THE ROLE OF FRIENDS NEIGHBORHOOD GUILD IN HELPING IN-MIGRANT PUERTO RICANS ADJUST IN A NEW COMMUNITY, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA OCTOBER, 1949 TO OCTOBER, 1951

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JUNE 1952
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Through all recorded history, men have dreamed of a world in which there would be both complete equality of opportunity for all and perfect fraternity of all."¹ Yet such a world is still a Utopia, a world that exists only in the minds of those who close their eyes to facts and refuse to face reality.

The one universal characteristic of mankind is variability. Social organization form such differences as those of race, religion, and nationality, and the awareness of differences is lifted from an individual to a group concept. Each group tends to develop a "we-group" or "in-group" feeling with an attitude of superiority as to its own cultural pattern and a feeling of antagonism toward that of the "they" or "out-group". It perpetuates its own folkways, exalts its own culture, fosters its own self-glorification, and seeks to transmit this same attitude to its children. Thus, the superiority of the in-group and the evaluation of all other groups by reference only to the culture pattern of one's own group is found the basis of differentiation between dominant and minority groups.

The problem of minorities is as old as civilization and as universal as the social organization of mankind. It is neither new nor is it peculiarly American. It exists in every nation to the extent that any group is consciously aware of a feeling of difference between itself and the

majority or dominant group. In the United States, with approximately fourteen per cent of its population of a different race and with more than thirty per cent of its people foreign born or first generation, minorities are based on difference of race, nationality, politics, religion and economics. The problem is not that of seeking to establish a common mold for all, even if this were possible, but rather that of finding more effective ways in which each variant may be increasingly aware of its integral relationship to the composite pattern of American life.

The task of meeting the problem will be long. Only by continuous, thoughtful, cooperative planning and by the earnest and consistent effort of all agencies, will mutual appreciation and human understanding characterize the attitude of all Americans and truly create a great nation.

Significance of the Study

To America - which represents a land of hope and opportunity, today as yesterday, there have arrived and are arriving immigrants and migrants who are seeking a better way of life. While there are similarities in the adjustments of these new nationality, religious and racial groups, we must be cognizant of some of the basic differences in their reasons for settling in continental United States from the older periods of migration.

Large numbers of these migrants have come to Philadelphia. The displaced person came primarily because of the conditions that were the outcome of World War II; the Puerto Ricans as contract laborers expecting to return to Puerto Rico and the southern Negro and white as individuals, basically, to find better job opportunities.

Friends Neighborhood Guild, a social settlement located in a blighted
area in Philadelphia, is populated by many racial, religious and nationality groups. It is in this community that many of these newcomers are striving to settle. It is to Friends Neighborhood Guild that many of these people have turned for alleviation of many of the problems that confront them.

The Puerto Rican posed a special kind of problem because of his citizenship status. His cultural background was also different from that found among continental Americans. In Puerto Rico, living to him was cheap and settling in the United States, he was not prepared to compete in the business and industrial world. Many of them lived at a mere subsistence level; they did not know the language, nor American customs; their educational qualifications were at a minimum, and they had to accept low paying jobs or had to live on funds from their friends, relatives or on what assistance might be offered them through some of the neighborhood organizations.

In 1948, the Puerto Ricans began to filter into the area and began their colony. As their numbers grew, Negroes with increased incomes began a slow movement in small numbers out of the area. The preceding statements have indicated a state of constant ethnical flux, and new services had to be developed to meet new needs.  

Because of the many problems these new Americans were facing and the services that were needed, the writer was interested in knowing the

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role that was played by Friends Neighborhood Guild in helping these people to meet many of their needs which in turn enabled them to make an adjustment in this community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to show the methods employed in helping the Puerto Ricans adjust in the new community in which they lived. The writer purported to show how community organization services were utilized in contacting community resources for aiding the Puerto Ricans and for the use of stimulating social action; how counseling and referral services such as those resulting from relief problems, employment and health were employed to help individuals meet many of their needs; how the group work and recreation programs were used in providing this selected group an opportunity to develop a greater sense of self-direction in agency program which would provide ultimately for decision making and integration into other groups within the agency and the community.

Method of Procedure

The procedure for collecting material used for the study was as follows:

1. Personal interviews with the executive director of Friends Neighborhood Guild, supervisors and workers of the agency directly responsible for the Puerto Rican group during the process of its orientation.

