

1-1-1986

**Puerto Rican natural support systems : the feasibility of first mobilizing natural support systems to help Puerto Rican children with school problems prior to referral for special services : a case study of Holyoke, Massachusetts.**

W. Sydney Stern  
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PUERTO RICAN NATURAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The Feasibility of First Mobilizing Natural Support  
Systems To Help Puerto Rican Children With School  
Problems Prior to Referral for Special Services:  
A Case Study of Holyoke, Massachusetts

A Dissertation Presented

By

W. SYDNEY STERN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1986

School of Education

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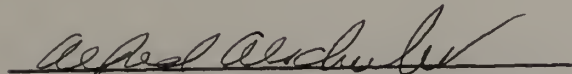
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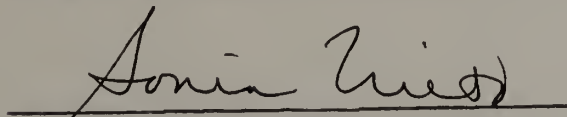
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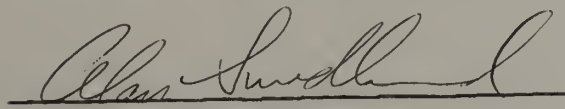
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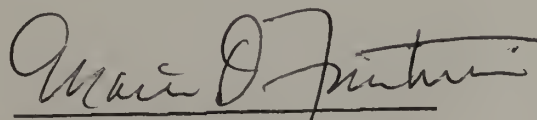
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## DEDICATION

For Larry, who has been my partner throughout this work, and whose patience has been another lesson of this dissertation;

For Sarah, our daughter, whose birth is a metaphor for the work created herein;

And for Emily, her sister, who has been a teacher for us all, as well as a child.

ABSTRACT

TITLE

MAY, 1986

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Directed by: Professor Alfred Alschuler

This dissertation is a study of Puerto Rican natural support systems and how they influence students with school performance problems.

Puerto Ricans are a people with strong links to their culture, language and history. Their own unique complement of supports includes extended family, religious groups, folk healers, merchants and social clubs. Home and community usually give the stability needed for children facing the school world. For many Puerto Rican children in the United States, these supports are fragmented by pressures of migration and acculturation, and thus do not operate effectively.

School personnel in the United States often are unaware of the important influence of traditional family and cultural values on a child. When values taught at school

differ from home values, as they often do for Puerto Rican students, conflicts for the child arise. Many of the migrant families are under such stress they cannot provide the necessary support needed to work through such conflicts. School and clinical help for such children is, in many cases, minimally effective. What might be more effective ways of helping Puerto Rican children with school problems?

Research for this project was done through literature reviews, field interviews of 15 Puerto Rican families, their children and human service professionals. The information gathered strongly suggests that a more successful approach to change for Puerto Rican children with school problems should come first from within the natural support systems rather than imposed from without. This will require a change in the way professionals perceive problems. People do not tend to think of community, family and school as one integral unit for a child. Thus solutions to problems fragment children rather than integrate them.

The seven recommendations in this dissertation focus on combining community, family and school resources in a more natural configuration. The premise is that many Puerto Rican students are faced with problems that are not academically related but whose side effects show up in deficient

performance. By working with the natural support systems, schools can focus on such underlying issues before they reach a crisis stage. This will leave the special education classrooms more time to work on actual academic difficulties.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of how Puerto Rican natural support systems, specifically those in Holyoke, Massachusetts, can and do influence Puerto Rican students with school performance problems. I first began dealing with some of those problems while working as a bilingual family therapist for a mental health clinic in Holyoke, Mass. My background in special education strongly directed my interest toward the problems of children. The research in this study combines both the fields of mental health and special education.

#### Statement of the Problem

Many Puerto Rican children have difficulty in school. Research (Hill 1975, Mercer 1972, Mass Advocacy Report 1978, Canino 1980, National Commission on Secondary Education 1984, Nieto 1985) indicates that there has been an imbalance of Puerto Rican youths in public school special needs programs and that the school drop out rate for Hispanic students is the highest of any group (National Commission on Secondary Education 1984, Nieto, 1985). Elimination of these imbalances has been a subject of concern for schools and communities.

Unfortunately, few studies have researched the effectiveness of the special education system for Puerto Rican students. There is even less information addressing the influence of a Puerto Rican child's natural support system on school performance.

This study is coming out of previous work on Hispanic natural support systems done by Delgado (1977-83), Mendoza (1980) and a number of other authors listed in Valle and Vega (1980). Much of the research on such natural support systems is unconnected. No overview has been developed which effectively links the pieces together and discusses the influence of Hispanic families and communities on educational performance. Therefore, this study will explore different areas of information which particularly affect Puerto Rican children, from historical and cultural issues to the daily experience of families in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Holyoke, with its high Puerto Rican population (estimated at 20%), is representative of many other United States industrial cites that have a history of changing ethnic populations. The factories created growth and prosperity in earlier decades but are currently in decline. This places stress on the city's economic base. Previous immigrants, mostly of white racial origin and lower



educational levels, created an ethis of hard work leading to eventual acculturations and success for their offspring.

Many of the Puerto Rican migrants are poorly educated, as were the earlier ethnic populations, but there is no longer a large demand for manual labor, and there is even less acceptance in the U.S. social system for non-white workers than for the white ethnic groups who preceded them. This implies a substantial welfare population in a city where financial resources have been weakened by loss of industrial growth.

When we include other factors with such unemployment, such as language and cultural differences, poverty and its attendant problems (health and nutritional deficits, early pregnancies, school dropout, chaotic family environments, and so on, we realize that today more children entering the schools will need special help than in the past.

This situation is not unique to Holyoke. The large but varied ethnic base, racial, cultural and language differences, the industrial decline, the increased numbers of poorly educated people many living below poverty levels, etc. are factors which can be found in other U.S. cities. For this reason, it is felt that the research, although focused in a specific city, will generate ideas that can be

generalized to other regions of the United States.

Discussion will focus on how these issues are related to the school performance of Puerto Rican children. Authors of importance in each field will be mentioned and information gathered from field interviews will be analyzed.

The work of Paulo Freire, an educational and political theorist, has been particularly influential in identifying factors of value to this dissertation. His work will be reviewed and the key factors, as they pertain to this study described in terms of the "culture of silence." This is a culture which arises as a result of the structural relations between the "dominated and the dominators." It will be argued that, first, the extreme vulnerability of certain Puerto Rican students to school failure may be predicted by assessment of culture of silence characteristics in the families, and secondly, that such families are most open to change if it comes from within the natural support system rather than imposed from without (ie: special education, welfare, truancy officer, etc.)

#### Questions to Be Addressed

In order to study the question of Puerto Rican natural support systems and how they might influence school performance, the dissertation will address the following



topics:

First, the cultural and historical context of Puerto Ricans both in Puerto Rico and in the United States will be reviewed. How the migration has affected the life styles and adaptation of Puerto Rican families and school children will be included in this discussion.

Secondly, special education services for Puerto Rican children and legislation leading up to these services will be discussed. A review will be made of the school services as they exist in the city of Holyoke, Mass.

Thirdly, the topics of support systems, natural support systems and Puerto Rican support systems will be described. The natural support system alternatives within the Puerto Rican community of Holyoke, Mass. will then be specifically identified through field interviews. This will include researching:

- what the natural support systems are
- if and how they might be mobilized to support these children
- which problems the natural support systems might handle
- whether these problems could be handled effectively enough by the natural support networks to reduce symptomatic behaviors in school

Once the research data is analyzed, recommendations will be made concerning the possibility of assessing and mobilizing the natural support networks to help children with school difficulties. These recommendations will also include how the schools can expand their actions and effectiveness in working with those children.

### Final Comment

My experience with Puerto Rican families and children has been both as a bilingual family therapist and dissertation researcher. During this time I began to understand that my work as an "outsider" to the culture had

its own intrinsic value. Many clinical methods, including the more non-traditional aspects of family therapy, were not reaching Puerto Rican families. Was there a way, I asked myself, to encourage and help Puerto Rican families to use the strengths they bring with them? If this were possible, it would be better than only developing agency programs that reach a small percent of the population. We might do this by working with and respecting deeply the natural support networks which nurture the children who study in school.

This study does not mean to suggest that Puerto Rican children who DO need special services should be denied them. It does mean that alternatives to the current system should be investigated, specifically, the use of natural support systems. The purpose of this study is to help develop less institutionalized, more effective alternatives (or supplements) to current methods of working with Puerto Rican school children and their families. These recommendations will also discuss the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies and individuals within the community.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### Comments

How do events of 100, 200 or 500 years ago make any difference in what happens right now? And anyway, "So what? Who cares?" Analyzing the importance of an event that happened a long time ago doesn't guarantee the reader will understand it.

The answer to the "so what" question lies in how historical novels do what they do. Historical novels personalize things. A good one really makes the story come alive. It tells what happened by elbowing in to a person's life and standing there while the scene pulsates around the reader. Suddenly we can understand why this event, this deed, is important, how it could affect what people would say or do for a long while after.

A dissertation is not an historical novel. However, it should bring understanding. In this study, I hope to weave theoretical perspectives into the realm of the personal. The information should be balanced between academic soundness and personal "realness."

So from here we ask--what happened in Puerto Rico? And,

of course, so what?

### Description of the Island

Puerto Rico lies in the Caribbean, a 3 1/2 hour flight direct from New York City. It has had the misfortune of being strategically located--close to the North American mainland, the Panama Canal and the 'mouth' of the Caribbean. The island has been a military stepping stone to the other islands and lands beyond.

It is a varied land, lush in some parts and dry in others. In many, many places it is mountainous. The hillsides of these mountains are often eroded by tropical storms. All this means that good, easy-to-cultivate agricultural land is going to be precious.

It also means that the coastal flat lands must house many people and many factories. Recent industrialization has changed the island, not only emotionally but physically. First it drew people away from the land they tilled, and then it consumed the land from which they came.

The current population has grown steadily and now numbers over 3,000,000. Simple division shows that each square mile would need to support approximately 857 people. However, most people do not live in the extensive

mountainous areas but have congregated in cities closer to the coast. These urban square miles support many more than that number of people. Puerto Rico is a crowded island, over 11 times more crowded than the United States (Cordasco, 1973).

Along with the "bunching up" around certain coastal areas, the decreased death rate (a drop of 62% from 1940-1958) added to the population figures. Birth rates fell only 15% in the same time period. Poverty, a long standing problem in Puerto Rico, became even more oppressive as people moved to urban settings and still could not find work. For many, although not all, the answer to the survival dilemma took the form of migration to the United States.

Traditionally the migrations, particularly after World War Two, have been identified as being caused by the push from overpopulation. This explanation is somewhat simplistic. It ignores the intense economic, social and political events which reshaped life in Puerto Rico since the United States invasion. The economic changes created a

"...marginal population while changes in production and land ownership created a surplus working class prepared to migrate wherever it was most needed within the North American capitalist orbit." (Korrol, p. 18)

In order to better understand the migration and go beyond the traditional explanations we must first explore



(although briefly) the history behind a people pushed into migration, especially a migration which produced very mixed results for those with the courage to attempt it.

### The History

Originally, Puerto Rico was inhabited by the Taino Indians. Their name for the island was Boriquen. They were reputed to be a peaceful people who placed much value on being with their families and community groups. The Tainos were no match for the well-armed Spaniards who first set foot on the island in 1493 (Columbus did that) and colonized it 15 years later (Ponce de León did that). Most of the Indians died of hunger, suicide or overwork after the island was colonized (Fernandez-Mendez, 1970).

The Spanish, as always, were looking for gold and silver, but little was to be had. However, the island's location made it an excellent military base against other European interests in the Caribbean. El Morro Fortress, built in the 1600's, still stands overlooking the cliffs at the edge of San Juan harbor--to this day an incredibly impressive structure. It can be certain that the Conquistadores themselves did not mortar these blocks. That meant native or black manpower did the job. One can only wonder at the amount of backbreaking, sweat-hole labor that must have produced such a working monument to the power of

Spain.

Spain stayed on as mistress of Puerto Rico for 400 years, influencing profoundly the language, customs, religion and self concept of the island's people. Black slaves were brought in to do work after the Indians died out. Fewer slaves were brought to Puerto Rico than to the other islands, but their lives were similarly difficult and sad. Most worked the plantation sugar fields. Freedom was granted in 1873 but many continued to live in poverty, dependent on their previous owners.

In the midst of all these difficulties, a unique culture was being built. Intermarriage, although discouraged by the Church, became more and more common, probably due in part to the island's isolation and lack of European women. Language changed, skin color changed, music, religion, family and moral values--all these were influenced by the blending, although the Spanish influence is predominant. Slowly, the 3 cultures -- Indian, Black, and Spanish -- merged into what is now known as "Puerto Rican."

The social system of that time was based on land and ownership. Rich and poor lived here with no middle class. One did not "move up," one did not stop being poor. Values were functional in this difficult, incommodious society.

Since material poverty was a "given" for most people in this basically feudal system, richness and meaning came through personal relationships. How one was treated and seen in the community, how well one played out his or her role and fulfilled duties, this was of great importance. In these areas a man or woman could earn "wealth." One's reputation was extremely important. Business was done through primary relationships--someone knew someone who could do the job.

During her reign, Spain was not particularly "nice" to the Puerto Ricans. She neglected to create a public school system. 77% of the people were illiterate. 92% of the children were not in school. The birth and death rates were those of an impoverished culture. There was an absence of sanitary and medical facilities and the political climate favored European interests (Senior, 1948). By the end of the 19th century, Puerto Ricans were ready for a change.

This change came in 1898. The Spanish-American War, partly motivated by U.S. interests in economic expansion, was won by the United States. Puerto Rico became part of the war spoils from Spain. At first, they welcomed the United States as liberator, little aware of the intense complexity which was to grow out of this relationship. They hoped that



this new leader would provide greater freedoms and less misery. But the relationship has remained one of mixed blessings and uncertain futures. To this day the continuing political controversy over Puerto Rican statehood vs. independence is a testimonial to the unresolved dilemma.

Since the mid 1800's Puerto Rico had struggled unsuccessfully and uncomfortably for freedom. Before 1898 independence was not actually achieved although 2 events were significant.

The first was a brief revolt in 1868 called the Cry of Lares (El Grito de Lares). It suffered from lack of skilled leadership in battle, too few committed people and a quick 'snuffing out' (Maldonado-Denis, 1972). The brief revolution did not have a chance to catch on but it did express the need for change.

The second event was the actual granting of autonomy to Puerto Rico, 30 years after the unsuccessful revolt. Through the astute maneuverings of politician Muñoz Rivera, Spain granted self rule to a body of elected Puerto Rican officials. A 6 month period of self government ended abruptly when the United States Navy invaded Puerto Rico in May of 1898. Spain ceded the island to the United States and new masters came to replace the old.

These events are not considered important for what they actually accomplished. Their importance is as a guide to the political pulse of Puerto Rico. Independence is a theme which does not die for Puerto Rico. But neither does the desire for it take hold. Independence is an ongoing issue in relations between Puerto Rico and the United States, a complex problem which grows more complicated as U.S. economic involvement with the island continues.

In 1900, after 2 years of military rule, a civilian government was created, though it is questionable how much "real" power was actually granted.

First, English became the required language of instruction in the schools. It has been noted that

"...Language gives a people its sense of unity and brings in its train a whole complex of elements that go into the making of a peoplehood." (Kaplan, p. 59 as quoted in Notes of Neorican Seminar) and

"U.S. educators who came to Puerto Rico at the turn of the century thought that the Spanish spoken there was not an appropriate vehicle to transmit the culture the people already had, much less the culture the educators intended to introduce." (p. 28, Interracial Books Bulletin)

These events began a history of education in Puerto Rico which has been termed a "tragicomedy" (Interracial Books Bulletin, 1983). Between 1899 and 1948 a series of

directives ultimately emanating from the white House created chaos in the Puerto Rican education system. Few people on the island, instructors included, knew how to speak English. However, in 1899, English was established as the sole medium of instruction. This was modified for a short time but only until

"...pupils and teachers can be trained sufficiently in the use of the English language to make it the official language of the school room." (Senator M. Lindsay as quoted in Interracial Books Bulletin)

Thus, until 1916, the use of Spanish in any classroom was not permitted. From 1916-1936 Spanish was reintroduced in grades one through four with fifth grade being a transitional year of half English and half Spanish. After 1936 and until 1948 when Puerto Rico elected Muñoz Marín as its own first governor educational policy around language issues was again in flux.

In 1949, with the appointment of a Commissioner of Education responsible to the governor of Puerto Rico and not the President of the United States, Spanish was instituted as the language of instruction. English was to be taught as a subject but given double period status.

For a short period (1965-8) attempts were made to "Puertoricanize" the schools, fostering a stronger Puerto Rican identity. Puerto Rican writings were introduced in

literature classes and Puerto Rican patriots given equal prominence with American Presidents. This movement was halted in 1968 with the election of a prostatehood governor, Luis Ferré. Certain texts which depicted poverty conditions and alienation were completely removed. These policies of the late 1960's are still in effect today (Interracial Books Bulletin, 1983).

Secondly, the legal status of the island has always been a controversial issue in U.S. politics. Puerto Rico was both an important military base as well as a new economic market. The island was too valuable to be given independence. Prior to the acquisition of Puerto Rico, U.S territories (such as Louisiana and Florida) were prepared and governed with statehood in mind. But Puerto Rico was considered differently.

