gangs, such as the Bloods of Los Angeles or the Black Gangster Disciple Nation of Chicago, descriptions of Vulcans seem egalitarian. Only one of the informants mentioned a slate of officers, and that was for another

Cuban gang, the Hawks.

JUTES AND OTHERS

Some confusion remains regarding the name of this particular gang, because different sources have rendered it Jutes, Utes, or Yutes. The former two choices would offer some explanation of the name through their connection with fierce fighting tribes in western Denmark. Another etymological clue may lie in the properties of the tough, rope-making fiber called jute.

Only one of the participants in the Little Havana study had been a member of this Cuban fraternity that became inactive by 1978. Jutes primarily operated outside of Vulcans territory, west of Le Jeune Road and in Hialeah. As did Vulcans, Jutes had a reputation for brawling. They also became involved with drugs and other criminal behavior. The key informant, who was initiated in 1970, reported that his initiation involved committing a theft in order to bond him with other members. The initiation ceremony featured paddling.

Additional Cuban fraternities that were active at the time of Vulcans and Jutes included the Aztecs and the Hawks. One informant reported a brief affiliation with the Hawks and close association with the president of the organization, but as this was at the end of his gang career, he gave no details on the hierarchy of Hawks, as he had been sworn to secrecy. All of these organizations shared several characteristics:

- 1 They formed in the early 1960s.
- 2 They consisted almost exclusively of Cuban members.
- 3 Their members pooled resources for parties and called themselves fraternities.
- 4 They had reputations for brawling that escalated to gunplay by the early 1970s.
- 5 They wore characteristic clothing, pullovers or tee shirts with group insignia.
- 6 They had an officer structure of organization, but members' descriptions made them seem egalitarian.
- 7 They had escalating involvement in drug use and other forms of criminality.
- 8 They all disappeared by 1978.

The fraternities' operative characteristics apparently sprang from similar circumstances of exile. Parents of the young men who joined fraternities found themselves in working class or lower middle class statuses

subsequent to leaving what in many cases had been higher statuses in Cuba before exile. They settled in acceptable but low-cost housing and set about trying to recover some of their lost social and economic wherewithal (Gonzalez, Page 1981; Page 1980). Inability to supervise children led to formation of intense social links among the exiles' offspring between the time school let out and the time work ended. The children themselves sought their own means to deal with the interethnic tension they experienced in the schools and on the streets in the form of peer groups. Just at the time these groups were forming, a major wave of opinion and behavior change (Hunt, Chambers 1976) regarding illegal drugs took place in Miami, and the rest of the United States (Page 1990), leading to greater use of illegal drugs among youth.

Of course, the situations that led to weak or non-existent supervision and involvement with fraternities varied considerably from Vulcan to Vulcan, Jute to Jute. The rigors of exile left some families attenuated, with either father or mother, or both absent (Page 1990). Some families broke up subsequent to exile, and some experienced ongoing uncertainty because of economic vicissitudes in Miami. Still, the process of joining a fraternity had a general shape, motivated by a sense of threat, need to belong socially, and economic uncertainty.

WHY EXTINCTION?

Although some literature addresses Hispanic variants of the gang phenomenon (Vigil 1988), and many authors have offered theories on how gangs form, nearly nothing has been written on how gangs decline. In the case of the Cuban fraternities, they had disappeared by the time of my investigation, and examination of the social and economic processes that took place during that period affords some clues to explain their disappearance.

The major processes that transformed Miami's Cuban community in the early 1960s into the city's dominant social and economic force by the 1970s are well known (Casal, Hernández 1975; Clark 1980). Cuban exiles had made the most of their Hispanicity in establishing businesses that reached toward willing Latin American markets and met the growing needs of their own sizeable community. Schools that they had transplanted from Cuba were educating their children, and health maintenance organizations were taking care of their

ill. Essentially, to be Cuban in Miami in 1975 constituted an advantage, not a disadvantage.

This circumstance had a clear, direct impact on gang membership during the early 1970s. One former Vulcan member, despite his dropping out of school, moved into the following situation:

I) You say that you started working at age 16 or 17, a year before you would have graduated from high school?