2. Examination of group and case work records from agency files of material in relation to problems faced by Puerto Ricans and role of agency in meeting them. Illustrations were used where necessary.

3. The reading of material pertinent to the subject from books,
papers and periodicals.

Scope and Limitations

Although other cultural groups had moved into the Settlement, the study was limited to Puerto Ricans, a small group in the agency numbering approximately two hundred. Because of the absence of some of the records, the memory of some of the staff members had to be relied upon to fill in many details.

The study was limited to the agency operation between October, 1949 to October, 1951.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Settlements

The roots of the Social Settlement are entangled in the social and political reforms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They can be traced in particular to the complex economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, changes which came too rapidly for easy adjustment by a rigid feudal society, producing tragic consequences to whole sections of the population and stimulating further change and reform.

The Industrial Revolution was essentially the development of manufacturing processes which required masses of laborers, living close together. With it came congestion, health hazards, anonymity, segregation of the poor and ignorant and unemancipated from the privileged and protected.

Behind the determination to ameliorate the sufferings of poverty-stricken people and to enlighten the ignorant and uncultured were certain ethical beliefs identical with those which fathered our democratic forms of government. They were related to the newly reawakened spirit of scientific inquiry. There was a positive quality about which stimulated the improvement of sanitary techniques, contributing skills, and the educational standards which make our metropolitan centers possible. They stimulated also a concern about social evils and a new sense of society's responsibility for the individual.¹

¹ Lorene M. Pacey, Readings ... in the Development of Settlement Work (New York, 1950), pp. 1-2.
The very name Neighborhood Guild suggests the fundamental idea which this new institution embodies; namely, that irrespective of religious belief or non-belief, all the people, men, women and children in any one street, or any small number of streets, in any working class district shall be organized into a set of ideals which are in alliance with those of other neighborhoods, to carry out, or induce others to carry out all the reforms - domestic, industrial, educational, recreational - which the social ideal demands.¹

At the outset, a true insight into the spirit and methods of the Guild will perhaps be gained most readily by noting that it is an expansion of the family idea of cooperation. In the family all ages and both sexes meet mentally and morally, and do not limit this combination of effort to the attainment of any one special object in life, such as the mere physical comfort, the health, the financial convenience, or the intellectual development of one another; but all of these aims are pursued at once and any one of them may become supreme and each member receives the kind of help adapted to his present need.

Friends Neighborhood Guild

Friends Neighborhood Guild, located at Fourth and Green Streets, is the oldest settlement in Philadelphia. It was founded by the First Day School Union of the Society of Friends in 1879. "It was called Friends Mission No. 1, and was organized to teach Bible and deportment to the

¹Ibid., p. 21.
neighbourhood." The settlement was largely operated by the members of the Green Street Meeting who built the meeting house at Fourth and Green Streets during the War of 1812.

In 1913 the Guild moved from Fairmount Avenue to its present location, the Old Green Street Meeting house. Although the Guild became a charter member of the community chest in 1922, the Friends continued to support and play an active part in the aspirations of the Guild.2

From the beginning the aims and objectives have been:

We believe that it is our duty as members of the human family to do what lies within our power for the assistance of those less fortunate than ourselves, and for society in general, and to share with others the benefit of every advantage which we enjoy, and there would seem to be a special call to all who believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, to do our Father's work among our brethren.3

The purposes and program were much the same as those of the settlement movement when it began 1884. The philosophy of Social Settlement is virtually at one with the testimony of the Religious Society of Friends. Jane Adams said Social Settlement was born of "passion to understand and a desire to reform", in a belief that "the social and economic problems are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city" can be solved through the spiritual, cultural and economic sharing of "the

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2Ibid., p. 6.

over-accumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other".  

From the beginning the Guild offered services to all of the people in the neighborhood. In the beginning there was the first day school for children, a department for older and younger boys, a department for older and younger girls, and a mothers' meeting. The community began changing and the needs were expanded. The first Well Baby Clinic was established, where twice a week a physician and nurse taught mothers how to care for their children. Today, the Guild program has expanded even more. Counseling services are offered to individuals; a Recreation - Education program for all ages; and Community Work where workers on the staff plan and coordinate the services of the community.