In the Congressional Record of April 2, 1900 (p.3612), Senator Bates of Tennessee offered his opinion about the Puerto Rican population:

"Under this new order of expansion, what is to become of ... (the Philippines and) Puerto Rico? Are they to become states with representation here from those countries, from that heterogeneous mass of mongrels that make up their citizenship? That is objectionable to the people of this country, as it ought to be." (Maldonado-Denis, p.88, 1972)

It was felt strongly that the people of Puerto Rico

differed

"...radically from any other people for whom we have legislated previously," and that they had "not been prepared for any kind of experience for participation in government." (Congressional Record, March 2, 1900, p.2475, Maldonado-Denis, 1972).

At the same time the United States was very concerned over industrial expansion.<sup>1</sup> It was Senator Foraker (Ohio) who expressed these views. He was also the Senator who designed the initial structure for the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico for, supposedly, the next 17 years.

"It's main avowed intent was to provide 'temporarily' revenues and a civil government for the island, but its effects have gone far beyond those purposes...(We see that) the basic legal and economic relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico has remained unchanged since the adoption by Congress of this 'temporary' act in 1900." (Garcia-Passalacqua, p. 45)

The Foraker Act (1900-1917) did not groom Puerto Rico for statehood but established a colonial government. A congressional representative for Puerto Rico was sent to Washington but could not vote. The island's executive chief was appointed by the President of the United States. In every case until 1946 when Truman appointed a Puerto Rican governor, the political head of the island was a representative of the United States white culture, oftentimes unable to speak the Spanish language.



The Jones Act of 1917 was an attempt to redefine the existing relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. Citizen-ship was granted, a bill of rights was approved, certain Federal properties were transferred over, and an elected Legislative Assembly was provided for. In order to vote, however, a man had to be able to read and write as well as pay a contribution to the public treasury. Since almost 80% of the people were illiterate and poverty endemic, it is easy to conclude that very few Puerto Rican men showed up at the polls. More symbolic than the previous regulations is the final veto which the US Congress held over any legislation passed in Puerto Rico. Although this veto has not been exercised, Congress has chosen to maintain the veto power up to the present day.

The third important congressional redefinition of the relationship between the two peoples occurred in 1950. Public Law 600 provided for the drafting by the Puerto Rican people of a constitution of their own making. However, the old provisions of the economic relationship between the two countries would remain in effect and be known as the Federal Relations Act. The U.S. Congress rejected several of the provisions of the newly drafted constitution. It also required that any future amendments had to be compatible with the U.S. Constitution, the Federal Relations Act and Public Law 600. These revisions were accepted by the Puerto

Rican voters and the new commonwealth was inaugurated on July 25, 1952. (Garcia-Passalacqua, 1984)

### The Consequences --General

So what does all this mean? What is the connection to everyday life, especially every day life now? It is in the everyday connection that these events become "impact"-ful.

First of all, these events meant that people did not have control over what happened to them. For instance, just as the United States was entering World War I, citizenship was granted to Puerto Rico. This could be seen as a mixed blessing. As soon as citizenship was granted, Puerto Rican men became eligible for the draft. Citizenship was also seen by certain Puerto Rican politicians, as a serious counterblow to the move for independence. Many people were assuaged by the benefits of such an association and discarded an interest in independence.

On a personal level the draft meant, first, that all Puerto Rican families with young men were to be directly involved with the international politics of the United States even though Puerto Rico had no Congressional vote. Secondly, the granting of citizenship opened the floodgates to the continent--it was the beginning of the back and forth migrations which were to profoundly affect Puerto Rican life

and culture.

Another issue which intimately affected daily life was language. For 50 years Puerto Ricans could not change the fact that English was the language of education. On an individual level, this meant that everyone who wished to be educated at the upper levels (8th grade +) had to do so in a foreign language. Spanish was relegated to the status of an academic subject. Several generations of Puerto Ricans characterized this situation with the phrase, 'We are illiterate in 2 languages!'" (Senior, 1948)

One more "by-product" of the U.S. influence which affects each Puerto Rican personally has been the intensification of racial prejudice. In Puerto Rico, although people have always been aware of skin coloring, the primary source of self concept came from culture or social class (Longres, 1974). This is not so for North Americans who are much more color conscious. As the U.S. became more involved in the island's economy many Puerto Ricans found themselves blocked from social mobility through discrimination.

This blocking of social mobility is evident today. Currently, the U.S. Census marks the Puerto Ricans as being the Hispanic group with the lowest level of income and the



highest school dropout rates in the United States. This means many Puerto Ricans continue to live in poverty for longer than other groups. It means they continue to be under-educated in a society where more and more jobs call for literacy and skills. Both of these factors would maintain the widening gap between social classes even if racial discrimination were not a factor.

It is important to mention consequences caused by the economy which has been has been irrevocably changed since 1898. It has been estimated that in 1898, 93% of the land was owned and worked by Puerto Ricans (Senior, 1948). The economy was based on coffee, sugar, cotton and tobacco. In the ensuing 60 years, coffee growing was almost entirely destroyed, sugar production on large plantations owned by absentee landlords increased many hundred fold. As big firms took over agriculture the small farmers could no longer compete.

Men now had to leave their families behind, traveling on foot many miles and for many weeks to find jobs. Migrant laborers grew to be an important part of the work force. Sugar production on plantations, however, called for months of "dead" time where workers, who no longer owned their own land, went unemployed. Because not enough jobs were available, many Puerto Ricans migrated to the cities. The

industrial buildup in the cities encouraged people to leave the land and seek a livelihood in the factories. Families began to separate and cultural traditions weakened.

After World War II this became even more apparent when the airplane opened up a corridor from New York to San Juan that seemed almost irresistible. For a relatively inexpensive price, one could seek a better salary, a little adventure, an escape from personal problems. For the U.S. industrialists, this airway express seemed a creative solution to inexpensive, available labor. Many workers would come during the 'dead times' after sugar harvest and work the fields or factories on the mainland. Wages, although perhaps minimal by U.S. standards, were almost double that which most workers could earn on the island. However, migrant labor, and even migrants who remained in the United States, were targets for exploitation. A price was to be paid, the toll was taken in self concept, values, disillusionment and a lost sense of national identity.

Along with these industrial changes came the political ones. In 1948 Governor Muñoz Marín helped create a new legal status specifically for Puerto Rico. The Free Associated State, as it is named, could be called an ingenious balance of political issues. Puerto Rico was allowed certain freedoms, such as elections of their own leaders, yet was

curtailed in others. The island could not sell its products on the open market and yet had no tariffs to protect its own goods or guide its own economic growth.

When we look at the constitutional design (of 1952) we see it did not really change the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States.

"All it did was provide for a broader system of self-government on the island and add to the relationship the element of electoral consent...(However) Congress legislates for the island in a myriad of ways...A study of the island's political status undertaken in the 1960's by a joint status commission found that the number of federal agencies intervening so numerous that it published, as an addendum to its report a full inventory of federal agencies with offices in Puerto Rico." (Garcia-Passalacqua, p. 47)<sup>2</sup>

Even the impressive health and educational improvements held a mixed economic blessing. The U.S. had a "brilliant record of accomplishment in health and sanitation" (Senior, 1948) on the island. The death rate was cut in half in the first 50 years. Smallpox and yellow fever were virtually eliminated in the first year, malaria reduced, sewerage and drinking water systems were introduced and the literacy rate rose from 22% to 67%. Increases after Operation Bootstrap<sup>3</sup> began were even more dramatic. Between 1940 and 1960 life expectancy increased from 46 to 70 years. Literacy rose to 89%.

Income increased almost 600% from a 1940 per capita amount of \$120 to \$740 in 1963. Although this might be twice the average for Latin American countries (Lewis, 1965) we must consider Puerto Rico as a U.S. associate and compare such salaries to U.S. standards. It is a symbol of the ambiguous nature of the Puerto Rican status that allows research literature to make economic comparisons at times with the Latin countries and at other times with the United States.

Also, during this time, the population more than doubled. Although sanitary and educational conditions improved, overcrowding and a lack of resources for the increasing numbers caused continuing social distress. The traditional small farms which previously provided resources for families were rapidly disappearing. The economy entered into a survival-oriented dependence on American markets. This was caused by the U.S. industrial buildup of the island. This buildup destroyed most native resources that might have adapted to the sanitation improvements and population increases. Families, once uprooted from traditional homes were more likely to be encouraged to separate and move again. Migration, a phenomena which was to forever change the face of life in Puerto Rico, was held out, particularly by the North American industrialists, as the answer to Puerto Rico's problem of inadequate resources.



### The Consequences as Specifically Relate to This Study

In Holyoke today a number of those Puerto Ricans who migrated came for better medical care or because the United States social service programs are more comprehensive than those in Puerto Rico. A "revolving door" migration pattern is still evident when one looks at school records. Students jump back and forth between schools in Puerto Rico and Holyoke.

For those children in Holyoke with such family patterns, this has created discontinuity in schooling and repeated culture shock. Many Puerto Rican children are one or more grades behind their age level. It is not uncommon to find Puerto Rican teen-agers (ages 13, 14, 15) in fifth or sixth grade classrooms, many of whom have been born in Puerto Rico. Such disruption, especially if combined with a stressed family and support network, can manifest itself in school adaptation and achievement problems. Schools often only screen and remediate for academic difficulties. If they do not take in the origin of such problems, the interventions suggested may be superficial.

Language problems intimately affect the day to day life of a student in school. We have seen that completing an education in Puerto Rico was especially difficult in that



English, a foreign language, was the medium of instruction until 1948. We see the difficulty over language differences continuing today. Holyoke has a large bilingual education program. However, many people within the system (parents, teachers, children) speak only one language. Translators are often needed. Although necessary, this often diminishes rapport and understanding between parents, professionals and students. Parents cannot just "go in" to speak to the teacher, doctor, etc. In periods of crisis or problem solving, language barriers become even more of an obstacle.

Sometimes the children speak English while the parents do not. Such children are often used as translators, but this upsets traditional lines of family hierarchy and authority, detracting from already stressed parental esteem. Another school related language problem is that Spanish speaking parents have trouble helping their English speaking offspring with their all-English homework.

Language differences obstruct communication. Many of the English speaking personnel are unaware of the Puerto Rican cultural patterns. This can create severe misunderstandings between home and school even though the efforts were originally well intentioned.

The list could go on. However, it is the child who finds

him or herself caught in these unresolved issues. Language is a primary connection between people. Therefore, it is not surprising that some bilingual children face complexities in their day to day communication in school that show up as "symptoms" rather than solutions.

Racial prejudice has affected children in Holyoke also. In 1979, it was documented by the Massachusetts Department Education in Consent Decree Docket #79-001, that minority children in Holyoke were receiving an unequal education as compared to the whites in that city. Through special programs and desegregation, this is no longer true statistically. However, it takes much more than special programs to erase deeply held attitudes which can still surface in more subtle ways. This is especially true when dealing with school children who have special needs. Unless people become aware of and change these attitudes and behaviors, destructive actions may continue to occur, often under the guise of "appropriate discipline." Many Puerto Rican children will find the schools inhospitable to them and drop out. This helps continue patterns of social stagnation for Hispanics.

As also mentioned in the section on General Consequences, the economy and politics of Puerto Rico was irrevocably changed since the U.S. began its involvement in

1898. In the long run what appears to have resulted from the economic changes is the weakening of the Puerto Rican social system with minimal economic gains. We see this in Holyoke today. Many families are single parent households. The men, in a number of families, are not "fathers and husbands" but men who drift in and out of the family life. Although this is not true in many other families, it is a common enough pattern to create cause for concern. This type of behavior as a cultural pattern, as previously described, can be traced back to the breaking up of Puerto Rican family farms during the industrial takeover of agriculture on the island.

Too many of the migrants who came to Holyoke seeking better financial prospects here find themselves unemployed, underemployed, or in jobs that have no future. The great economic changes on the island seem to have left behind many Puerto Ricans. In Holyoke 59.9% live below the poverty level (LeBlanc, 1983). This means that nutritional, financial and emotional resources will be severely stressed. Support systems under such constant, grinding stress will have difficulty providing for their children, especially children who are having problems in a school systems that was created by people with a different language and from a different culture.

## CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Now that we have discussed Puerto Rican historical events and their consequences in Holyoke today, we need to explore the cultural background and issues which Puerto Ricans bring with them when they migrate to the United States.

Migrations change things. In talking of the Puerto Rican people, we say the migration changed the people, the families, their lives. But what was it that changed? What was it like before?

In all overviews, particularly cultural ones, generalities exist which cannot be made to apply to each person or family. The descriptions given are composites of an ideal which may not adhere so closely to real behaviors of specific individuals. However, these paragraphs do describe values which are still of importance when alluding to more traditional lifestyles in Puerto Rico. The reader is urged to review the following section with these thoughts in mind.

### Roles in the Nuclear Family

For the Puerto Rican individual (as well as in many other Hispanic cultures), the family is of great importance

and value to the lives of its members, as noted by a variety of authors and researchers (Levine and Padilla 1980, Mizio 1974, Rogler 1979, Rodriguez 1982, McGoldrick 1982).

Family ties were (and are still) intense. Visits between family members occur frequently. In times of crisis Puerto Ricans turn to their families. The expectation is that the family is obligated to help. Group cooperation is emphasized, not individual independence (Garcia Preto, 1982). In a culture where social reform was minimal, people learned to work together to survive.

In a traditional Puerto Rican family each member has a role and is expected to fulfill the attending duties. Standards prevail which permeate sexual and social roles during a person's entire lifetime. Ideally, a girl is expected to learn home skills, be shy, modest and remain a virgin until she is married. As she grows into adolescence, she requires protection and surveillance by her family, particularly by her father and brothers.

In the middle and upper classes a girl is protected by chaperonage. Girls from lower class families do not have the same degree of protection. They often marry young (15 is not an uncommon age) and many of these marriages are common law unions. Such consensual marriages are socially accepted



and can be equally as stable as legal ones. There are a variety of reasons as to why consensual unions are preferred. One such possibility is that such unions allow the woman to retain some measure of control over her own life. Another possible reason for some is that the costs of a marriage ceremony may be prohibitive (marriage fees, wedding gown, money for a proper celebration, etc.). They may thus decide to live together without the ritual ceremonies (Mills, 1950).

Ideally, boys are given much more personal freedom (Mills, p. 9, 1950). They are perceived as being "desinquietos" (active, restless), "atrevidos" (daring) (Rodriguez 1982) and are expected to be "macho." (male)

"Machismo is a style of personal daring ... by which one faces challenge, danger, and threat with calmness and self-possession; this sometimes takes the form of bravado. It is also a quality of personal magnetism which impresses and influences others and prompts them to follow one as a leader ... It is associated with sexual prowess, influence, and power over women reflected in a vigorous romanticism and a jealous guarding of sweetheart or wife, or in premarital and extramarital relationships." (Fitzpatrick, p.90, 1971)

Piri Thomas, in his book Down These Mean Streets gives a moving and insightful glimpse of 'machismo'.

"What's your name, kid?"

"That depends. 'Piri' when I'm smooth and 'Johnny Gringo' when stomping time's around."

"What's your name now?" he pushed.

"You name me, man," I answered, playing my role like a champ.

His boys cruised in...I stiffened and said to myself, 'Stomping time, Piri boy, go with heart'...Scared, yeah, but wooden faced to the end...For an instant I thought, 'Make a break for it down the basement steps and through the back yards--get away in one piece!' Then I thought, 'Live punk, dead hero. I'm no punk kid.' I kept on walking." (p. 56)

The rules of machismo for a man are balanced and maintained by the rules of 'marianismo' for a woman. An ideal woman, pure and virtuous, expects the man to behave in particular ways, as she in turn is expected to display certain behaviors.

"Machismo" and "marianismo" are hotly disputed complex issues in the United States today. The concepts are deeply cultural. When understood in context they are more likely meant to stress honor and strength combined with gentleness for the male, respect-fulness, warmth and loving for the female. The one balances the other and could not survive properly without its partner. However, twentieth century trends seem to have distorted these concepts into the uncomfortable extremes which many of us see today, creating caricatures of both sexes. This was most probably not the original intention of such a long standing "cultural ideal." It is with this in mind that we should assess the values which underlie such complex concepts.

The traditional husband is a patriarch. He is expected to provide for his family, make all major decisions for them, be the primary disciplinarian and ultimate authority. He is not expected to help with household chores or in raising the children. The rest of the family is expected to show deference to the father, especially when other people are around.

After marriage a woman is expected to be a faithful wife and give her husband no cause for suspicion. It is her job to care for the home, be obedient and submissive to her husband, and raise the children with much love. Hers is the role to counterbalance the stricter and more distant image of the father. She is expected to be all-suffering and all-loving, to submerge herself in her children and her family. For these sacrifices she earns the respect of her husband, neighbors and relatives.

Middle and upper class homes allow much more freedom for the women, especially if the women contributes to the family income. However,

"the women have to tread the delicate line between submission to their husbands and exercising their own initiative in running their homes and families (Cordasco, 1973, p. 63)."