R) Yeah.

I) ...Was it that you were earning so well in the job that...

R) Yeah...and I got married right around there, dropped out of school, and as soon as I got married I got that job. I was sixteen years old, or seventeen, making a \$280 [weekly] wage. I didn't go back to school.

At that time, college graduates could count themselves fortunate to earn \$200 a week to start. A young man with his apparent prospects in Little Havana had reason for optimism, and little need to resort to the gang for social or economic support.

Another former member of Vulcans took a completely different path, becoming a street level marijuana dealer and never holding a wage earning job:

I) And how have you survived since then?

R) I don't know, making business in the street, you know.

I) Business in the street?

R) Selling nickel bags.

Little Havana's expanding early 1970s economy was able to accommodate this individual as well as his job holding former associate, even though he chose continued criminality instead of wage earning. In order to do so, however, he had to leave the highly visible gang setting and become more covert in his activities.

As circumstances developed in Little Havana and Hialeah, gangs became irrelevant and unnecessary. Uncertainties became less important when Cuban exiles achieved increasing numbers within their home neighborhoods (they are currently the plurality among Dade ethnicities by a considerable margin) and their economic power increased. The development of a strong Cuban community did not completely erase the social problems associated with exile, but they reduced the

numbers of people facing them so that they were no longer a critical mass of youth between 13 and 27 who needed gang membership to adapt to difficult or oppressive situations. The "carrying capacity" of the Cuban community Dade County received a further test in the arrival of 123,000 lower class Cubans during the Mariel Boatlift between May and September of 1980. After an initial period of high crime attributable to the prisoner populations included in the boatlift, the community absorbed most of these new entrants over the next few years, regardless of the site of their original settlement.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS BRIEF CHRONICLE

The Cubans in Miami have had several advantages in their erasure of conditions that produce gangs:

- 1 The dominant racial phenotype was indistinguishable from Euro-American, especially in the first waves of the exodus from Cuba (Portes, Clark, Bach 1977). This helped them to avoid racial prejudice in a Southern city while they were establishing themselves.
- 2 The immigrant population had a relatively high level of education upon arrival, and high levels of economic achievement in their backgrounds.
- 3 The United States government made concerted and well funded efforts to assure adjustment to life in Miami, including re-certification for professional credentials, minority business initiatives, and interim welfare programs to smooth the process.
- 4 The fact of settling in an area with strong potential in tourism and international commerce, especially commerce emanating from a region whose people shared Spanish language and much cultural background with Cubans.

These advantages stand in sharp contrast to the conditions in which gangs have assumed a multi-generational, institutional status. Typically they have the opposite conditions in three of the four areas:

- 1 Dominant racial phenotypes in many gangs correspond with those of minorities that have long backgrounds of discrimination against them.
- 2 Historically low levels of education and achievement reside in the gangs' home neighborhoods, and residents flee ethnic neighborhoods once they have achieved both.

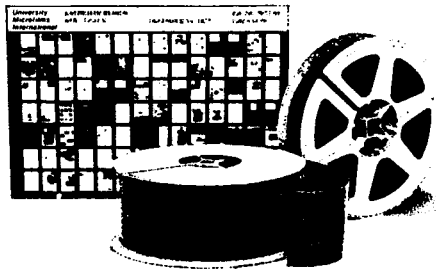
- 3 Although governmental support has sometimes been massive, it has tended to be short-sighted and administered in ways that cannot foster growth in communities with no base of capacitated population.
- 4 In no case are the surrounding ethnic communities so poor in their prospects that they cannot grow economically (Hagedorn 1988). The obvious unfairness of this circumstance exacerbates the antagonism between gang members and the "establishment."

The extinction of the Cuban fraternities points out only that the solutions to the problem of intransigent gang-based antisocial activity are far from easy. They require that we overcome racial prejudice and interethnic conflict. They demand that we make every effort to educate and capacitate members of disadvantaged communities. They suggest that we rethink the ways that we provide governmental assistance to populations in need. Finally, they dictate that we closely evaluate the developmental potential of all communities, regardless of their present state.

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