Problems of Adjustment of In-Migrant Puerto Ricans

At the close of World War II large numbers of Puerto Ricans, brought over to work on labor contracts, began settling in the community. As had always been the purpose of the Guild to help people make satisfactory adjustments in the community, steps were taken in order to try and understand the many problems these New Americans faced.

The problem of the Puerto Rican has often and quite aptly been explained in terms of the proverbial vicious circle. It was pointed out that the people in Puerto Rico lived on a very low income and economic level. The living standard was so low that the inhabitants could not afford adequate health measures or an adequate educational system, and had

1 Lorene M. Pacey, op. cit., p. 2.
insufficient capital to develop anything but an agricultural economy.
The people who had little or no education and people who were chronically victims of hookworm, tuberculosis or malaria, had limited ability to earn or produce.¹

With such conditions, it would appear that Puerto Rico would either lift herself by her own bootstraps, or else obtain aid from the outside. When the United States took over control in 1898, presumably she was prepared, and intended to give Puerto Rico this help. A health and sanitary campaign was launched, which in two score years reduced the mortality rate by nearly fifty per cent. Continental teachers were sent and the school system was greatly expanded. Investors from the United States poured capital into the Island in order to develop its sugar resources, thereby increasing sugar productivity and bringing higher wages to the Island's laborers.²

The response to this, however, was not quite what was expected. The higher wages did not raise the standard of living. It merely enabled the Puerto Ricans to have larger families, rather than a higher standard of living.

Because of the over-crowded conditions in Puerto Rico, that was the result of a labor shortage, Puerto Ricans began migrating to the United States in search of job opportunities. Many came as seasonal migratory laborers expecting to return to Puerto Rico. New Jersey was one of the

²Ibid., p. 101.
largest areas of Puerto Rican migratory workers in the country. After several years of working with the Puerto Ricans, the New Jersey migrant labor bureau reported that "the Puerto Ricans had been integrated successfully into the state's harvest economy".¹

Because the social life in New Jersey was very limited, many Puerto Ricans sought Philadelphia as a means of meeting their social needs. Later many of these Puerto Ricans began settling in Philadelphia and in the Guild neighborhood. The fact that they were new to the ways and language of continental America posed many problems. These problems included: (1) Language, (2) Lack of adequate training for jobs, (3) Discrimination or resentment by and from other groups, (4) Housing shortage, (5) Adjustment, including new methods of work, new methods of travel, new types of homes and change of climate, (6) Unemployment, (7) Isolation, (8) Health facilities, and (9) Lack of Organization.

The Guild, being interested in helping people find solutions to their problems, became aware of some of the needs of the Puerto Ricans. New services were extended and the Puerto Ricans were invited to utilize the services offered.

¹Ibid., p. 102.
CHAPTER III

UTILIZATION OF SERVICES

Community Organization Services

There is no finer word in the language of citizenship than "Community". The meaning which local patriotism gives to it is of enduring value, and the necessity of the small community and the larger community of national interests being joined with the inevitable international community of friendly peoples is known by all men and women of good will. A community can be as broad in its sympathies as the men and women who are its builders.¹

Because of the many problems that communities were facing, many forms of social agencies were developed in order to alleviate many of the conditions which tended to destroy sound healthy communities. Social agencies are instruments of the people to meet specific needs which arise out of social conditions. Obviously, the social agency is a non-profit institution which operates with the sanction and support of the people it serves. It meets specific, recognizable, visible needs which are agreed upon as being important for a substantial number of people.² The Guild program, therefore, was not just a list of activities designed for a specific group, but was a program designed to meet the needs of all groups that composed the community. The Guild feels that the community in which

it serves is the client, whether it is helping an individual or the community as a whole.

The Guild also served as the area office of the Philadelphia District of the Health and Welfare Council which is responsible for social planning and coordination of welfare services for the people composing this area known as the Poplar Area. The Poplar Area activities, staffed by workers from the Guild, include activities such as: the recreation workers' committee that plans and coordinates recreation services in the area; a housing committee that deals with violations of housing, fire, building and sanitation codes, conducts tenant education programs and engage in social action; a school program that's active in preventing school zoning which tends to establish segregated patterns, interested in the establishment and improvement of home and school associations.