It should be noted that cultural descriptions of women's

roles in Puerto Rico seem to have described a modest and retiring female population. This is a narrow view of multifaced individuals. It has been suggested that more intensive documentations of women's social and historical roles needs to be done. This information, particularly for peasant women, is in the form of oral history. Documentation does exist detailing contributions of women from the Spanish gentry who became leaders in the women's movement and the struggle for independence. (Santos-Rivera, p. 22)

For instance, in the early 1900's, Puerto Rican women from the upper and middle class began a movement for suffrage. The vote was granted in 1929 but, until their abolishment in 1936, literacy tests barred most women from voting. It has also been noted that

"...the girls and women who attend school in Puerto Rico, do better than the men...but still have not attained equality with their male counterparts...(This is probably because) effective power is still with the upper class which is both elitist and sexist." (Santos-Rivera, p. 22)

This type of written report belies the one sided nature of the printed cultural descriptions concerning the role of Puerto Rican women in society. Puerto Rican women in today's world take a much more assertive position than what the cultura stereoptype would have us believe.

However, within many traditional marriages, a lack of

communi-cation, as idealized in the United States, can exist between husband and wife. This situation may be a natural outcome of how they themselves were raised (Cordasco 1973, Garcia-Preto 1982). Boys and girls have been kept separate, socializing mainly with their own sex and sharing no common activities:

"...in very traditional families (roles are clear so) there is no need for communication between them...When decisions have to be made the husband dictates and the wife submits."  
(Mintz in Cordasco, 1973).

Having children and establishing a family is seen as a major goal in Puerto Rican life (Mills, 1950). Children are highly valued and well loved by the family. They are brought up to be obedient, passive and respectful, particularly towards their parents and respected elders. Parents do not see children as individuals with minds of their own. Spanking a child is an approved form of discipline, while rewarding good behavior could be withheld for fear that such rewards would diminish the child's feelings of respect. (Garcia-Preto, 1982)

### The Extended Family

The family is considered to include the extended family members, not only those related by blood, but through social obligations such as 'compadrazco' (god parenting), 'hijos de crianza,' (children of upbringing not necessarily related by



blood or friendship) and long term friendships. The absence of such extended family may cause much tension between the marital partners. This can occur when duties with which the extended family might have helped are thrust on to one or the other of the marital partners. Thus, the extended family provided strong support for the nuclear family.

Compadrazco was considered a serious family commitment.

"It is a system of ritual kinship with binding mutual obligations for economic assistance, encouragement, and even personal correction... Godparents are to provide security for the children and to offer help in times of crisis. The choice indicate not only admiration and respect for the person, but a wish to include them in the family." (Garcia Preto in McGoldrick p. 172).

It was not uncommon for children to be brought up by individuals other than their parents. These children were called 'hijos de crianza'--children of upbringing. The biological parent might initiate a request for help in time of crisis. The other family (aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends, acquaintances) would take the child in as if he or she were their own for a temporary or permanent stay. Although the pain of separation might be experienced by both the parent and child, the practice was not generally considered to be shameful or indicative of failure as it might be in the host culture of the United States.

Rodriguez (1982) also mentions what he calls 'adopted

relatives' who fill various functions in the extended family.

"Informal members are close family friends or special neighbors who, over a period of years, have proved their willingness to engage in important family matters and events. The term 'como de familia' (like family) is often used to describe these individuals." (p. 23)

For a Puerto Rican, life is a network of such personal relationships. The same trust is not automatically extended to systems or organizations which are more impersonal.<sup>4</sup> This will be a major difference in values when the Puerto Rican migrant faces life in the United States.

### Cultural Values

Stability, a sense of pride and meaning came by following and transmitting family and cultural values. Dignidad (dignity) is one such value. This is the concept that self worth is defined in terms of inner qualities, not external achievements. Since status was fairly fixed in Spanish society, very few other "external achievements" existed. However, the nurturing of internal qualities (such as character, goodness, etc.) had no defined limits. One could have a wealth of such qualities.

Respeto is another handed-down value. Respeto (respect) is the acknowledgement of another's social position (ie: age, sex, etc.) and the giving of special treatment accorded

such positions. According to Nieto

"Respeto" and "dignidad" are the natural outgrowths of what is called "capacidad" in childhood. This virtue can be defined as responsibility, responsiveness, maturity and mutual obligation to the family...It is not unusual, for example, to see a nine year old prepare dinner every evening, or an eight year old contribute to the family by packaging groceries at the local bodega two or three hours every afternoon. This manifestations of "capacidad" often appears to make Puerto Rican children more serious and shy than their North American peers." (1979, p.41)

Another value for the culture is that of authority, a concept implanted from very early infancy. Children learn to listen to their elders with head and eyes lowered. Respect for the authority of an older person is of great importance. Control of aggression and duty to the family are other values of similar importance to the Puerto Rican. As Garcia-Preto indicates:

"The family guarantees protections and caretaking for life as long as a person stays in the system. Leaving the family is considered a grave risk." (1982, p. 170)

### Religion

Religion has always played a major part in forming the structure of people's lives. In the Hispanic cultures of Latin America Catholicism was brought as an integral part of the conquest. There was no separation of Church and State. The Church was expected to do its work as surely as the 'conquistadores' were expected to do theirs.

The Spaniards created their colonial social system to transmit the principals of their religion and community. Religion was community. The town plaza was built with the church as the main structure and this is where most of the socializing occurred. People did not need to be affiliated with the church to be "Catholic." Catholic was simply what you were, along with everyone else.

The style of "personalismo" (meaning personal and direct contact), was reflected in the Puerto Rican religious practices. People spoke directly to their God, or their special saints. They did not necessarily reflect their belief and faith by following the dictates of organized religion.

When the United States took possession of Puerto Rico, Church management took on a North American flavor. The changes meant improvement in religious instruction and practice and better organization. However, most of the people, through lack of contact with the Church as an organization, remained unaffected. Many of the Catholic schools had to charge tuition and were selective when choosing students. Religious personnel often did not speak Spanish or had a poor command of the language. All this gave the impression that the Church was more interested in the affluent than the poor. Therefore, the Catholicism of many

remained the personal and cultural involvement that each person had with their God. (Fitzpatrick, 1971 p.120)

Protestants first came to Puerto Rico in 1898 when the Catholic dominion was broken. The most vigorous of these groups were the Pentecostals. This is a fundamentalist group whose practices are highly structured and all encompassing. Such groups may have found popularity because the intensity of involvement can create a strong sense of ideals and community. This may help stabilize lifestyles and replace traditions undermined by rapid change.

It is important to speak of the Spiritists, although they do not consider themselves as forming a religious sect. Spiritism is a belief that the material world is surrounded by a world of spirits, that one can contact these spirits and be guided or influenced by them, either physically or emotionally. In turn, through proper ritual, a person can influence events or people in either this world or the next.

Many Puerto Ricans will seek out the spiritist for healing and for counseling. Herbs, symbolic relics and prescribed ritual are used. The spiritist is often a community individual who has been "called" and has followed a period of training among other spiritists in the community. Many people will follow these practices combined



with their more traditional religious background. Spiritism has had an important effect on the lives of the people who have connected with it. It is not commonly spoken of in casual conversations. Because of this the Spiritist influence on a family may be overlooked. Since Spiritism is considered part of the Puerto Rican natural support system it will be discussed at length in Chapter IV.

THE CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF OPPRESSION: Paulo Freire's Theories and the Culture of Silence

Before we look at what life is like for Puerto Ricans in the United States, we should explore the educational and political writings of Paulo Freire. This is important because Freire describes certain sociological characteristics of oppression which may be misinterpreted as being Puerto Rican ethnic behaviors (or black, native American and so on).

Paulo Friere is a well known educational theorist and teacher. He was exiled from Brazil in 1964 because of the political nature of his work. Originally a university professor and the Secretary of Education, Freire designed and taught a controversial literacy program for the impoverished classes. This program was designed not only to teach reading but to raise the consciousness of oppressed people, thus promoting radical social change. Freire was in exile almost 20 years before the Brazilian government extended an unconditional invitation to return to his homeland. During his time abroad he served in a number of prestigious educational and international training organizations developing, teaching and using his ideas.

The "American dream" is a view of the pioneer who can,

through independence, courage and hard work, mold the future. Freire speaks of a world which lies beneath this "dream," one of oppression and controls. These controls keep people in their places and helps stabilize the status quo--whatever that status may be. This "other world" exists in the United States today. It is particularly felt by minority groups, but in truth is experienced, consciously or unconsciously, by many of us (ie: women, elderly, homeless, welfare recipients, etc.).

Puerto Rican history has been one of oppression. They have not had control of their own lives for 500 years and still do not. Survival has been based on obedience to the system, or at least being so familiar with it that one could survive "around" it. Either way, the individual intimately lives with oppression as a social system. In order to understand the Puerto Rican experience in the U.S., we should first review the psychology and behavior (as described Freire) of the different stages of consciousness awakening to oppression. Of particular interest is Freire's "culture of silence."

Freire describes oppression as an

"...act which prevents individuals from becoming more fully human. (p.42) (It is)... any situation in which A objectively exploits B or hinders his pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person." (1970, p.40)

One of the most difficult aspects of oppression is the difficulty that people, either the oppressed or the oppressors, have in recognizing its existence.

"For the oppressors," says Freire, "it is always the oppressed (whom they obviously never call 'the oppressed,' but--'those people', or 'natives,' or 'subversives') who are disaffected..who are violent, barbaric, wicked, when they react to the violence of the oppressors. (p.49)

(But also)... "a particular problem is the duality of the oppressed. They are contradictory, divided beings, shaped by and existing in a concrete situation of oppression and violence." (1970, p.41)

For instance, a high school student accused, of threatening a teacher on duty in the hallway, is suspended from school. The teacher is supported and the student punished. However, the oppressive situation which victimizes both individuals is not addressed. What is the situation that creates "hall duty" for high school teachers (do we expect hall monitors in college situations?) and violent, disrespectful behaviors from young people? We need to ask this question regardless of the truth of each individual incident.

Freire points, not to the individual, but to the "unjust order" as the perpetrator of violence in the oppressors. In the previously mentioned example, both teacher and student might be considered oppressed. In most cases, however, neither will be able to remove themselves enough from the

situation to first recognize and then transform it.

### Freire's Stages of Consciousness and the Culture of Silence

Freire describes the "culture of silence" as a subculture within society. This subculture has its own way of thinking and acting. It arises, he says, as the result of structural relations between the "dominated and the dominators." He speaks of different levels of consciousness through which a people must pass before they transcend the culture of silence to become creators and speakers in the society around them. Until people reach a point of critical consciousness, they cannot take control over the events around them.

The first stage of consciousness belongs to the culture of silence. This stage is called semi-intransitive (or magical) consciousness. In this stage people do not recognize their situation as oppressive.

"Their interests center almost totally around survival and they lack a sense of life on a more historic plane...They fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend true causality."(Freire, 1970, p.17)

The magical way of looking at difficulties is to see them as "fate" or facts of existence. Thus the idea of change causes fear and

"Little action is taken...This inaction is a form of passive collusion, though unconscious and unintentional, to maintain oppressive conflict-laden situations."



(Alschuler, 1985 p.6-7)

The second stage is called naive transitivity.

Transitivity here means that man is "permeable" to new ideas.

However, at this stage,

"...problems are seen to lie in individuals who deviate from the system's idealized rules, roles, standards and expectations. At this stage, individuals either blame themselves for their problems, which causes feelings of inferiority, incompetence, guilt and other forms of self deprecation, or others are blamed, which leads to resentment, anger and hostility. As a result, individuals try to improve themselves or change others...because of their belief in the soundness of the system. (Alschuler, 1985, p.7)

Freire warns that in this stage, the developing capacity for critical dialogue and analysis is still fragile. If consciousness does not pass to the next stage, that of "critical consciousness", it can become deflected into a fanaticized consciousness. This is an irrational state even more disconnected from reality than the predominantly illogical stage of magical consciousness. (Freire, 1973, p.20)

The third stage in this progression is called critical consciousness. In this stage, individuals become aware of the rules of the system in which they live, the way in which these codes of power and behavior have affected them and how their own roles as victims have perpetrated the oppression in the educational, social, economic and political spheres.

Individuals can, at this stage, organize themselves to responsibly transform their environments.

"The critically transitive consciousness is characterized by depth in the interpretation of problems...by the testing of one's "find-ings" and by openness to revision; by the attempt to avoid distortion...and preconceived notions, by refusing to transfer responsibility; by rejecting passive positions; by soundness of argumentation; by the practice of dialogue...by the good sense not to reject the old just because it is old--by accepting what is valid in both old and new." (Freire, 1973, p.18)

### Behavioral Characteristics of the Culture of Silence

In the first stage of semi-intransitive, or magical thinking, there are some behavioral characteristics which are distinctive and particularly pertinent to this study. These characteristics can be identified among certain families in the Puerto Rican community with whom we work. However, as Freire clearly indicates, the characteristics of this subculture are not ethnic--they cross national boundaries and strike blacks, whites, Asians. Unfortunately, it is sometimes very easy to think of these behavior patterns as "ethnic" and call them "Puerto Rican behavior," or black behavior, etc. Specifically, what are some of these behaviors?

1. Fatalism, lack of motivation. Oppressed individuals in the culture of silence have a sense of fatalism. People believe that what IS cannot be changed. They have an attitude of "Why bother; what can I do? I'm only a \_\_\_\_\_ (salesperson, teacher, factory worker, etc.). Others may perceive this attitude as a lack of motivation, laziness, lack of interest in improvement, unwillingness to change. This fatalism is often interpreted as a trait of national character."

2. Violence. Individuals living in oppressing environments often become violent towards each other, striking out for insignificant reasons. Freire calls this "horizontal" violence (1970, p.48). Although they have internalized the rule structures of the oppressing system, they also resent it. Tensions build. Freire says that the violence against one's comrades may alleviate such unresolved emotions and also symbolizes the greater, but less sanctioned attack on the oppressor as well.

3. Poor Self Concept. Poor self concept is another characteristic of oppressed individuals. They have often internalized the same opinion of themselves which the oppressors hold.

"So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything, that they are sick, lazy and unproductive, that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness...They come to distrust themselves, not realizing that they, too, have learned things in their relations with the world and other men."  
(Freire, 1970, p.48)

4. Poor Behavior Control. For people in the culture of silence, the lack of self concept and the actuality of having little or no power are manifested through feelings of helplessness, marginality, dependence and inferiority. They show a lack of impulse control, a present time orientation with little ability to plan for the future, and a high tolerance for psychological pathology. The use of alcohol to drown out their pains and conflicts is a common scenario.

5. Inability to Plan or Take Action. Such people have lived in and accepted a relationship of "being under" for so long that they cannot truly understand or say what they want. They wait for others to decide or structure their lives for them. They become uncomfortable with ideas or actions that ask them to go beyond certain narrow boundaries. Freire describes the dominated consciousness as not having sufficient distance from reality to know it in a critical way.

"This consciousness fails to perceive many of reality's challenges, or perceives them in a distorted way...The only data grasped are the data that lie within the orbit of its lived experience. It cannot objectify the facts and attributes the source of situations to something outside of what is happening."  
(Freire, 1985, p.75)



6. Inconsistent Family and Authority Structure Which Does Not Provide Adequate Guidance. Families in the culture of silence are usually one parent families, or if both parents are available then they usually relate as parents, not as spouses. Parents often alternate from being totally autocratic to feeling completely helpless. In many cases they may give over their responsibilities by requiring an older sibling to be in charge or by abandoning the family (physically or psychologically). There is usually a breakdown in communication between parents and children and siblings tend to support each other in opposition to parental control. (Minuchin, 1967)

For children there is a pervading sense of impermanence and inconsistency. A variety of family and friends care for the child. Often adult responses to children depend more on random moods than on principle (Minuchin, p.193). With both these factors in operation little sense of rule structure or of the future can be internalized.

7. Lack of Participation in the Larger Social Structures. As far as the relationship to the larger social system, one sees in the culture of silence a lack of effective participation and integration in the major institutions and traditions of society. There is little involvement in the larger economic system, little use is made of banks, libraries, museums, etc. and a minimal organization exists beyond the nuclear and extended family. They have a distrust of the basic institutions of the dominant society, including police, government, and even the church.

8. Low Levels of Skills and Resources. Low wages and unemployment foster chronic cash shortages, not food reserves in the home, no property ownership and no savings. They experience poor housing conditions and overcrowding. These conditions mean living patterns which include pawning of personal goods, borrowing cash at exorbitant rates, informal credit systems and frequent buying of small amounts of food many times during the day (due perhaps to poverty issues such as no refrigerator, low levels of cash, etc.). Low levels of education and literacy are apparent.

It should be noted that Oscar Lewis (1965) identified certain characteristics evident in oppressed families.

However, he has labeled these aspects differently. The way in which he synthesized his research ideas seems to blame those who are victimized for being victims in the social

order. Although he may have a broader understanding of the situation than that described in his preface to La Vida, the introduction does not show a deep understanding of the larger social system which has kept the subculture (which he described as the "culture of poverty") oppressed. However, we can still use his description of characteristics as a flag for identifying those situations which lead to culture of silence behaviors.

Both Freire and Lewis agree that the core of this "culture" is destroyed when the individuals adhering to it become active members of a group movement or struggle. At this point, those who have been dominated begin to believe in themselves. Lewis seems to indicate that it is the movements (religious, political or otherwise) which give purpose to people's lives--organizing them, giving them hope and a sense of identity with larger groups. Freire, however, states that it is the people themselves who create and shape the struggle for their own freedom. They must become aware members of the group and back this awareness with informed actions. Otherwise, people revert to fanaticism, an irrational emotional state even more disengaged from reality than magical thinking. (Freire, 1973, p.19)

The origins of the previously described behaviors is often misunderstood by members of the host society.