In addition to this functional program of community organization in the entire area, the Guild operated an intensive program in the community, by helping the community develop services to meet its needs. Since the Guild community fluctuated and the activities were never static, work included: housing problems, sanitation, law enforcement, better schools and the establishment of cooperation among many different racial and cultural groups in order that they may understand and respect the contribution of each to the successful achievement of a better way of life. In this connection special consideration was given to the Puerto Ricans in their problems of adjusting to urban living. It was discovered that over 200 Puerto Rican families were living in the community and because the language and customs of continental Americans were new to them, they were experiencing many problems. A study of the Puerto Rican families was
made to determine more specifically what were these problems. This study showed that the Puerto Ricans of the community had been in this country less than three years and were young families with few children. The study also revealed that employment difficulties had created the most serious problems stemming principally from a language handicap. This proved to be serious because later discoveries proved that Puerto Ricans were being exploited in labor.

Because of the clannish nature of the Puerto Ricans and the tendency to isolate themselves from the community and its activities, many of the services the Guild offered had not reached them. It was the fall of 1948 when one of the Guild members, Mrs. Gomez, a native American and wife of a Puerto Rican, came to the agency and expressed an interest in having the services of the Guild used to help the Puerto Ricans. She explained their inability to speak English and suggested the possibility of the Guild offering them a special English class. She further explained that the children were being sent to special schools for the purpose of learning English and felt they would be interested in other Guild activities if invited to join the membership.¹ This was the first move towards working out a special program for Puerto Ricans.

Later the community worker, the counselor and Mrs. Gomez, met in a conference to make plans. Resource persons were discovered and contacts were made with many of the Puerto Ricans in order to arouse some response as to what they thought of the idea of the Puerto Ricans participating in

Guild activities. Mrs. Gomez volunteered to compose a letter to the Puerto Ricans which served as an invitation, and agreed to act as interpreter on the night they set for registration.

In the meantime, Mr. Bosworth, the director of the Guild, attended a Poplar Area meeting along with a member from the Board of Education, also interested in the situation, and decided to contact all schools and other agencies for data that would be pertinent to the situation.¹

After contacts were made with the various schools in the community and cooperation was seen as existing among the principals and other leaders, another use of community service was seen when Mr. Bosworth contacted a member from the Board of Education and made arrangements for a teacher. Meanwhile, home visits were made by the counselor and it was discovered that many of the families were living under crowded conditions with relatives and friends living with them. Although they wanted to learn to speak English, certain mores that were traditional and a carry-over from their Spanish culture, prevented their fullest participation and cooperation. In several instances it was discovered that the man would not willingly consent for his wife to leave home unescorted under any circumstances and was not willing for her to associate with others. Despite these difficulties the class was started.

In trying to help the Puerto Ricans, the Guild encountered many difficulties. Because of the language barrier, they resented the fact that they were not accepted as citizens. Because of this barrier, they

exhibited hostile feelings and a suspicious attitude towards the Guild staff. During the period of orienting them, The Guild took the responsibility of interpreting to the community its responsibility in helping the Puerto Ricans in their process of adjustment. Speeches were given at schools, legal meetings, the Department of Public Assistance and other social agencies, explaining the citizenship status of the Puerto Ricans and all of the benefits they were entitled being American citizens.

In formal conversations were held with various persons from private and public agencies and organizations to cooperate in the plan of helping the Puerto Ricans. Contacts were made with:

1. The School District of Philadelphia in order to work out a program that would be built around vocational work; the Guild recruited the classes.

2. The Police Department in order to secure at least one bi-lingual officer in the Puerto Rican vicinity and to some extent educate the police force in understanding that the Puerto Ricans did not report to a consul when they were in trouble.

3. The Philadelphia Housing Authority in order to interpret the needs and customs of the Spanish Americans as they were paying exorbitant rents and were more over-crowded than any other group.

It was felt that the key to putting all of these elements into operation was to secure a top skilled social worker, who would be an employee of the Guild and not an outsider working in the program.¹

Despite the fact that there were many services offered by the agency to the Puerto Ricans, they were not taken advantage of by this cultural group. The Cruz case changed the attitude of the Puerto Ricans toward the agency; it told a case history of the Puerto Ricans and changed many of the Latin American Association's policies that will be explained in the section on Counseling and Referral Services.1

Counseling and Referral Services

Counseling is a broad term used to describe many kinds of interviews in which one person comes to another for information about, or help in thinking through, a problem. Whether this takes a long time or short time, whether it can be dealt with simply or needs deep exploration, depends on the nature of the problem, the purpose of the interview, the auspices under which it is held, the need and wish of the person seeking help and the training of the person giving it.2

The immigrant and migrant had many immediate problems: financial assistance, housing, employment, and medical care. These must be met quickly and sometimes simultaneously.3

Basic need for security, comfort, love and self-expression exists for all individuals, but the form and method of gratification, as well as personal potentialities and limitations, differ from individual to

1Case records from the files of Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.


3Ibid., p. 38.
individual. It is an accepted truth that regardless of the setting in which men live, they differ individually in their ability to work out their problems and capacity for adjusting to the environment in which they live.

Because of the many problems that individuals in the community were facing, the idea of services to individuals by means of counseling was explored by the agency. The initial plan was developed according to the plan that was advised by Schied Linger who wrote his master’s thesis on "Case Work in a Settlement House", at the New York University School of Social Work.

The Counseling and Referral Services at the Guild were not limited to Guild membership only, but were available to all who lived within the Guild area. It was a short contact service and involved helping the client with a part of his problem, in that it helped the client to say what he wanted and then referred him to the place where help could be given. There were questions from the simplest to the most intricate when a person does not know what he wants and expresses a superficial need to a real one. The case worker who serves as counselor in this field must have a wide knowledge of resources in regard to financial help, health problems, employment, educational facilities, legal guidance and other community resources.1

The Puerto Ricans, because of cultural differences and difficulties in assimilation were hesitant in utilizing these services. Being a group

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1Interview with Mrs. Marcia Bacchus, Counselor of Referral Services (Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 13, 1952).
whose ideas, customs and traditions were still an integral part of their pattern of life; the family and the church being the ties that bound them together, they mistrusted and resisted these services. Many of their needs, however, could not be met by the church. It was to the Guild that many of them turned for individual services. It was through these individual services that the first break in their patterns of withdrawal and resistance was broken. The requests for direct relief were numerous and continuous.

The Guild did not give direct relief but helped people explore the resources that would help them. This was seen in the case of Mr. and Mrs. N who needed financial help.

Case 1

Mr. and Mrs. N, referred to the agency by the worker, stated that although father was working, they had no reasonable income. There were seven in the family; father earned thirty dollars weekly, but could not meet the needs of the family. They lived in a two room apartment, having just come from Puerto Rico. The father spoke very little English; mother spoke none, and neither did the children. The children were referred to non-English speaking class in South Philadelphia public schools but lived too far and had no carfare. Attendance was poor. They had consulted worker as to what could be done. The counselor visited the home with an interpreter and secured enough facts to refer them to the Department of Public Assistance. As a result, a supplementary check was granted in order to bring up the minimum budget for a family this size.¹

Despite the fact that the Guild had a comprehensive health program that included health education, many Puerto Ricans failed to make use of these facilities. Many, however, utilized the services of the Well Baby

¹Case record from the files of Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Clinic, but still there was a need for solutions for other health problems. Help was again given by the counselor as was seen in the case of Mrs. F.

Case 2

Mrs. F, a widow who had recently come to this country with three children, was referred to the counselor by the group worker. The children, all of school age, had been required to attend the all non-English speaking class which was quite a distance from their home. The mother complained that she could not pay the necessary carfare for the children because her budget would not allow it, which resulted in the children attending school irregularly. When counselor visited the family she discovered that problem was even more serious. The mother was diagnosed as an active case of T.B. She was to be placed in a sanitorium but was waiting for her children to be placed in an institution. Due to the overwhelming case load of the Court and the Department of Public Assistance, who both had to function in this case, months had elapsed before any help was given. The mother's condition was worse. Counselor then proceeded in contacting agencies in getting cooperation. Counselor helped both agencies in getting the children examined and the petitions that are required for cases of this type. The counselor's cooperation was accepted and resulted in the mother being placed in a sanitorium and the children placed in a Catholic Home.¹

In cases dealing with employment, most were referred to the public employment service office where there was a worker who spoke Spanish. Both men and women were referred and jobs were secured in factories, hotels and general labor jobs. In one instance, a young man who had come to this country to work on a farm, decided at the termination of his work not to return to his home. When interviewed at the private employment service office, it was discovered he had skill in baking. His father

¹Case record from the files of Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
owned a baker shop in Puerto Rico. Nothing was available at the private employment office and he was referred to the public employment office, and was appointed assistant baker in a large institution of another state and later became baker in charge.¹

Previously, as was pointed out, the Puerto Ricans were very hesitant in receiving help from social agencies and organizations, and believed that their church was their only source of help. This skeptical feeling can be found among any group with strong cultural ties and patterns. Eventually the Guild was able to break through this resistance in helping the Puerto Ricans realize that church, though their main source of inspiration, could not meet all of their needs. This was illustrated in the Cruz case.