According to Freire, individuals of an oppressing social system do not recognize the elements of that system as being oppressive. Many people do recognize that problems exist which need attention, but

"...(there is an underlying) belief in the intrinsic soundness of the system. Thus the system goes unquestioned while it is the individuals who are criticized." (Alschuler, 1985, p.7)

Now we can ask, how is it that these theories affect the issues being discussed in this dissertation?

I would like to reserve the fuller essence of this question until we arrive at the chapter on research and analysis. It is here that Freire's theories will be used to clarify some of the phenomena encountered in the field work. It should be noted, though, that Puerto Ricans have managed to create and retain a unique spirit and cultural identity throughout their constant dominations. This speaks to a national strength which should be appreciated and cultivated rather than erased through assimilation.

The characteristics of Freire's theories, however, can be used to describe behaviors which we encounter in everyday contact with certain families. By understanding that these characteristics are universally found among oppressed peoples and are not ethnic behaviors, we may better understand and expand our options for action when working

within different cultures.

### Summary

In summary, the preceding sections have given a brief overview of the more traditional family, social and religious practices which grew out of life in Puerto Rico as well as behaviors whose roots lie in oppression. These practices, concerning family and authority structures, racial interactions, cultural values, extended family and political involvement, have been evolving as North American influences become more predominant. Perhaps the most encompassing influence of all has been the Puerto Rican migration to the United States.

The changes in traditional behaviors is seen most dramatically when describing the migration phenomena. Exactly what these changes are will be described more fully in the section on "Problems With Migration." However, partly because of the revolving door migration to and from the island, the changes which occur to the Puerto Rican culture in the United States is transmitted to the lives of those who remain in Puerto Rico. So our next task is to explore the Puerto Rican migration to the United States and then its relevance to this particular study.

## THE MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

### Some Statistics

Puerto Rican migration has been closely tied to the economic trends in the United States. When jobs are available, migration increases; when job opportunities decrease, so does migration. Many Puerto Ricans came to the United States during World War I because jobs were easily obtained. They stayed during the boom of the 1920's but many left as the Depression closed down employment. The war years, 1940-5, showed little change, but migration rose steadily after 1945 until it hit a peak in the mid 1950's.

#### Puerto Rico Passenger Traffic for Fiscal Years 1940-69

Fiscal Year	Departures from P.R.	Arrivals in P.R.	Net Balance
1953	304,910	230,307	-74,603 (# staying in U.S.)
1964	1,076,403	1,072,037	-4,366 (# staying in U.S.)
1969	2,105,217	2,112,264	+7,047 (# staying in P.R.)

(Source: P.R. Planning Board, as quoted in Fitzpatrick, 1971, p.12)

Such figures represent not the number of people who actually came and went, but the difference between the numbers who came and the numbers who left. There may be, in actuality, many more thousands of Puerto Ricans arriving in

the U.S. for the first time (or leaving) than the charts indicate. For example, by looking at the net balance it appears as if more Puerto Ricans stayed in the U.S. in 1953 than in 1969 (A negative indicates that people stayed in the U.S.). However, on looking at the Departures Column, one sees that almost 700% more people actually departed for the U.S. in 1969 than in 1953 even though slightly more people left for Puerto Rico that same year.

What the figures indicate is that many, many people are undergoing changes. It is certain that for a good number of people these changes will be major life events. It is also important to note that heavy migration to and from the U.S. has been equaled by internal migration on the island from country to city. For Puerto Ricans, this internal migration has had many of the same disruptive effects as the migration to the continent.

These statistics become important when attempting to integrate large numbers of new migrants into the host society. The new migrants need adjustment to enormous differences in language, culture and climate. They must find housing, jobs, familiarize themselves with new neighborhoods and services. People pay the price of these changes not only financially but with changed values, family disruption, loneliness, racial prejudice, etc. In turn the

cities and towns which accommodate these migrants must make many adjustments. When large numbers are involved this is often times difficult to accomplish.

### Uniqueness of the Puerto Rican Migration

The Puerto Rican migration has been different from other migrations in several ways. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. There is no restriction on their internal movement. People can come and go in whatever numbers and however often they wish. This movement has been facilitated by inexpensive airfares and the need for industrial and farm workers on the mainland.

The Puerto Rican migration was the first airborne migration in the history of the United States. This experience can be one of never ending jet lag. In several hours a person is flown into a foreign culture of which they are considered citizens. The language spoken is different; the community structure is different; cultural values and expectations are different; life is often technical, urban and rigidly time-structured. Racial prejudice still thrives. As the chart on the previous page shows, large numbers of people undergo this experience each year. Culture shock is a fact of life--not only for the migrant but for the host society.



Puerto Ricans, because of their citizenship, have been the first group of migrants to come to the U.S. who did not need to think in terms of permanency in their new lives. For the cost of an air ticket they could "go home again." And they did. A continual flow to and from the island was created. Because of this many did not develop the rules they needed to live in the U.S. culture. This flow has affected the Puerto Rican culture to its core. One professional who I interviewed said,

"I met the superintendent of schools from San Juan. He said they're starting a bilingual program there because they have so many students who come and go, and who only speak English."

Another quality of this migration is its link to the rise and fall of the U.S. economy. Generally, the migrants who came were not the unemployed; they were people looking for better jobs and greater opportunity. Their first jobs on the mainland often paid at least double their Puerto Rican salaries (Mills, 1950). Many came with the help of or to join relatives already in the U.S.

How does this correlation between economy and employment occur? Clarence Senior (1969) describes the "family intelligence network."

"A foreman who likes the work of a Puerto Rican employee often says, "Juan, you are a good mechanic. Are there any more at home like you?" Juan is likely to answer, "Sure, my brother Jose is just as good a mechanic as I am." So Jose comes to join Juan." (p.203)

And the community is built.

Unfortunately, the skills which the Puerto Rican brought to the U.S. were only needed for a short time. In many cities, Holyoke in particular, the old industrial base was gone and the agricultural base was dying out. The new industries are founded on more complex technologies. Language and certain educational skills have now become necessary for jobs. And this puts the Puerto Ricans at an even greater disadvantage.

#### Migration Issues as Pertain to Holyoke

How are these issues of migration relevant to the study at hand?

First, we have in Holyoke, a city which has a large Puerto Rican population. If we assume that family members provide entry into the new setting for individuals coming up from Puerto Rico, we can predict increasing numbers of migrants living in the city. This may be true, even though jobs are not abundant, since social welfare programs still provide some means of support. This means that many new people will be integrating into the city's already pressured resources. Integration of an individual unfamiliar with language and culture, particularly if they have poor

financial or educational resources, is very time consuming for city services.

Many Puerto Rican migrants who come to Holyoke are in need of such services. But the U.S. social welfare structures do not allow what support systems the Puerto Ricans do bring with them to function properly (ie: extended family are not allowed to lived with nuclear family in public housing). This places extra stress on the family support systems while at the same time attempting to alleviate stress. If many people are in need of such services at once, then the entire systems becomes obstructed. On a practical level, these issues come down to delays in services to needy children with a focus on crisis rather than prevention.

Since new industries in Holyoke require more technical and language skills than previous positions, many Puerto Rican migrant parents are less likely to encounter work which could independently help them better provide for their children's needs. Thus we see that the migration, particularly in an industrial city which has lost its previous economic base, such as Holyoke, causes great stress on city and migrants alike.

This stress takes the form of poverty, racial prejudice

and resentment from previous city residents, unemployment, poor housing and nutrition, high drop out rates from school, etc. All of these problems can be intimately connected to the natural support systems which the migrants bring with them--what the unique strengths of these systems are, how quickly and adaptively they mobilize when needed, how they preserve, support, or threaten the integrity of the individual family members. If this natural support system can be strengthened and kept constructively functional, then the entire social systems benefits. The bureaucratic structures have fewer and less complex problems to resolve, while the families maintain their lives, values and balance within the new culture.

### Problems with Migration

Unfortunately, maintaining a family "balance" within the new culture is very difficult. This is because, in the migration to the United States, the traditional role of the Puerto Rican family comes into jeopardy. Since the family structure is so pivotal to the Puerto Rican way of life, anything which threatens its functioning will be sure to have broad consequences for the family members.

"While the family is the major support network for all children, this is especially true in the Puerto Rican case where the family is a fundamental integrating and identifying institution. Thus the potential effects of family dysfunction may well be more severe for the Puerto Rican child than for other children." (Canino, 1980, p.27)

Several important examples of this are seen in traditional cultural values. Traditional Puerto Rican values are very different from U.S. values. For instance, Puerto Rican women are expected to be modest and submissive. The U.S. culture, in many cases, encourages independence and equality for women. Many Puerto Rican women do manage their lives, jobs and household very capably and, in quite a number of cases, independently. However, it is the value clash, if not the reality which can place stress on relationships between Puerto Rican men and women and children's relationships with their parents.

In the United States men often cannot find jobs. Between 1970 and 1977 a deterioration in socioeconomic levels occurred for Puerto Ricans as shown by the census. In 1970, 23% of the Puerto Rican families were below the poverty level; in 1977 this had risen to 39%. Such an economic situation puts a great number of Puerto Rican children and families at great risk due to continuing and unrelieved financial stress. The Department of Labor statistics for 1977 indicate that 62% of employed Puerto Ricans worked in the four lowest paid occupational groups while being underrepresented in white collar categories (Canino, 1980). Even more discouraging is the fact that there are fewer and fewer jobs available for unskilled labor.



Therefore many women find themselves in the role of household provider--either by obtaining jobs such as cleaning, sewing, etc., or by receiving AFDC payments (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). The men may then be required to care for home and children, which is a complete role reversal. All of these factors combine to undermine the husband's authority and respect within the home and community. It also damages his self confidence. In fact, in many cases, the man no longer forms part of the daily household. This leaves the woman to manage the family alone.

The parents' inability to speak English makes the adults less employable and undermines the Puerto Rican family structure. Children are often asked to become interpreters and advocates for their parents. In this manner parental authority is weakened--especially in a culture where children are trained to be submissive, obedient and non-interfering.

Certain Puerto Rican migrants believe that their stay in the U.S. is only temporary--they are here to earn a better living or receive better medical care. Therefore, learning English is not a priority even though they may stay on the mainland for the rest of their lives. Others have expressed

a lack of interest in learning English. They say they are unsure that the extra efforts expended will actually get them jobs. In a declining economy with high unemployment rates this can be very true.

Racial prejudice, not only from external sources but from within the home also, is another culture shock which must be faced. Puerto Rican are aware of color differences. However, the intensity of social and occupational ostracism due to skin color in the U.S. creates great personal and family difficulty. Many distressing, complex situations occur in nuclear families where color ranges from black to white. Light skinned children, brought up in the North American value system may openly reject or be visibly embarrassed about their relationship to a darker parent or sibling.

"I'm not black, no matter what you say,  
Piri."

"Maybe not outside, José," I said, "But  
you're sure that way inside."

"I ain't black damn you! Look at my hair.  
It's almost blond. My eyes are blue, my nose  
is straight...My skin is white. White,  
goddamit! White! Maybe Poppa's a little dark,  
but that's the Indian blood in him..."

"So what the fuck am I? Something Poppa  
an' Momma picked out the garbage dump?...Look  
man, better believe it, I'm one of 'you-all.'  
Am I your brother or ain't I?" (Thomas, 1967,  
p. )

Emelicia Mizio points out that it is also the

differences in family structure which place Puerto Rican families at risk in the mainland, particularly in the legal system. She indicates that the U.S. laws (including Welfare, Social Services, court involved Youth Services, food stamps, etc.) deal mainly with the nuclear family.

"Consider social security provisions and the income tax regulations. These regulations do not allow the deduction of support to a compadre or to a common law spouse. Common law relationships are not frowned upon in many parts of Puerto Rican society. They must be viewed in the context of the economic situation. When one owns no property, there is little need for entanglements. Support to an 'hijo de crianza' is credited only if the contribution has been more than 1/2 of the year's total support. Health insurance policies, for those few who hold them, define coverage without reference to the Puerto Rican concept of family.. housing regulations do not allow the public housing dweller to extend the traditional hospitality to relatives in need of a start in a new land or to share the rent when it would be mutually supportive. (However)...mutual assistance under existing societal conditions is critical to the Puerto Rican, not only financially, but emotionally." (Mizio, 1974, p.77-8)

Current day Puerto Rican political action in the United States has been described by James Jennings (1984, p.7) as an "explosion" with Puerto Ricans organizing around education, housing, labor, but most importantly around electoral issues. However, at this point one might ask, in order to better their conditions, why did the Puerto Rican people not become politically powerful before, particularly since they have been citizens for almost 70 years?

This question becomes particularly interesting when we realize that in Puerto Rico itself, 90% of those able to vote are registered and more than 70% of those registered DO vote every four years (Garcia-Passalacqua, 1984, p.64). In the light of this information it is too simplistic to say that Puerto Rican politics has been one of colonization, and thus does not foster an activist mentality. If people are politically active on the island, what has prevented them from similar actions on the mainland?

Evidence is now emerging that Puerto Ricans were politically effective, particularly prior to the 1950's. At this point changes occurred due to the massive migration from Puerto Rico after World War II. Also affecting the political climate in the late 1940's and early 1950's (we are speaking now primarily of New York City at this point) were changes in Democratic party attitudes, as well as the

changes in political relations between Puerto Rico and the United States. Jennings (1984) suggests that the lack of literature concerning Puerto Rican political movements in the U.S. is due to several causes.

"One...is the overwhelmingly poor and working class nature of this community with its intense back and forth migrations. Such research has been dominated by middle and upper class persons not present in significant numbers in the Puerto Rican community of the United States...

"(Also, there has been) a general ideological bias of mainstream social science against racial-ethnic working class history and politics, as well as radical movements. Although effectively challenged in the past two decades...it has made current (research) efforts more difficult." (p.17)

It has been shown that Puerto Ricans, in the period prior to 1948, did belong to clubs and associations that organized their people in ways that stabilized the community and accommodated new migrants. It is also known that these groups came into contact with mainland political parties. So the question becomes what actually happened to the Puerto Rican vote?

Many Puerto Ricans in the United States did not vote. By various means, they were discouraged from joining regular political clubs that were then under the sway of the Italians and Irish. Voter registration was a difficult experience and submission to an English literacy test was even more discouraging. Also, many migrants were still



highly concerned with island politics. They believed their stay in this community was as workers, not as permanent residents. Although this was not necessarily the attitude of all those who came, it could not help but affect the electoral process.

A number of current publications are now exploring Puerto Rican history in the United States between 1917-1948, in order to more fully understand its political and social aspects (Korrol 1983, Garcia-Passalacqua 1984, Jennings 1984). None of these publications deny the decline in political activity during the 1950's. However Bayer (in Jennings, 1984, p.44) suggests it is important to offer explanations for "the virtual exclusion of Puerto Ricans in New York politics."

First, she says, the decline of the New York City democratic party in the 1950's left little for the party to offer the migrants in exchange for party loyalty. The migrants, coming in huge numbers, were harder to integrate into the social system than the fewer numbers who had come earlier. They were concerned with survival, and it was now the government, rather than the political parties, that provided the majority of social services.

Secondly, the Democratic party was becoming mostly one

of white ethnics. Although Puerto Ricans were citizens, "they were considered non-white and therefore a threat to the white population." (p.45 Ibid)

Thirdly, in conjunction with this, the political leanings of the Puerto Rican people were in doubt, at a time when the conservative McCarthy era made this almost a national crime. We find that Vito Marcantonio, an affirmed leftist from New York's Spanish Harlem, was elected to the House of Representatives, backed by most Puerto Ricans. In the same period, Puerto Rican nationalists were conducting attacks on President Truman and other members of Congress. These types of incidents must have contributed to the democratic reluctance to welcome the new migrants into the established political structure.

Fourthly, the island's Department of Labor set up a Migration Office in New York in 1948 to help Puerto Ricans adjust to mainland life and to help them find jobs.

"By serving as the migrant community's broker for jobs and social services in New York City, the island's migration division took on the function that ethnic politicians had served for earlier immigrant groups. As a consequence, the division's presence slowed the growth of Puerto Rican leadership ...with even the New York officials speaking to island officials about problems in the New York communities. (Baver, p.45 in Jennings, 1984.)

It was finally through the antipoverty programs of the

1960's and 1970's that the Puerto Ricans began to develop political power. Monies were granted to create social programs which in turn created places for political activists to begin their work. This unintended dual nature of the programs, plus the instability of Federal funding created many difficulties for the newly forming political awareness. However, as has been mentioned, Puerto Rican political activism is now making inroads into the older political establishment.

### Summary

Puerto Rican history shows that the people have been traditionally workers of the land. For over 400 years the social system was tightly structured by a feudal system of oppression. the cultural values which grew out of this particular system included a strong dedication to the family, to cooperation and interdependence, respect, dignity and a preference for personalized interaction ("personalismo") in daily affairs.

In 1898, when Puerto Rico came under U.S. rule, many changes began. Puerto Rico's unsuccessful struggles for independence were submerged in the new accomplishments of the United States government--sanitation and education reforms as well as industrialization of a basically agrarian economy. This industrialization began to interfere with more

traditional ways of living. Family resources were weakened, small farms disappeared, men traveled far to earn wages.

Within this climate of separation and change, migration from the island was not such a foreign idea. U.S. firms and agriculture encouraged the migration of such inexpensive labor through cheap airfares. Most concerns did not foresee the Puerto Ricans as permanent residents, nor did the migrants.