Case 3

Cruz, a migratory laborer, had been in this country only a few months. He had previously decided on returning to Puerto Rico after the harvest season was over. He was working at odd jobs and living with relatives and friends. One night he encountered a fight and during the course of the fight his opponent was knocked to the ground; his head striking the pavement; he was unconscious. Upon arrival at the hospital he was pronounced dead. Cruz, who could speak no English at all, was taken to the police and held for questioning. Because of his language difficulty he was unable to explain what had happened and due to his financial status, was unable to secure a lawyer to defend him. The Puerto Rican people were stirred up over the case and were at a loss as to what could be done about it. The counselor at the Guild was summoned and the facts of the cases were explained to her. A lawyer was secured by the Guild and after the legal procedures, he was cleared and given enough

¹Interview with Mrs. Marcia Bacchus, Counselor of Referral Services (Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 13, 1952).
money to return to Puerto Rico.\footnote{Case record from files of Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.}

The Puerto Ricans in the community responded to this act of the Guild very favorably. It was at this time that they began utilizing the services of the agency without hesitation. They came as individuals to the Guild, seeking solutions to the many problems that confronted them in trying to adjust to urban living.

These cases demonstrate most clearly the meaning of good counseling and knowledge of community resources. It also demonstrated the "great inner strengths of the human being". Recognizing this the counselor utilized this understanding in her work with the nature of the client.

There were many difficulties encountered by the counselor in trying to reach these people. First, the Guild operated on a family basis and breakdown in ages. The Puerto Ricans moved in a family group, thereby making it difficult to interpret to them the program of the Guild. It was discovered they functioned in family groupings.

Secondly, it was difficult to interpret preventive medicine. They feared needles, inoculations, etc. This was due to the poor medical facilities in Puerto Rico. Studies show that the mortality rate of T.B. in Puerto Rico greater than any other country in the world.

Thirdly, there was the difficulty in interpreting the paying of membership. No one paid in the beginning, in that they had the understanding that the services were free. Later reports showed that one third of the Puerto Rican membership had paid out.
Finally, there was the difficulty of interpreting to the social agencies that the Puerto Ricans were American citizens, entitled to all benefits. Because of their language difficulty the workers at the agencies such as the Department of Public Assistance classified them as "foreigners". There had to be interpretation given that they were citizens as other persons migrating from other states. In light of this, more cooperation was given.¹

Through the use of individual services, the wall of resistance to some extent was broken in reaching the Puerto Ricans. The Guild, however, feels that these services should be offered on an even broader basis; that is, by continuing the services of the Well Baby Clinic, securing specialized services such as foster home placements, securing special medical care or treatment such as T. B. sanitorium, eye glasses, dental care, etc., the program of the agency will have a permanent value and will serve the people more completely.

Group Work Services

One cannot examine the life of any group without realizing its potentialities for affecting the attitudes and values of the members. Group interaction, therefore, is the social force through which individual growth and development takes place. It is also the means through which society grows and change is accomplished. While group life makes growth possible, it does not necessarily mean that any group life

¹Interview with Mrs. Marcia Bacchus, Counselor of Referral Services (Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 13, 1952).
develops a happy, well-balanced individual or a democratic society. Achievement of these ends depends upon the set of values which are the dominant ideals of the members and of the society of which they are a part.\(^1\)

Work with groups is carried on by many different auspices and for many different purposes. Social group work has been difficult to define despite many attempts at doing so. Most social agencies serving groups have two purposes in common: (1) to help individuals use groups to further their development into emotionally balanced, intellectually free and physically fit persons; (2) to help groups achieve ends desirable in an economic, political, and social democracy. Social group work, therefore, can be defined as a process and method through which group life is affected by a worker who consciously directs the interacting process toward the accomplishment of goals which in our country are conceived in a democratic frame of reference.\(^2\)

Group work, the backbone of the Guild, was work being done in order to bring people together regardless of their differences for socialization. The individual in growing up is likely to be taught either by direct or implied precept that the beliefs of his culture are "right" and that persons who hold other beliefs and standards are "wrong". His values and norms are closely bound up with his emotional ties to his parents, his entire family circle, and all the groups to which he belongs. In other


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 61.
words, his values and norms are held in place by the structure of his immediate culture.

The Puerto Rican is culturally more Spanish than American. Food, houses, music, literature, family organization, social relationships, training of children - all are predominantly Spanish. The family is closely united and to a great extent, social life is confined to the family group. Puerto Ricans cling strongly to their own traditions and customs.¹

In a cosmopolitan community as was the community of the Guild where the population was representative of many nationality groups and the way of life which they followed was quite different from the customs practiced by the Puerto Ricans, the Puerto Ricans were hesitant in utilizing the group work services offered by the agency. It was, therefore, necessary for the group workers to initiate a planned program based on assumed interests in order to discover some of the specific needs and interests of the group.

Since the Puerto Ricans were a closely knit group and participation in any type of program involved all members of the family, they found it difficult to participate as individuals in any program in which they were forced to sever their relations with members of their own group. This situation was alleviated to some extent by the fact that the Guild operated on a family basis but with a breakdown in ages. The services offered and participated in by the Puerto Ricans were: the athletic teams for teen-age boys; English classes, jointly offered by the Board of

Education with Guild facilities; adult interest groups included sewing, wood work, pottery, art, doll making and the adult social night; children's program included: a newspaper group, children's play group, music, art, pottery, and gym games.

The athletic teams were mainly basketball and baseball according to the season. The response to this activity was with much enthusiasm, the boys in the majority. This activity later developed into athletic clubs and they began branching out playing other teams in the community. The Guild took the responsibility of providing transportation and made the contacts for games with other teams in the community.

Because language was their basic problem, the English classes were in the demand during the initial stages. Later many dropped out because they opposed the policies of the Board of Education, the policy being that only English be used or spoken in the classroom. Only the more advanced continued with the classes. The classes gave occasional parties and the response to this was heavy.

The Puerto Rican social group conducted activities such as: social dancing, movies, table games, occasional singing especially around holidays, an occasional play, speakers, American folk dancing including waltzes and jitterbugging. In the beginning they were very dependent and expressed it by taking no responsibility for planning their own programs. This was left to the workers, and even after program activities were sometimes planned, they were withdrawn and hesitated to participate. The worker worked with them and later a planning committee was formed. As the responsibility of the planning committee increased and the group responsibility increased, they became less dependent; attendance also
increased.

At the close of the regular Adult program on Thursday nights, the adults would come together for what was known as the Adult Social Hour with all groups participating. In the beginning the Puerto Ricans were very withdrawn and did not participate. They were greeted, however, with such warmth by the Negro adults, that later they moved in and began participating.

The children suffered more than any of the groups. They were extremely shy and felt the pressure of being in the minority. Very few of them participated in the activities.

Like any other phase of Guild work, there were many difficulties encountered and prevented the Puerto Ricans from full participation in the group activities. First, there was the language barrier. No professional staff member spoke the language, therefore the need was met by the Puerto Rican leaders in the neighborhood; that is, the interpreting to the Puerto Ricans the services the Guild had to offer. At times it was evident that the personal needs of these leaders hindered interpretation. There was also great difficulty because of the lack of consistent confidence on the part of the Puerto Ricans in their leaders. When a leader was in favor with his people, the program would boom, but when he made a move that caused him to lose favor, interest and attendance would fall away.

Secondly, another problem encountered in working with them as a group was their lack of serious concern for the future. They resisted language classes and meetings held for the purpose of discussing problems such as health, education and employment. It was found that unless a
family was faced with an immediate problem, they responded negatively to the program when serious forms of activities were planned.

Thirdly, another problem encountered was one around the customs of family life. Adult and young adult women were not permitted to leave the home unless escorted by a male member of the family. If the male member were not interested in the activities, this limited female participation. This was found to be a blocking factor in the formation of friendship and interest groups. The women were not especially interested. There was a strong trend for Puerto Rican families to stay home on week nights. This limited married Puerto Ricans to participate only on week-ends and thus they were blocked from many of the group work services.