After World War II the Puerto Ricans flooded into the U.S., particularly New York City, due, in large part, to an extremely poor island economy. Such large numbers descending in a relatively short period of time heavily stressed the social services, housing resources, and school systems of the host society. This was an especially acute problems when one considers that most of the new arrivals spoke a different language, had poor educational backgrounds, different cultural values, a mixed racial background and were, in most cases, experiencing financial distress.

For a number of reasons, social and political, the "establishment", particularly in New York where most of the post war migration was focused, was resistant to creating a "niche" for the newcomers as had been done for previous wave of immigrants. This type of "closing off" helped continue

the behavioral and social effects of oppression which began, for the Puerto Ricans, with the Spanish takeover of the island centuries earlier. Such behaviors, particularly as described by Paulo Freire, are often misidentified as being ethnic. However, they are actually universal behaviors found among peoples suffering under oppressing social conditions. Freire has labeled the most oppressed behaviors as belonging to the "culture of silence."

Along with the paralyzing behaviors accompanying the culture of silence, come the changes which occur when two very different cultures meet--family structure and values, traditional lines of authority, courtship and marriage, customs, employment and financial issues, housing, language and support systems. All this comes under severe stress and disruption in the course of migration.

These traditional structures need support and healthful integration into the new life. It seems that this support and healthful integration has been politically and socially obstructed. Although many Puerto Rican families in the United States have found the strength to survive the poor economy, racial prejudice, housing conditions, difficult school situations and language issues, many others are continuing as victims in a social system which blames them for being victimized. These unresolved conflicts are often



mirrored in behaviors of children, particularly in school. Schools have attempted to remediate such behaviors through special academic programs for individual students. However, little of the supports, social customs and historical roots surrounding the children have been investigated or called upon. This lack of involvement with the child's support system will be explored more fully in later chapters.

It should be noted here that certainly not all Puerto Rican families undergo all of the above mentioned experiences. As in any other situation, coping styles will range widely from families with traditional life styles to families which follow mainland habits. However, even those who do take on mainland customs are not immune to these stresses.

The next chapter will briefly review what support systems are, how they affect the individuals, who belong to them and, finally, how natural supports systems differ from support systems in general. This discussion will lead into the chapter which deals specifically with Puerto Rican natural support systems in the United States.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>It is of interest to note that, in 1960, Puerto Rico was the fifth largest U.S. market in the world (Senior, 1961).

<sup>2</sup>Those U.S. agencies with a large number of offices in Puerto Rico at the time that Garcia-Passalacqua did his research were the Department of Agriculture; Health, Education, and Welfare (now separated into different departments), and the Treasury. Other departments with fewer offices were Defense, Commerce, Interior, Justice, labor, State, the Post Office and some administrative agencies. Functions and services affected by these government agencies are "military bases, induction to the armed forces, veteran's affairs, immigration and naturalization, criminal investigations, secret operations, aerial traffic and travel, radio, television, cable communications, customs, coast guard, social security, labor-management relations, wage-hour regulation, parks and historic sites, geological survey and mapping, census taking, postal services, agriculture, soil and water conservation, welfare benefits distribution, fresh product and meat distribution, health quarantine stations, weather bureau, public housing, loans to small businesses and atomic energy...

"The U.S. Supreme Court has the power to intervene in the final decisions of Puerto Rico's Supreme Court in cases involving Federal questions and other special cases as does the U.S. District Court in a number of situations."  
(Garcia-Passalacqua, 1984, p.47)

<sup>3</sup>Operation Bootstrap was a program by which industry was encouraged to invest in Puerto Rico through a program of tax incentives and special aid promised by the Puerto Rican government. This program was called Operation Bootstrap and occurred in the late 1940's. The incentives included up to 17 years of tax free operation, factory sites, buildings and roads to be supplied by the government and, of course, the guarantee of cheap labor. Factories were built on land previously used for farming; they paid low wages and did not have to cycle profits back in to the economy, many of which were sent out of Puerto Rico.

<sup>4</sup>Such impersonalized services generally must show themselves to be "personally" trustworthy before a full and open connection can be made. This can often mean that a particular agency staff member becomes known and trusted. It is through this professional that other clients are introduced to the system. Thus the "impersonal" organization has become personalized.

<sup>5</sup>Such fatalistic docility, says Freire, comes from the structure of the class relationships and is "not an essential characteristic of a people's behavior" (Freire, 1970, p.48). The oppressed are not marginal people living 'outside' a social system. They have always been an integral part of the oppressing system, occupying its most uncomfortable positions. The solution is not to 'integrate' them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so they can ...(transform) themselves (p.61, Ibid).

However, there exists a major difficulty in such a philosophy. First, the oppressors do not recognize their system as oppressive. Secondly, and more importantly, the oppressed people being raised within the system have "internalized the rules and concepts of that system. They do not clearly perceive the order which serves the interests of others. Many come to explain their suffering as the 'will of God', as if God were the creator of this 'organized disorder.'" (p.48, Ibid)

## C H A P T E R   I I I

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND NATURAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Human beings live together in a web of interdependent actions and communications. The nature of these connections is especially important for children. Children have little control over whom they will contact or the quality of those interactions.

The first section of this chapter will define and discuss the characteristics of support systems in general before describing what is meant by natural support systems. From there we will look specifically at the natural support systems for Puerto Rican children and families in the United States.

#### What Are Support Systems

Support systems are those resources in a person's circle of contact and life activities which help that person cope with daily living and on going growth. Baker (1977) states that:

"In most communities there exists a network of individuals and groups who band together to help each other in dealing with a variety of problems in living. Such groupings which provide attachments among or between individuals and groups so that adaptive competence is improved in dealing with short term crises and life transitions are referred to as...support systems."

The support system helps individuals by providing feedback about themselves and the world. In this way, each person can learn how to adapt competently. Communications outside of the support network, says Caplan, are often not comprehensive or consistent enough for continuing growth and guidance. So according to Caplan (1974) attachments must last over a period of time but can be either of a continuous or intermittent nature.

It we assume this to be true, then we might also assume that Puerto Rican children in the United States who move from place to place and change schools frequently will not look upon schools or teachers as part of a support network. The lack of attachment over a period of time effectively prevents this. In a more traditional lifestyle, the teachers and children would "become known" to each other, thus initiating the sense of support.

However, the specific components of support systems vary from person to person. If one support link is weak, then others can take over. Resources in the network can include religious organizations, friends, neighbors, school, local merchants, community services and agencies (especially those involving physical health, mental health and financial aid), lay healers, legal system, etc. Bott (1971) describes the social environment of urban families as networks, rather



than organized groups. Networks are a social arrangement in which some, but not all, of the component parts have contact with each other. These parts do not make up a larger social whole and are not surrounded by a common boundary.

This network concept might indicate that urban centered Puerto Rican families have less control over the influences which affect their growing children. This can create situations in which some parents, themselves struggling with the new environment, may become overly controlling, or give up with feelings of helplessness, around the guidance and discipline of their children.

Of all support systems, it is the family which is the first and primary resource. This is particularly true for children (Baker 1977, Froland 1979, Shulman 1975, Canino 1980). Any research involving children must place a great deal of importance on the organization and problem-solving approach of the family unit. Often recognizing the importance of the family is not taken into account when enacting school programs. Although the importance of parental consent and advice is written in to programs, it is often too difficult to coordinate more than minimal compliance. Not insisting on more than minimal compliance may be due to confusion in how the general public has held the idea of family and extended family.

Croog (1972) cites 4 studies done between 1933 and 1955 which hold to the view that institutional services proliferate because they take over functions once performed by the family. According to this point of view the urban family suffers from isolation and specialization of functions. If this is so then the schools can be justified in "taking over" where parental involvement seems insubstantial.

However, he then cites four later studies (1960-7) which indicate that the extended family is alive and well, held together by means of rapid transportation and communication. Within this framework, friends, neighbors and agencies supplement, he says, rather than substitute for, family functions. If this is true, then the extended support system surrounding a child should be expected to participate competently with the school professionals in designing programs.

The confusion among these two viewpoints is made even more complex in the United States where having children is often delayed and where many adults lead single lives for extended periods of time. In these circumstances, it might be assumed that the family as a support system does not function as well as before. However, Shulman (1975) notes

that the separation from family is part of a life cycle. When people marry, and especially when they have children, family and community ties increase in importance again. He also cites several studies which show that the greatest involvement with neighbors occurs among parents of young children.

If we assume that this is true, it seems somewhat contradictory that many school professionals should assume a lack of interest on the part of a Puerto Rican child's support system. As Shulman has noted, this is the time in the life cycle where community involvement should be the highest. Instead of blaming the support systems for a lack of interest, the question might be rephrased:

"What could be preventing the parents' natural involvement with community resources when they have young children?" It is this question that may lead professionals to more effective solutions when working with children.

### Characteristics of Support Systems

In order to begin answering such a question we would want to analyze a person's support network. One way is by describing its structure. Mitchell and Trickett (1980) have listed the important structural characteristics used in assessing social networks. These include:

1. Size: the number of people with whom the person has contact.
2. Network Density: the extent to which members of an individual's social network contact each other independently of the person.
3. Intensity: (the strength of the tie): the number of reciprocal functions in a relationship and strength of the feelings towards each other.
4. Stability: length of time and degree to which the relationships change.
5. Multidimensionality: number of functions served by a relationship (ie: advice, financial aid, exchange of services, etc.)
6. Reciprocity: the degree of give and take in a relationship (ie: a doctor-patient relationship would be considered low in reciprocity whereas a connection with a neighbor might be considered medium to high reciprocity depending on the exchange of services and feelings.)
7. Ease of contact (dispersion): usually means geographical proximity.
8. Frequency of contact (includes phone and letter contact as well as direct contact)
9. Homogeneity: extent to which the people in a network share common social attributes (ie: religion, education, social class, etc.)  
(1980).

By using these characteristics of support systems we could, in a fairly non-threatening way, describe and compare the networks of different children. We could see if any particular strengths or weaknesses exist which might be a clue to a child's behavior.

### Types of Aid

Sometimes a structural description of a network does not

locate the information needed. Another way to assess a network is in terms of function--what the help actually accomplishes. Thoits (1980) categorizes functional aid into two categories: Socioemotional aid (sympathy, moral support acceptance, understanding, respect, etc.) and instrumental (or practical) aid (money, advice, information, help with family or work duties, etc.). Delgado (1983) quotes two other important support functions--indirect assistance (unconditional access and willingness to be available), and advocacy (intervention on someone's behalf).

The offering and accepting of any kind of help forms part of a complex system of relationships and culture. Thoits does state that not all types or sources of support reduce stress equally. It is important to be aware of the perceived adequacy of the service. A person's perceptions will affect the extent to which the aid is used. For instance, a sister may offer advice to a sibling. If the relationship between the two is strained, the advice may be discarded as ineffective or unwanted.

A functional assessment may require a more indepth and trusting involvement with the people being interviewed. In most cases, it would involve more abstract response than a structural assessment. These more complex responses are often more difficult to illicit and more difficult to



assess. However, they explore a different depth in the family which may provide information previously unavailable.

In working with Puerto Rican school children, it seems clear that the importance of support systems in general has not been understood. This, in part may come from a lack of knowledge about how support systems function to influence individuals.

#### Four Basic Functions of a Support System

A number of studies have shown that a majority of people in our society seek help primarily in the family (Birkel 1983). The family then influences the help seeking behavior of the individual. This is done in several ways:

a. By buffering the intensity of the stress, thus reducing the need for help.

A number of writers and investigators (Canino 1980, Cassell 1976, Cobb 1976, Caplan 1974) have theorized that a person's social support system helps "buffer" or reduce the stress of life events on his or her psychological state. In this context, life events are defined as any event which causes a person to substantially modify his or her behavior patterns. It is thought that those people with strong social support systems would cope better with life changes than those who had less support. Conversely, those people with weak support systems would tend to be more vulnerable to the

stress of life events, especially negative events (Thoits 1980).

The buffer theory hypothesizes that if the greater social system cannot provide its members with the guidance and consistent feedback necessary for healthy development, then the smaller, more personalized support group surrounding each person attempts to do so. An important characteristic of these smaller groups is the degree to which they render personalized services - services which take into account and respect the uniqueness of the individual.

We should note that the buffer theory does not explain why some people are individually more prone to illness from stress than others. Factors which affect a person's vulnerability include not only the stressful environment, but the person's perception that it is stressful, his or her ability to cope with the situation and the genetic predisposition to illness (Canino 1980). These factors may help explain why several children in a family move through a stressful situation with no long term effects, while another child from that same family shows disordered behavior or physical illness.

b. By providing support and help with the tasks of daily living.

Hammer (1963) found that supportive aid was offered most quickly when the person in need held a "critical" position within the social unit. Critical positions are:

"...those positions whose structural norms involve performance significant for the maintenance of the unit. (p. 247)"

The critical positions usually involve household and childcare or financial support. Can we surmise from this that children in non-critical positions may not be offered supportive aid until their behaviors become highly symptomatic?

She found that "non-performance" in a position also caused a rapid response from the support network. However, "poor performance" did not. Hammer states that "support networks tend to make the smallest available changes." In a "poor performance" situation, a person's behavior may often deteriorate little by little. The network may not be aware of the full extent of the behavior change since the change has occurred gradually. Since the family has adjusted little by little to the deterioration what might appear to be aberrant behavior to an outsider may not be classified to such an extreme within the support network.

"Closeness" is another factor which determines the responsiveness of a support network. This involves not only

the "directness" of a contact (ie: such as wife-husband or child-parent vs. an in-law or teacher-parent relationship which is considered to be an indirect tie--one mediated through another individual), but the number of life areas with which the relationship deals. The closer the contact, the more affected, and therefore more responsive (although not necessarily effectively responsive), the network will be.

c. By acting as screening and referral agents to professional services, and

d. By transmitting attitudes and values about help seeking. (Gourash, 1978).

These last two factors become particularly important when communities attempt to organize help programs for residents in need. Studies indicate (Birkel 1983, Croog 1972, McKinlay 1973, Hammer 1963) that low income and high risk groups show minimal participation and high drop out rates in voluntary prevention oriented service programs. What might be some factors affecting the help seeking behaviors?

Network density seems to be an indicator in predicting help seeking behaviors (Birkel 1983, McKinlay 1973). Dense networks-- those in which members often contact each other independently of the focal person--exert pressure on their members. Adhering to ideas different from group values brings much pressure on the individual to conform. This

pressure for conformity holds true around help seeking behaviors. Tightly knit networks can often provide more readily available aid than professional resources (Birkel, 1983). Or, if they cannot, they will then suggest outside resources which they see as being most useful. In many cases, he indicated, it is the physician who is most likely to be the link between the lay consultants and the professional services than other community members.

Open networks are networks with minimal or no independent contacts outside of the focal person. This means that most of a person's acquaintances or friends do not know each other beyond their meeting with the focal person. Since there is less uniform peer pressure in an open network an individual can connect more easily with outside helpers and agencies. Therefore, a woman who has moved away from her family and friends, perhaps for educational or financial reasons, will be more likely to seek help from community services than a woman who has her parents, siblings, and friends close by.

However, whether a network is considered 'dense' or 'open,' personal recommendations from the support network about seeking help from community agencies is very important. Thus we can see the immense influence of support networks at many levels--at the subtle psychological levels



which determine attitudes and outlook as well as at survival levels of "who will babysit while I go shopping" or which doctor to see for an illness.

### Levels of Support

When we understand the all pervasive influence of support systems, we can then ask, "How actually is this system structured?"

There are different levels to the support structure surrounding each individual (Bronfenbrenner 1977, Nuttal 1979, Figler 1981). The helping resources which may be called upon to cope with stress can originate from any level of this structure. These resources are depicted by a series of concentric circles, growing gradually more distant from the individual. They include, first, personal resources and skills, secondly, those of the immediate family, third the extended family and friends, fourth community services, and fifth culture and values (See Figure 1 at the end of this chapter).

The first level which is the personal level, consists of resources which an individual carries "within" or which personally accrue to him or herself. Nuttal divides these into 3 categories:

Psychological resources--these include characteristics such as independence, ambition, social adeptness, strength of

personality, etc.

Skills and knowledge--includes education, occupation, language proficiency, knowledge of community resources, etc.

Material resources--income level, property owned (house, car, etc.), job situation, etc.

The immediate family level includes those people who live together in the house (including unmarried partners) as well as estranged spouses not living at home.

The level of extended family and friends refers to people who are related to the focal person (person being interviewed) as well as those friends whom the person considers important (ie: god-parents, close friends, etc.)

Community services, the fourth level, includes the various programs, both public and private, which serve the community needs. These include Department of Welfare, hospitals, mental health clinics, schools, food stamp programs, visiting nurses, etc.

Values and culture is the fifth level and provides a social structure so that each individual knows what to do, how to do it, and how to think about it. The meaning which the focal person puts on various aspects of life and the extent to which these meanings are shared makes up the cultural level of the support system (Nuttal 1979).

It can be seen that each family develops its own unique coping strategy. How the family supports its members, who is considered a part of that systems, how resilient that system is, etc. depends on this coping sytle. We may now ask how this family develops one style while another family creates a different one.

#### One View of How Families Develop Their Own Unique Support Styles

Bott (1979) proposes a concept of family networks that clarifies how certain families develop their unique coping styles. First, she describes how families organize conjugal roles in the marriage. There are segregated conjugal roles in which husband and wife have a clear division of duties and considerable number of separate interests and activities. And there are joint conjugal roles in which activities are carried out by husband or wife together, or by either partner at different times. This includes spending leisure time together. She says every family has a mixture of these roles, but usually there is a predominance of one style over the other. She then explains how these intimate roles are often determined by the support groups surrounding the family.