Finally, there was the problem of minority pressure which was difficult to measure. This was seen more in the children's group than any activity. Since the program was divided into many interest clubs and the children were in the minority, many of them ceased coming which left only a core group throughout the year. There was no evidence in the conclusion that uncomfortable feelings resulted in the decrease of attendance.¹

In light of the preceding, it can be seen that group work services, though limited, met some of the needs of the Puerto Ricans. However, the Guild recognized the limitations and the staff agreed that planning a program of permanent value to serve the people more completely was a definite need. The plan was to provide group work services on a broader basis and secure a skilled professional worker who was bilingual and who was either

¹Interview with T. Smedly Bartram, Group Worker (Friends Neighborhood Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 6, 1952).
a Spanish-American or a person who understood the problems of the Spanish-American people. The Guild would supervise this worker who would not only serve the Spanish-Americans and build a relationship with them through his knowledge and sympathy, but would work to integrate these people into the total Philadelphia community.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem of minorities is as old as civilization and as the social organization of mankind. It exists to the extent that any group is consciously aware of a feeling of difference between itself and the so-called dominant group. In America, this posed quite a problem in that more than thirty per cent of its population is foreign or first generation immigrants. Since America represented a land of hope and opportunity, many immigrants and migrants have arrived seeking a better way of life. All of these groups encountered many adjustment problems.

The Puerto Rican, migrating to this country because of the overcrowded conditions in Puerto Rico, encountered many problems of adjustment. His problem was to some extent "special" in that he was an American citizen but was not treated as one. Because of his cultural background due to his poor health facilities, lack of employment, his tendency to isolate himself and his difficulty in speaking English, the problem of trying to raise his standard of living was difficult.

It was to Friends Neighborhood Guild, a social settlement, that many turned for alleviation for many of their problems.

The role of the Guild was one of trying to help them adjust in the community. The community organization services offered an interpretation of the Puerto Rican problem to the community which stimulated social action; speeches were made at schools, legal meetings, Department of Public Assistance and other social agencies where public services were offered. The establishment of the English classes also resulted from the action
taken by the Guild in utilizing the community resources by the Puerto Ricans.

The use of counseling and referral services for helping individuals secure jobs, utilize public health facilities and improve their language handicap were seen as factors operating in trying to break down the barrier that existed in trying to reach them. The services helped individuals in solving many of their individual problems and meet their needs; also helped them to utilize the resources of the community.

By the use of group work services such as recreation and informal educational facilities, the opportunity was presented for participation in many of the activities in the community as well as Guild activities. The Puerto Ricans were able to grow and move to the extent of planning their own programs and utilizing the facilities of the community as well as the agency.

The following conclusions were drawn:

1. Despite the fact that the Puerto Ricans were American citizens, it was difficult for them to become accepted as citizens because of the language barrier. The establishment of the English classes met a real need in that most of their difficulties stemmed from the language problem.

2. The cultural pattern in reference to the status of the Puerto Rican women hindered their participation in many of the Guild activities.

3. The primary step in helping this group was the interpretation to many of the organizations and interested civic minded people in the community with respect to the problems the Puerto Ricans were facing. Special efforts were made in alerting the housing authorities, employment
agencies and sources of legal protection for the aid of the Puerto Ricans.

4. The Guild offered no direct relief. The use of referral services was seen in helping individuals solve many of their problems.

5. Successful work with individuals made it possible to provide services on a large group basis.

6. Activities such as baseball, pottery, sewing, arts and crafts served the purpose of stimulating their interests as well as bringing them together for informal recreation.

7. The Adult Planning Council gave the Puerto Ricans the opportunity to participate in the planning of their activities, thus offering them a sense of development for self-direction.

8. A need was seen for a skilled professional worker who was bilingual and a person who understood the problems of the Spanish American people as well as his own in order to help them build a better relationship with the total Philadelphia community.

9. The importance of the three basic methods in social work can be seen in the Guild's effort to help the Puerto Ricans to become adjusted in the community in which they were a part. The Guild demonstrated that through the use of community work, counseling services and group work in a team relationship, the Puerto Ricans could be effectively helped to become useful and adjusted citizens.
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