Families belong to networks and each of these networks have their own degree of "connectedness."<sup>1</sup> These networks

are either close knit or loose knit and it is this factor which very often determines the degree of separation in the husband/wife activities.

How is this so? Often a marriage of two people, each from close knit networks, is actually a relationship superimposed on previous relationships. The husband and wife continue to be drawn into activities with people outside their marriage, and thus demand less of the spouse. Separation of activities and responsibilities is possible because each spouse can get help from outside people.

Loose knit networks do not have this 'draw' to other activities and people, thus encouraging more involvement between husband and wife. There is also less pressure to conform to a family norm.

Other intimate behaviors towards kin and friends are also determined by a combination of factors beyond personal likes and dislikes. These include, first, economic ties among kin. The greater the degree to which kin share property and business, and expect inheritance from one another the closer their ties will be. Second is physical accessibility, especially important for families with young children, although this does not guarantee intimacy. The genealogical relationship (how directly closely people are

related) also was a determining factor in whether people chose to maintain their ties with each other as was "connectedness." If kin see each other frequently they are able to put a collective pressure on a family to keep up kinship obligations. Bott lists other factors but these four give an idea of the overall concept.

### Summary

We have seen that support systems create adaptive competence in dealing with life problems. The family is the most primary of these supports, especially for children. However, it has been noted that current school procedures do not require school professionals to seek more than minimal involvement from a child's support network.

The lack of effective encouragement for parental and community involvement is particularly detrimental to Puerto Rican school children if their families move frequently. Such moves can disrupt whatever sense of support might be acquired between school and home. The child becomes more vulnerable to stress in the family system if school is not perceived as a supportive resource. For Puerto Rican children, whose families may already be under great stress, this increased vulnerability may help produce school failures. Thus it is important to know the strength and effectiveness of support systems in order to assess what



types of help will be most effective for children showing school distress.

There are several ways for professionals to assess the strength of a child's support network and how this network might be approached most effectively. The first is from a structural point of view. This involves describing a number of characteristics about the support system such as size, density, homogeneity, etc. A more complex description of a network is through a functional analysis--a description of what the help actually accomplishes. Each methods of focusing provides valuable information for the researcher who must decide which is most appropriate for the needs at hand.

Also described were 4 ways in which support systems influence its members. These influences ranged from subtly influencing outlook and attitudes to practical survival issues such as providing housing and child care. Different levels of support were also described. These levels include the most personal resources, such as personality and knowledge, to the more distant resources of culture and values. Families develop and refine their own unique support systems by selecting and developing styles from those resources and skills available. A theory of how this selection and development takes place has been described in

the body of the text.

These descriptions and organized structures concerning natural support systems are especially valuable in attempting to understand and influence the support systems of children. Many times such information come to us in amorphous and disjointed segments. When school professionals receive pieces of such information through the child, parent, etc., the information is often unable to be due to a lack of understanding as to "where the pieces fit." So what may be a key piece of information about a situation is lost because there may be no broader understanding of where it fits and, thus, how important it may be. This type of connection is particularly important when working with Puerto Rican children who are experiencing disruption in culture, language, family and community support systems.

Now let us turn to natural support systems and how they differ from the support systems already described.

## WHAT ARE NATURAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS?

Natural support systems in this study will be defined as "groups of people who band together in emotionally encompassing, primary relationships where adaptive competence is improved in dealing with life situations." (Baker, 1977)

Baker further explains that:

"...the word 'natural' is used to differentiate such systems from the professional caregiving systems of the community. (Clear examples)...of natural support systems include family and friendship groups, local informal care givers, voluntary service groups not directed by care giving professionals and mutual help groups."

Valle and Vega (1980) emphasize that the word 'natural' may be misleading. Natural networks are, in actuality,

"...complex social interventions systematically adopted and evolved over time (p. vii)."

A bureaucratic system is also natural in that it is a method human beings evolved to organize their social structures. The difference between natural supports and other formalized systems is:

"...the distinction between primary group, emotionally encompassing relationships and secondary type relationships which are based on task oriented interactions between consumers and providers.(Valle, 1980)

An example of a situation which is not part of the

"natural" support system is school. 'School,' being a task oriented provider of services run by professionals would not be considered part of the 'natural' support system. Mutual help groups such as alcoholics anonymous, community services rendered by informal caregivers (ie: advice from bartenders, check cashing from storekeepers, neighbors, etc.) and religious organizations are considered part of the natural support group because they deal with primary and emotionally encompassing issues.

Religious organizations might be seen to fall into a quasi-category here since they are highly organized societies often with care giving professionals as leaders. However, this paper will consider most religious contacts as part of the natural support system. In a religious setting the person usually has access to the religious group and leader without a pre-paid, pre-set meeting as might occur in professional agencies. The person-to-person level is often on an informal caregiving basis. However, what would not be considered part of the natural support system would be the scheduling of ongoing, regular counseling sessions with a clergyman or woman. This would then follow the model of professional caregiving.

#### When Natural Supports Do Not Work

There are times when the natural networks do not provide

the support needed by an individual. Delgado (1983) indicates that the reasons for this are varied. Any person working with support systems, however, should be aware of what prevents the system from being supportive at that particular time for that particular individual. This knowledge can affect the type of help which would be suggested.

First there may be a temporary breakdown of the system itself, or an inability to respond to the particular situation. In these circumstances the system may be undergoing its own crisis, the demands for assistance (ie: financial, medical) may be beyond the system resources or whatever help was offered has proven unsuccessful.

Another possibility is that the system has refused to help. This can occur because there is a poor or faulty relationship between individuals (ie: person in need has not been able to maintain supportive relationships or has too few relationships), the system does not consider the 'problem' as a problem, the system is 'burned out' on that particular individual (ie: too much help has already been given or there has been no reciprocity of support from the individual in need).

Finally, in certain cases, the natural support system



may not exist. This may be the case due to disintegration of the support system or, as in cases with migrant groups, the support network has been left behind and no replacements have been found.

It is important to recognize how and when natural support systems weaken or fail. Often mistakes are made by school professionals attempting to create home-school contact, especially when dealing with students who exhibit different behaviors. Families instead of being able to collaborate with the school, withdraw from the contact. For support systems which are weakened or under stress, this type of "contact" can be seen as another burden. Thus, through a lack of awareness, schools initiate inappropriate actions which further weaken the web of support around the child in need.

### Conclusion

We can see that "natural" support systems, as opposed to support systems in general, are those that deal with the entire individual in a primary, emotionally encompassing way. Other types of support systems are more goal oriented. They deal with specific segments of an individual's life and perform specific tasks, rather than dealing globally with the complete individual.

It is more difficult to assess a natural support system than an institutional-professional one. For instance, determining the size of a child's natural support system, after a certain point, becomes a matter of determining how influential certain people are, ie: godparents, friends, neighbors. relatives, religious figures, etc. The structure and function of the school system and how influential it is in the child's life has a much clearer boundary and thus becomes easier to assess.

If a child's natural support system is weakened or failing, it will influence the child's daily behaviors and responses. Thus, assessing the strength and integrity of the support system and its influence over the child is important. If a child needs extra help, one should first determine, according to Delgado's categories, what might be preventing the natural support system from providing this help. Once an assumption is made, it should be substantiated. This can be done in a number of ways.

First, the boundaries and basic characteristics of the support system can be delineated by describing the underlying structure in accordance with Mitchell and Trickett's characteristics as described in this chapter. A sensitive interviewer could then determine which questions to ask and about whom in order to more fully describe the

functioning of the system as mentioned by Thoits and Delgado. This type of analysis should lead the interviewer to assumptions on which level the system is functioning (according to the four basic functions of a support system).

For instance, imagine that a particular Puerto Rican migrant family is unable to reduce the stress for its school age child. The mother finds herself alone with no relatives nearby for help or support and no way to communicate adequately with services in the community (stores, hospitals, housing, school, etc.). She becomes overwhelmed with daily living tasks and keeps her daughter home many times to help her. The truant officer is alerted. Tension in the household now escalates causing debilitating stress for the school child. In this situation, the ability of the natural support system to "buffer stress" from the outside is minimal; in fact, the support system itself is creating undue stress, rather than alleviating it.

To an observer who knows the various aspects of the situation, it might seem ludicrous to resolve this situation by extra tutoring as the child falls behind in her work. However, equally naive would be the suggestion to bring in a homemaker so the mother has support while the child goes to school. Such a "resolution" without a more detailed assessment of the system values and resources could easily

create insulting and damaging misunderstandings.

For example, one of the four functions of support systems is offering help with daily living, which both the child does and a homemaker might also do. However, this does not take into account what the family attitudes are about seeking help or what professional services might, if any, be acceptable to the family. If a simple structural assessment of the family relationships is done, we might find a relative (sister, mother, brother, etc.) willing to come and help in time of need. This often occurs among Puerto Rican families. Or we might find that the mother was used to a very dense support network. When she lost this type of support in the migration to the United States she became clinically depressed and non-functioning. This calls for a very different remediation than not knowing the language or community.

We might find a number of other issues underlying the problem. However, any of these will relate directly to the daughters ability to perform in school. Yet we find that natural support system issues are often not considered in designing a solution to problem school behaviors.

Although school professionals may contact the natural support system for consent and signatures, in how many cases

is the natural support system included in the remediation plan? Rarely. Schools do not think in this way. Options have not been created. Choices remain limited. Consider that Freire's culture of silence is a factor in this family. Would educators and counselors begin to think of resolutions to the presenting problems by using new methods, rather than by creating more of the "same old responses?"

The responses we have already created to special needs in schools are blunted and cumbersome in the face of large numbers. Statistics indicate that these numbers will increase, particularly for the Hispanic population.

In many cases, effective education for Puerto Rican children must come from changing the family and school's interpretation of the problems and expanding the options from which action is taken. By working with and strengthening the natural support systems, we may be able to reach larger numbers of children more effectively at a source closer to the core issues. This will leave the school's resources more available to those children who need the specific type of help offered through special education.

At the moment, we seem to be funneling many types of problems into public school special education programs designed for learning problems and limited types of behavior



dysfunctions.

By helping to create more integrated functioning of the natural support network, we create ongoing skills. If successful, these skills will continue within the natural support system, thus creating an ongoing support for, not only one child, but for all those in the support network. This is certainly a much more extensive result than can be obtained by only working within the special education classrooms.

How do the Puerto Rican natural support systems differ from the description of the support networks already described? This will be the topic of the following chapter.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Connectedness is the degree to which people known by a family meet each other independently of the family, a concept similar to Mitchell and Trickett's concept of density.

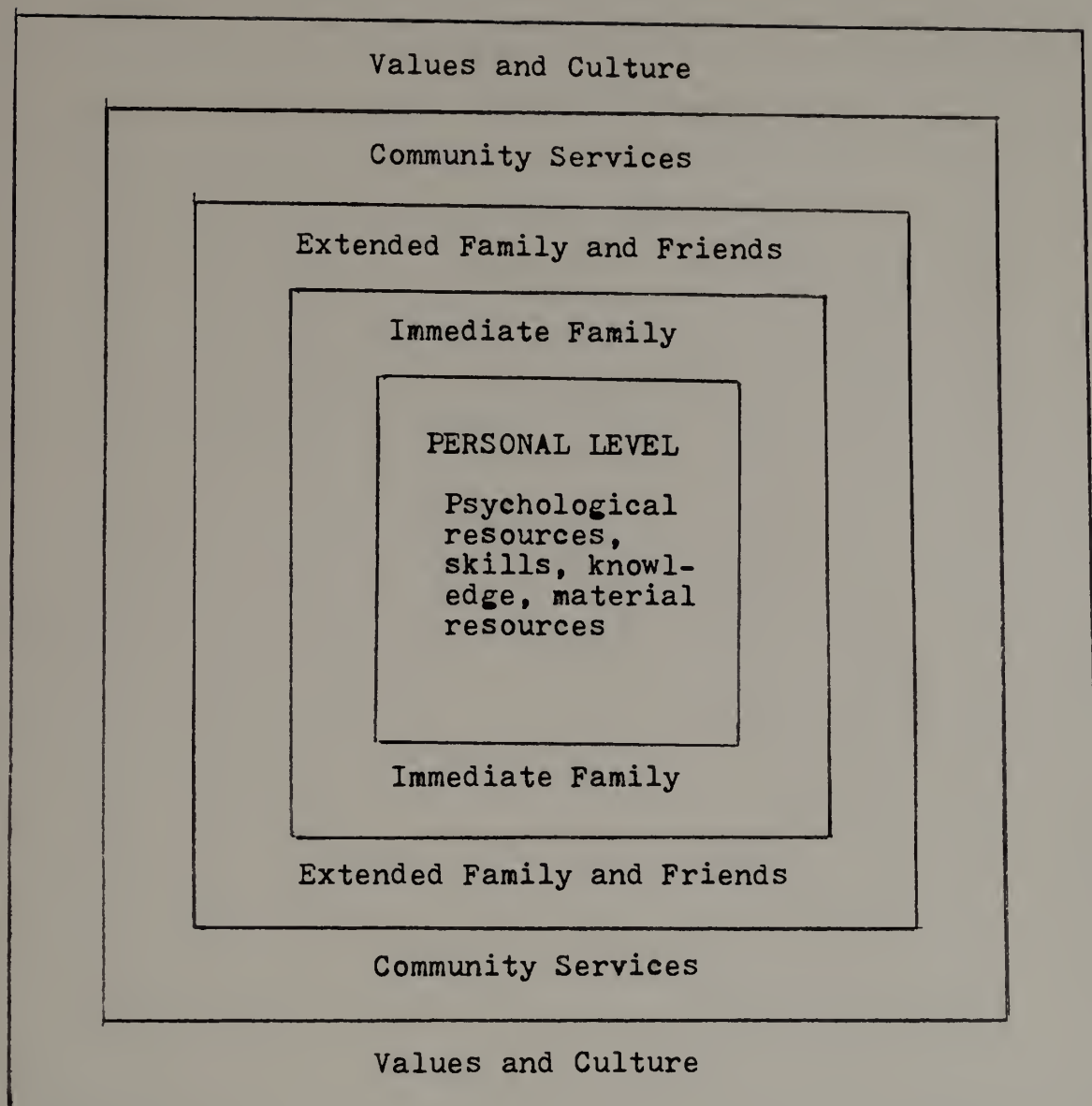


FIGURE 1: LEVELS OF SUPPORT (According to Bronfenbrenner and Nuttal 1977, 1979)

## C H A P T E R   I   V

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: PUERTO RICAN NATURAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Puerto Ricans in the United States form an ethnic minority. Although they are U.S. citizens, the pressures they face on the mainland are those of a transplanted culture. Their life style, rhythms and language are more similar to Latin American countries than the Northern European customs which form the basis of the faster-paced, urban-focused U.S. society.

Puerto Ricans bring their own coping strategies with them. Sometimes certain behavior patterns occur because people are poor and live under oppression not because they belong to one ethnic group or another. In the mind of the public, separating these behaviors from ethnic behaviors can be difficult. For instance, poor education, lack of employment, use of welfare, high drug and alcohol rates and females heads of household are situations endemic in the U.S. Puerto Rican community. However, these are characteristics of oppression (culture of silence) and not indicative of ethnic preferences.

What, then, are the natural support systems unique to the Puerto Rican community?

### Four Types of Puerto Rican Natural Support Systems

Melvin Delgado, Professor of Social Work and a member of the Hispanic community, has done work involving Hispanic support networks. He categorizes natural supports into 4 types:

1. Extended family
2. Religious institutions (Catholic, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness, 7th Day Adventist, among others)
3. Folk healers (spiritists, santeros, herbalists)
4. Merchants and social clubs (grocery stores botanical shops spiritism centers, and community clubs) (Delgado, 1982).

The Puerto Rican extended family is the most important of the support systems and typically includes more than blood relatives in the network--"adopted" relatives, close family friends, compadres, 'hijos de crianza, etc. All these comprise the resource group known as "extended" family.<sup>1</sup>

Religious groups are another important natural resource. Religion in the Puerto Rican community is divided almost entirely between the Catholic religion and the alternative Protestant sects, such as Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, etc. Although about 85% of Puerto Ricans describe themselves as Catholic, only 15% actually follow Church rituals with regularity (Brameld, 1959). Ties to the Catholic Church are often much less intense than those to the fundamentalist groups.



These smaller sects are very active socially and psychologically. Other services include caring for the sick, visiting homes, emergency financial aid, orientation to the city, greeting of new arrivals from Puerto Rico, help with housing and job searches, rehabilitation programs for social deviants (ie: drug addicts, prostitutes) counseling, etc. A strict behavior code for the congregation is laid out with ongoing biblical and moral teachings. Members are expected to strive actively to live up to and within the value system of their Church. A person who falls too far outside of these codes and does not show interest in changing is formally ostracized from the community and the religion. However, members are usually quite dedicated to the teachings and attend church up to 4 or 5 times a week with in-home tutorials for those who cannot attend. Social activities are frequently planned and parents are encouraged to bring children of all ages to both the services and social events.

Folkhealers form a third category in the natural support network. The practice and belief in folk healing was brought with the migrants in their move to the United States. Delgado (1982) mentions 4 types of healers in the Puerto Rican community: 1) the espiritista (spiritist) 2) the santero 3) the herbalist 4) santiguador. The espiritista and santero, says Delgado, focus primarily on emotional and

interpersonal problems; the herbalist and santiguador focus on physical ailments.

An espiritista both diagnoses and treats problems patients bring to him or her.<sup>2</sup> Special ceremonies are designed to communicate with the spirits. These ceremonies help to exorcise invading spirits from ailing persons or break spells (daños) cast upon them. The patient is expected to listen to and follow carefully the advice of the espiritista. This advice includes use of special herbs, prayers as well as non-ritualistic referrals to medical professionals. The reputation of an espiritista grows in the community through the effectiveness of his or her cures and advice. The session may be a private one between healer and patient or may take place with a number of apprentice espiritistas and other people attending the gathering.

The espiritismo branch of folk healing was influenced strongly by Kardec, a 19th century Frenchman who worked with and studied the spirit world. The origins of santerismo, on the other hand, come from African and Roman Catholic religious beliefs.

"Catholic saints assume the characteristics of particular African dieties and exercise influence over human beings, which is manifested in the presence or absence of misfortune. The santero uses African methods to diagnose the presenting symptoms (and prescribe appropriate treatment)... This includes use of songs, music and the

sacrificing of animals. These methods, unlike those of a medium, are highly ritualistic and may last several days."(Delgado 1982)

Herbalists, the third group of folk healers, are specialists in cures through use of plants and other natural elements as medicines. They believe that health comes from an equilibrium of body vibrations or 'humors' and that illness indicates an imbalance in the system. Their cures seek to reestablish the proper and unique balance for each individual. These healers often can be found in botánicas, small community stores which sell a variety of herbs and religious articles. Herbalists may also provide consultations or referrals to local healers.

Santiguadores, like herbalists, are specialists in physical ailments. They

"...treat chronic and intestinal diseases, as well as setting dislocated bones and curing various forms of muscle and body aches... through methods such as the laying on of hands, massages, herbs, prayers, changes in daily routines and...dietary recommendations."(Delgado 1982)

Several community institutions which also form part of the natural support network are the merchants and social clubs. Indigenous to the Puerto Rican community are small grocery stores known as bodegas. The bodega is a gathering place where service is personal and native foods can be found, information about events disseminated and referrals to community resources made. Credit is often given when

finances dwindle at the middle or end of the month.

Bodegas are usually within close reach. It is the "neighborhood corner store" and so transportation is rarely needed. This is not often the case with the larger supermarkets. To use supermarkets the family without a car must request rides from friends or relatives who have transportation, or pay taxi fare.

Delgado mentions that social clubs are part of the natural support system, but not a strong part. The Puerto Rican clubs are usually associated with a home town rather than being a generic gathering place for anyone from the island. People gather at the clubs for entertainment as well as for the passing on of local information.

#### Another Viewpoint

Lydia Mendoza (1980 p.55) conceptualizes the natural support networks in a different way from Delgado. First are the "family and kin-related networks (as mentioned by Delgado). Secondly, she describes the "non-kin/link person networks." These are natural networks comprised of "individuals bonded by ties based on reciprocity and exchange behaviors." Through her research she was able to categorize 3 kinds of link persons:

The servidor(a) comunicativo(a): These were people who had good organization qualities and were frequently involved



in organizations as planners, advocates and program developers. They were often the link between the lay community and the professional agencies. Some were actually hired as paraprofessionals.

The servidor(a) personal: These were people who preferred to work with individuals rather than organizations and whom Mendoza calls the caseworker/counselor. They might refer people to the servidor comunicativo for mediation with the larger agencies. When hired, they often became outreach workers, nurse's aids, or crisis counselors.

The third category of servidor was called a servidor(a) de los vecinos (neighborhood caretaker). These people help their neighbors but know very little about the more formal public services. However, they often know other link persons and thus can provide referrals to more knowledgeable sources when such help is needed.

Third in her description are the cooperative associations. These are groups in which support is action oriented and organized around a common interest, such as the religious groups previously mentioned.

Mendoza stresses that all such helpers operate within an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Without this sense of trust the helping network simply would not function.

#### Combining the Theories: Delgado and Mendoz

Delgado's categories give us a description of how people are grouped together according to their job or function. It does not describe how the people within those categories relate to one another. Mendoza does this by describing more about the human interactions within Delgado's groupings, specifically around helping relationships. One would



probably find, for instance, all three types of "servidor" in the religious institutions. Being a specific type of servidor does not define what job or function someone holds. However, it may determine how effective that individual will be within the position.

For instance, an individual who is a servidor(a) comunicativo(a) and is a practicing Catholic may find themselves involved in a number of community projects sponsored by the Church. This could easily lead to connections with professional agencies, thus increasing the individual's visibility as a leader, organizer in the community. On the other hand, a servidor(a) de los vecinos might be encouraged by the servidor(a) comunicativo(a) to work on some of the projects being organized.

Thus, by combining Delgado's overview of the Puerto Rican natural support system with that of Mendoza we find a more indepth description of how such systems operate.

#### Puerto Rican Cultural Values and Natural Support Systems

Both Delgado (1983) and Mendoza emphasize that Puerto Rican cultural values greatly influence how the support network is utilized. For instance, Puerto Ricans value an active focus-- one where they are advised to do something to bring about change. rather than an insight oriented

approach. This can, for instance, lead to misunderstandings in social service relationships where the worker may wish the "client" to arrive at some inner understanding rather than offering more directive support.

Puerto Ricans have an orientation to the present. This means their coping styles can often lead to crisis intervention and immediacy of assistance rather than more future oriented prevention measures. Also, most Puerto Ricans tend to be most comfortable with hierarchical relationships, where certain people are invested with authority. These leaders are respected and their advice and support is sought. This may mean that, for parents, questioning authority figures, such as teachers or principals, may be very difficult, even when school authorities have acted inequitably.

There is a preference for personal contact with and trust of such people. This leads to use of informal contracts and reciprocal favors rather than the more impersonal system of written agreements between relatively unknown individuals. One author terms this particular preference for personalism as 'confianza en confianza' (trusting in mutual trust) [Velez, 1980, p.45]. This can, for instance, lead to a lack of participation in or understanding of the bureaucratic channels involved in

Puerto Ricans, when one follows through on family and personal obligations, the natural support system will, in turn, encourage and support the individual in his or her affairs.

However, Puerto Ricans in the United States have had to re-locate and reestablish their support networks. Inevitably, as this is done, there are changes. A support network as found in the United States will not be re-created exactly as it was in Puerto Rico. Nor will it function in exactly the same way. Although a number of studies have focused on how support networks function for Hispanic adults, very little has been written on how these networks function for the Puerto Rican child. Even less has been written on the Puerto Rican child who has need of special help in school.

The cultural strength of support systems, though is an important clue to the behaviors of Puerto Rican children. School systems seem to be unaware of or overlook this aspect of behavior. Many professionals become confused because of this when confronted with "symptomatic" behaviors of Puerto Rican students. Although any child whose support system is in crisis will suffer consequences, this is particularly true of Puerto Rican children already at high risk. The heavy cultural emphasis on family and community support

special education procedures. Because many parents are not familiar or practiced with such procedures, they may give the impression of being "unconcerned," rather than confused or suspicious.

As a final example, there is a tendency to believe in the metaphysical--the power of nature over man. This leads to a certain subtle accepting of fate, a wholistic rather than segmented approach to problems and the use of folk healers and religious articles for curing.

These preferences in how to interact affect many Puerto Ricans. Educators and counselors should be aware that such preferences exist in order to more successfully understand the dynamics occurring in situations concerning Puerto Rican families and children.

### Conclusion

In most families, Puerto Rican natural support systems have been culturally very well defined. The roles within the family are clear. There is flexibility in family boundaries to allow for important non-kin to enter into close and ongoing relationship with blood-related members. Interdependence, loyalty, cooperation, along with dignity, respect and a preference for personalism in daily affairs are among some of these more important values. For most

systems makes them more vulnerable because these systems have been weakened in the migration to the United States.

The groups which generally make up the natural support network for Puerto Rican families are, as mentioned by Delgado, the extended family, religious institutions, folk healers and merchants/social clubs. How effectively these support systems function for a child often depends on the amount of stress (personal, financial, social, cultural, etc.) under which the migrants live and their ability to maintain a healthy balance between the new and the old.

For instance, the extended families of many migrant are scattered or non-existent when they move to the U.S. The fundamentalist churches with their focus on extensive involvement in all aspects of a family's life, can begin to substitute for many of the emotional and physical needs previously provided by the family. The different "servidor" types within the congregation can then begin to help integrate the individual families into the community at large. Many families and individuals need such type of support may be very drawn to these groups which provide for spiritual as well as survival needs.

The school systems often continue to discount the strength of the Puerto Rican community and the natural



support systems that maintain these values. It is certain that the more traditionally oriented values and support systems are transforming and adjusting to life in the United States. If the schools do not join with families and support networks to guide this change in a mutually acceptable manner, it is the children who will lose. They will be caught inbetween, unable to decide, unable to learn. One can guess that such indecision would lead to rage. And rage to violence. It is at this point that everyone loses.

This concludes the literature review. The following chapter will describe the field research, review the questionnaires used, and prepare the background for analysis of the data.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

For an in-depth discussion of family networks see the section entitled "The Extended Family" in Chapter II.

The curandero is the main type of healer for the Mexican-American community.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE OF PUERTO RICAN CHILDREN AT RISK IN THE UNITED STATES

#### Overview

Certain children are more liable to have difficulty in school than others. These children are considered to be "at risk." Some who are more at risk than others are children whose family values and backgrounds differ substantially from those customarily encountered in the school system (Canino, 1980). For a Puerto Rican child whose family environment is likely to be under great pressure, entering school is a very crucial time.

The school system itself may cause problems for the child. If there is overcrowding, lack of materials, political difficulties, etc. the school's ability to respond to children's needs is minimized. Working with at-risk children of a different culture and language magnifies any already existing problems. Many school systems were remaining unresponsive to the special problem of such children. Because of this the issues were finally brought to the United States Congress.

#### LEGAL ISSUES: The Federal Government Takes Action

In response to the call for proper remediation of the handicapped, the Federal Government became involved with the

passage of several bills.

The first of these bills was called Education of the Handicapped (PL 93-230, Oct. 1969). This bill discussed standards for special needs testing and assessment. It said that evaluation materials and procedures used must be equally appropriate for all racial and ethnic groups and that all significant factors related to the learning process must be measured. A 1974 amendment to this law, (PL 93 380) also required that states must develop plans providing safeguards against misidentification of handicapped children. This included the rights of parents to be notified of and have the opportunity to question school decisions. The amendment also required that handicapped children be placed in the least restrictive settings.

Pressure from class action suits first led Congress to pass the 1974 amendment (Pl 93-380) and then, in 1975, the more explicit Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142). Coinciding with these class action suits were various research studies documenting discrimination in public education (Mass Advocacy Report, 1978; Children's Defense Fund Report, 1974; HEW statistics).

PL 94-142 became operative on Oct. 1, 1977. This law provided financial aid to state and local educational

institutions if they met certain eligibility criteria. The purpose of this act was to:

..."assure that ALL handicapped children have available to them...a free appropriate education which emphasizes special education, and related services designed to meet their special needs." (PL 94-142)

It provided 'complete' services for the children, early identification of the handicapped, due process, inservice staff training, mainstreaming, individually appropriate educational programs, and non-discriminatory education procedures.

Condon (1979) indicates that with respect to Spanish speaking special needs children, certain items were meant to help assure proper assessment. Unfortunately, she says, within each item lay its own flaw. For instance, the translation of tests into the child's native language was provided. However, translation of tests does not necessarily eliminate cultural bias. The law provided that the tests be normed on different groups. Condon states that various norm groupings, although helping to equalize test procedures, is limited in terms of relevancy, reliability and bias. Also required was identification and teaching of skills needed by the minority group to survive in the majority culture. This point inherently assumes that the majority culture is of more value than the child's own culture.



Condon's comments are but a part of the controversy following the passage and implementation of PL 94-142. Donald Bersorf's article, "Using the Legal System to Secure the Right to an Appropriate Education (1982), cites several class action cases which attempt to clarify the scope of power of the law (PARC: Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children vs. Commonwealth; Larry P. vs Riles, California.)

He also cites more recent attempts by the Federal Government to replace handicapped funding with block grants giving states and agencies discretionary use of the funds (Reagan's proposed Elementary and Secondary Education Consolidation Act, 1981).

What these last paragraphs indicate is that at the national level, implementation and funding for the services to handicapped children is a politically unstable issue, especially since the programs are costly and many are still in need of refinement.

Researchers studied the effectiveness of the PL 94-142 and noted many

"...additional fiscal and procedural burdens imposed on school districts by the mandates of PL 94-142." (Bersoff, D. p.515)

Increasingly, they have noted the difficulties inherent in the realignments of responsibilities among special educators, regular educators and parents.

They have also noted progress in inclusion of handicapped children with their non-handicapped peers in public education programs, at least administratively, though sometimes not socially and instructionally.

#### The State Government Takes Action

What occurs at the national level is then reflected at the state level. It is here that the details of implementation occur.

In 1972, Massachusetts passed the Special Education law titled Chapter 766 three years before the passage of the Federal law. This legislation superceded the previous 1960 state law -- Chapter 750.<sup>1</sup> The new law was designed to:

"...protect children from arbitrary and discriminatory classifications in special education while ensuring that all children who need special help receive adequate and appropriate programs in the least restrictive environments possible" (Mass. Advocacy Center, 1978, p.1).

Chapter 766 also provided for monitoring and enforcement of its own regulations. It required schools to submit statistical data on children in special programs. This data would then be analyzed by the Massachusetts Department of

Education. If any evidence showed denial of equal educational opportunities the State was empowered to investigate and issue injunctions to correct the situation. A major change of focus here was that the laws placed the burden with the institutions rather than the parent to disprove discrimination.

In 1978, the Mass Advocay Center, a non-profit agency which advocates for chidlren in education, health and social services, found that the Department of Education had neither analyzed the Special Education information from the school districts as required nor had it monitored placements for discrimination. The prima facia evidence indicated that Chapter 766 was not being fully implemented for many racial and linguistic minority children.

It was also found that in certain school districts minority students were enrolled in special education at significantly different rates than non-minority students. They were overrepresented in the more restrictive in-school programs (502.3 and 502.4) and underrepresented in the special day and residential programs (502.5 and 502.6--the more costly programs taking place outside of the public school buildings). Even within the Hispanic population, students labeled "non-white" were found to be placed in more restricted programs than those labeled Hispanic-white.

This report suggested that over-enrollment of Hispanic children in special education in Massachusetts was due either to using special education as

"an excuse for not developing adequate language programs," (p.10)"

automatically passing children into special education programs after completing their 3 years of Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or the lack of bilingual test materials and proper test evaluators. In many cases, even when a child was properly assessed, appropriate services might not be available.

These statewide educational difficulties were documented 6 years ago. To illustrate what has happened since 1978, the following section will review events in Holyoke, a racially and ethnically mixed industrial city in Western, Mass.

However before we do so a brief outline of Chapter 766 requirements in Massachusetts will be given. This brief description is important for understanding the complexity and thoroughness of work accompanying any formal referral for special services.

#### Chapter 766: The State Special Education Law

Chapter 766 is a Massachusetts state law. The state law requires that a child with special needs be given an education planned to meet those needs. Since it adheres to federal guidelines as designated by Public Law (PL) 94-142, in-state professionals will refer to special education legislation by its state rather than its federal name.

The focus of this dissertation is actually on what is called the pre-referral stage. A "referral" is the formal process which determines if a child needs special services. It also determines what those services should be. However, by the time a child undergoes a formal evaluation, much work on the part of professionals and families has already occurred. In a number of cases, some or much of this effort might have been avoided or reduced.



## THE PUERTO RICAN EXPERIENCE IN HOLYOKE

The 1978 Double Jeopardy Report points to Holyoke, Massachusetts as characterizing the difficulties and successes which cities have undergone in adjusting to the Chapter 766 mandates.

Holyoke is an industrial city which in the past century has weathered waves of immigrants--the Irish, French Canadians, Polish, and now the Puerto Ricans. But the Puerto Rican story is a somewhat different one from the others.

According to the 1980 census, the Puerto Ricans make up 13.7% of the city's population whereas the 1970 census showed an approximate 3.2% of Hispanics in the city. It should be noted that this figure is generally regarded as low because of deficiencies in the census taking for that year. Some professionals estimate that the current population (1984-5) is closer to 20%.<sup>2</sup>

They come to a city which has been on the decline. The population has dropped from 60,000 to 40,000; some of the mills are no longer operating. Low income housing is often substandard or non-existent due respectively to lack of care and arson, yet rents are not lower. Many of the entry level jobs no longer exist due to increasing technology, changing

demands and competition from other non-Hispanic groups.

Unlike previous immigrants to Holyoke, the Puerto Ricans are already U.S. citizens. They come to Holyoke for various reasons, including better medical care, better education for their children, adventure, better jobs, or, if jobs are unavailable, welfare benefits which, although minimal, provide double to benefits available in Puerto Rico (Worth, 1983).

Their arrival is airborne, quick and relatively inexpensive. This leads to what has been called a "revolving" door migration--semipermanent settling with trips back and forth from mainland to island as economic and emotional pressures on either side wax or wane. This flexibility of choice leads to increased conflict for each individual. Many are unclear as to whether the chance for a better life should cost them their ethnic identity.

Arrival in Holyoke is often, but not always, to the homes of family or friends. Once here, they meet the

"...grudging indifference of a majority population that often romanticizes its own troubled beginnings here. They are accused of clinging to their heritage, being coddled by welfare, creating racial and other tensions, and being fickle for shuttling to Puerto Rico and back." (Worth, 1983)

Yet in the 1980's Puerto Ricans have made inroads into

areas of community life, including desegregation of the school, appointment to certain municipal boards and political office. And, according to school enrollment records the population is growing.

The people who comprise Holyoke's Puerto Rican community are varied. They include professionals, middle class families, merchants, secretaries, welfare families, manual laborers, those born here and others who migrated from Puerto Rico, those who speak only Spanish or only English and those who speak both. It is a diverse population with diverse needs held together through the bonds of a common culture.

Although many Puerto Ricans eventually hope to return to their island, this option is often even less promising than life in Holyoke. Statistics for 1982 showed unemployment on the island up to 22.8% (although economists indicate this figure may actually be closer to 40%) while welfare and medical benefits to families are often half of what are received in the United States.(Worth, 1983). The Census figures indicate that Holyoke's Puerto Rican families have an average annual income of \$8,158 compared to the white family income average of \$21,158. Less than 2% own their own homes; most live in crowded tenements. Keeping all this in mind, some immigrants feel life in Holyoke, although harsh,

offers more hope, in certain respects, than could be found in Puerto Rico.

Hispanic families in Holyoke average the largest in the state, with the average age of Puerto Ricans in the city less than 17 years. Along with this, Holyoke has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the state and the highest rate of teen age births (23.2% as compared to 17.8% in Springfield--the city with the next highest teen birth rate). Census figures show that of the 6,111 Hispanics in the city, 59.9% live below the poverty level as compared to 1.1% of the white and 43.5% of the black population.

"Of particular concern," states Barbara LeBlanc, special reporter for Hispanic issues of the Holyoke Transcript, "is the disparity between the infant death rate for white and minority residents. State statistics place the death rate at 9.2 for white residents and 13.2 for non-white residents."

It is within this context that the city of Holyoke and its Hispanic population interact. Since so many Hispanics are below the age of 17, many of the pressures and conflicts will be felt in the school systems. For a number of years this situation was even more complex because up until 1979 Holyoke had resisted changing its educational policies concerning minorities.

In June 1979, the Massachusetts Department of Education issued a decision upholding the allegations that black and

Hispanic students were denied equal education in Holyoke. This particularly concerned participation in special education programs and services. A consent decree (Docket 790-001) was drawn up and signed on February, 1980. The goals of this program were to identify and provide services to the minority students. This meant providing appropriate personnel, proper assessment of skills and language ability, and intervention techniques.

#### Types of Special Education Classrooms

First, it should be explained that there are a number of models for special education instruction. In this paper I will be referring only to public school special education for behavior or learning disabled children where the program takes place within the confines of the school itself. I will not be discussing special programs for physically handicapped or other disabled children.

Many special classrooms are called "resource rooms." This type of arrangement involves a special classroom(s) and teacher(s) who draw children from their regular class placement for remediation. A child can spend anywhere from 15 minutes to most of the entire day in the special class depending on need. For most students, placement in the special class is not for the entire day, although it may supply his/her major academic program. There is a strong



legal mandate to "mainstream" such children in as many regular activities and classes as possible. For this reason, the resource room classes are not considered a home-base, even for children who spend much of their day there.

Another public school style of special class is the self contained, home-base classroom. This can be set up for children whose diagnosis is behavior disordered/emotionally disturbed, even though they also exhibit learning problems. Due to their disruptive behavior patterns such children do not manage well in the regular class or resource room. The self contained type of classrooms are found less frequently than resource rooms. This is especially true since the recent emphasis on "mainstreaming" special needs children in the regular classroom as much as possible.

### Project Prep

In Holyoke, a new first step to the special education process has been initiated. This first step is called Project Prep (Pupil Review and Examination Process). The program is designed to resolve problems

"...as quickly as possible before the situation becomes so serious that the student needs special services. The process takes place during the time a student demonstrates problems within the regular education classroom. It is a short term program that attempts to determine if a child's problem, once identified, can be remediated within the regular school program. Once this remedial school program has been attempted and is

unsuccessful, then and only then will the child be referred for special education." (Project Prep mimeograph, p. 1)

Essentially, the teacher identifies a student with possible special needs, notifies the principal and fills out a conference form requesting a parent-teacher conference. The teacher is asked to fill out certain data forms for the student's Project Prep folder which summarizes the students academic and behavioral performance. After a parent conference is held, a programmer (the person designated to coordinate and manage the services involved in such evaluations) then gives the information to appropriate staff members who will attempt to modify the student's program. These individuals conduct the necessary screenings and in-class observations. Modifications in the students program are suggested and then discussed with the teacher. The parent is not required to be present at these meetings.

All suggestions are recorded in the folder. At the end of 30 days the team meets (with parents invited) to determine if the interventions were successful. If so, the modifications are continued and the case is closed. If not, the referral for a special education evaluation is begun.

### The Formal Referral

The schools in Holyoke, as mandated by state law, begin to look for children who may need special attention before

they reach kindergarten. This is done through a short screening process to see if any youngsters need further evaluation at that time. Parents, however, of any children ages 3-22 may themselves recommend their child for an evaluation at any time they feel their child is not receiving adequate help. This is done by requesting a Referral for Evaluation form from the school principal, special education administrator or Regional Education Office.

Actually, a number of people besides the parents can also recommend that a referral be initiated including the children themselves if they are over 18. Other people who may do so are teachers, school professionals judges, the child's guardians, social workers or family doctor. If someone besides the parent has referred the child a notice is sent to the home stating who made the referral and why. This notice explains the parents rights during the evaluation. These include such things as participation in all meetings involving the child's educational plan, if the parent so choses, with one other person of their choice, the right to an independent evaluation if the parent does not agree with the team evaluation, a home visit, etc.

A meeting called the pre-evaluation conference can be set up if the parent so desires. This meeting is to review

the reasons the child has been referred to answer any questions about the up coming process, and to help decide what kind of evaluation will take place.

The core evaluation itself is defined as being:

"...a group of tests and assessments describing what a child can do which provides the basis for developing his/her education plan." (Parents and 766)

There are 5 parts to a full core evaluation. These are:

- An educational history: This is a description of the types of programs and services the child has received.
- A psychological assessment: These are tests and observations done by a psychologist in the areas in which the student has difficulty. There are no mandated tests, however, the standard psychological selection of tests in Holyoke are: WISC and WISC-R, Bender-Gestalt, Draw-a-person. Observation is also used, as is the Wide Range Achievement Test for academic skills.
- Description of classroom preformance: This is a report by the child's current teachers on the student's performance in a number of subject areas.
- A medical examination: This can be done by either the school or the family physician.
- A family history which may involve a home visit: This is a description by the parent of the child's behaviors and skills in the home environment. A nurse, social worker or school counselor meets with the parents either in the school or home to discuss these issues.

Some children do not need evaluation in all the above areas. Generally, in cases where a child is in the regular classroom at least 3/4 of the time or could remain in class with some extra help, an intermediate evaluation is held.

After the assessments are done, the Core Evaluation Team meets to discuss the results which will become the basis for an individualized educational plan. Parents are encouraged to attend this meeting and can bring a friend, advocate or translator with them. If parents are dissatisfied with the team assessments they may chose to ask for a reassessment or go for private testing at their own expense.

From the information in the assessment a detailed educational plan is developed . The school then provides a program which will meet the educational objectives described in the paln. In some cases, children may need to attend facilities outside of their normal school district.

Within 10 days after the Core Evaluation conference, the parents receive a copy of the Plan. This copy is signed and returned whether or not the parent has approved. If the parent disapproves, a 30 day period is provided for negotiating and changing the plan.

Parents who cannot come to an agreement may initiate and appeal process which includes mediation hearings with the bureaus of Special Education Appeals, appeals to the State Advisory Commission and finally to the State Superior Court.



As can be seen, Chapter 766 is a comprehensive law designed to provide equal opportunity for the child with special needs. As can also been seen, the sheer number of contacts, paperwork and people involved has the potential, despite the intentions, to make referrals for evaluations a time consuming and frustrating undertaking.

#### Teacher and Counselor Comments

In 1983, three years after the Consent Decree was issued, a city-wide special education conference was held. The superintendent of Schools announced that the city was in compliance with the consent decree. Teachers and counselors at the conference stated that the referral process was in place with linguistic and cultural factors being considered when modifying children's programs. However, they did have concerns. They doubted whether referrals were able to be done in a 'timely' manner and strongly commented on the excessive administrative time needed to carry out the program design.

These factors, they felt, as well as the increased caseload made remediation available but inadequate for a number of students. The students who showed the most extreme needs were serviced more intensely. Staff members said they felt badly that the less demanding child, although not forgotten, was put on a lower priority.

Although services included outreach to the homes in certain situations and an awareness of trying to make parents feel welcome many still did not visit or connect with the schools. Unfortunately, though the federal and state laws required that parents be a part of the new special education processes, these bills focused on inadequacies and solutions within the school systems. Substantial use of parental or community resources is not included.

### Summary

In summary, we can see a long struggle to provide equal educational opportunity to Puerto Rican youngsters in the United States. This struggle began in the 1960's with other civils rights actions and has found its power in the 1975 National Education Law for All Handicapped Children (PL 94-142). This law, however, has been controversial. It has had very broad mandates which have needed testing through the legal system as to exactly what services towns and cities are required to provide.

Many of these programs are expensive and in need of refinement. With financial and emotionally laden legal issues at stake, many towns and cities nationwide were slow to initiate more than was absolutely necessary. It was not

until the city of Holyoke, Mass. was brought to court that the school system began to change its inequitable educational balances for minority students.

This has meant that some sophistication and action in the political arena is necessary before real change occurs. If we review the complex history of Puerto Rican political involvement in the U.S. we see that Puerto Ricans have been at a disadvantage for some time. Although the Puerto Rican community can now be described as politically active and making decided inroads into the political establishment, it still does not have the strength and organization of experience in years behind it.

This means that for a long while, Puerto Rican citizens have not had influence, and this means not having influence over educational programming. Even in the more informal ways of influencing a child's educational program, such as discussion with the teachers, parent-teacher organizations, speaking to principals or superintendents, volunteering time in a classroom, etc., Puerto Rican parents and children have been disadvantaged. Language differences often preclude effective discussions, even if a translator is available. Cultural differences create misunderstandings. Economic distress, poor housing, medical problems, separated family members, etc., may all cause families to move more often

than is good for children in school.

All of these factors leave schools distant from the children and families they serve. Combine this with the fact that many school personnel are not knowledgeable about the Puerto Rican cultural differences and history or the behaviors of oppression, and we find an even more alienating situations occurring because of unintentional misunderstandings.

Puerto Rican families in Holyoke are clearly under stress with poverty, poor housing , high infant mortality rates, language and climate difficulties, and a harsh employment market. Since a great number of Puerto Ricans are under the age of 17, many of these issues will be reflected in the schools. If the system for helping children in need (Chapter 766 in Massachusetts, PL-94-142 nationally), continues to be as cumbersome as described in this chapter, in the face of large numbers, it will finally end up obstructing, rather than facilitating, the original purpose for which it was meant. Some would say that such obstruction is already the current state of affairs.

Such a complex (although well meant) system is, in actuality, so bureaucratic that it can alienate many Puerto Rican parents (or for that matter, any parent). Puerto

Ricans come from a culture which prefers personalism in daily contact. A good number of parents speak only Spanish, which complicates communication (even though translators may be available), with large groups of professionals, many of whom speak only English. We can say that the structure of the Education Law, in practice and in theory, is often not understandable for many Puerto Rican parents. The fact that Puerto Rican parents may not easily understand how the law works suggests that they will have minimal participation in the formulation of school programs for their children in need.



## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 750 provided for instruction and training of "certain" emotionally disturbed children and state reimbursement to towns for such expenses.

<sup>2</sup> This is a population estimate by the Director of Hispanic Programs at a major mental health center in Holyoke. A 22% ratio has also been estimated by other sources.

## CHAPTER VI

### METHODOLOGY

The research in this thesis investigates the network of services in a Puerto Rican community in Holyoke, Mass. The primary purpose of the interviews was to obtain first hand information about natural support systems from the children at school, their teachers, families in the home setting, and professionals in the field.

The writer originally proposed to interview 10-15 children, their families and 6-8 professionals with visits be centered around an interview questionnaire. The interviews were to be done in Spanish or English depending on the preferred language of the interviewees. An explanation of how and why these particular interview questions were chosen is included in the appendix of questionnaires.

The number of family/school interviews to be conducted (10-15) was chosen in order to identify a network and not for statistical analysis. In this sense, the sample size is one, and the criterion is completeness of the identified service connections. At each stage of the research, enough people were interviewed to assure that redundancy of information had been achieved.

Unless care is taken in research studies involving human subjects, there can be a sense of exploitation on the part of those being interviewed. In order to address this issue, I wanted to offer what might be considered reciprocal service. I hoped this would occur by my being seen as an approachable person to whom they might direct questions concerning the education process or community resources. I would do my best to answer those questions or help them contact people who could do so, although this was not a part of the research study.

Because the sample in this study was to be so small, I attempted to keep some of the environmental factors similar (such as school and neighborhood). In this way, certain patterns might show up more clearly. For instance, if the families interviewed all lived in one general area, then there would be more of a chance that school and community influences might be similar. Questioning a family about which community resources they used would provide information about their coping style, problems and support networks. Why might one family on a block decide to use the local bodega (grocery) rather than the larger supermarket? Are most of the apartments in this area walk ups with 4 floors? Does that mean anything in terms of family use of support networks? Therefore, the field research will be dealing with children of working class families. The

particular neighborhoods in which the study was done attracted this type of population.

The first step was to look for children in the same school and same grade. I decided to start in a 5th grade classrooms. Fifth grade is a time when children can be quite verbal, have experienced enough school life to be accustomed to the routines, but do not yet exhibit the more independent behaviors of older children. That is to say, children at this age are normally expected to be more involved with the family support systems rather than with their peers. This is important in identifying family coping patterns and service usage within the natural networks.

Another reason for using 5th graders is that a number of Puerto Rican children, especially those involved in special education may be older due to being held back in previous grades. If not enough children were available for the study in that room, I had the advantage of being able to go up or down 1 grade level but remain in the same school (Holyoke Schools are usually divided into grades 1-3 and 4-6). This would keep the study within the same general school and community area.

Permission to conduct the study had to be obtained from school administration, building principals, teachers and the

families themselves. In the spring of 1984, the Director of Pupil Services spoke with the School Board and received permission for me to do the study in the city schools. This was also approved by the Superintendent. I waited for the next academic year, 1985 to speak with building principals and teachers in order to select children for the study.

It was suggested by the Pupil Services Director that I work out of a particular elementary school in the heart of the Puerto Rican neighborhoods. This school services approximately 600 students, 70% of whom are Puerto Rican. Grades 4-6 are housed here as well as a number other educational programs (the bilingual program, programs for the multiply handicapped and developmentally delayed students, kindergarten, etc.). There was one part time guidance counselor. The principal as aided by the secretary made up the administrative personnel. Plans for the coming school year included a vice principal and a full time rather than part time guidance counselor.

#### Setting Up the Interview with Families and Children

The two special education resource rooms, bilingual fifth grade and bilingual sixth grades were contacted. In selection of non-special education students, I decided to focus my contacts in bilingual fifth and sixth grade classrooms rather than all-English speaking classes. The



bilingual rooms were composed of all Spanish speaking children. It was more likely that from the bilingual student population enough Puerto Rican families would respond affirmatively to assure the number and type of visits required for the research study. The number of Puerto Rican children in the English speaking classes were much fewer and so would probably have required me to use many more classrooms in order to obtain a similar number of affirmative replies. This would have defeated the original intent to focus on as few classrooms as possible. This was done in order to keep the number of variables affecting children and their support systems as similar as possible. Reduction of such variables, it was thought, would allow support system patterns among the families to stand out more clearly.

Due to confidentiality laws, teachers were asked to select the names of their Puerto Rican students and address the envelopes without my knowing the family or child's names. The post card reply from the family was to be sent to the main office for administrative record keeping and then turned over to me. At that point I was allowed to contact the family directly.

Of 50 letters sent, 15 families replied. No letters were returned by the Post Office as being undeliverable. The

letters were mailed at the end of March and the majority of responses were returned within the first 2 weeks. 3 were returned within 4 weeks and the last one was returned approximately 6 weeks from the time of the original mailing.

The confidentiality process substantially restricted my access to students. Requesting written permission in a formal letter by an essentially unknown researcher as the first contact with the family most likely limited which individuals responded. I did not have a chance to meet the family first and thus ask permission in a more personalized manner. This personal contact, as discussed in previous chapters, is particularly important in working with many of the Puerto Rican people. Feedback from school professionals was that some of the parents or guardians simply do not respond to written correspondence or requests from the school system.

My original proposal was to interview Puerto Rican boys involved in 3 different categories--those in special education, those referred to special education and regular class students. The original study was to focus on boys since it has been noted boys outnumber girls in special class placement sometimes by nine or ten to one (Reinhart, 1980, p.7). By concentrating on boys it was felt that gender issues would not confuse results. However, after reviewing

the files it was clear that no boys were available from this school who were in the referral stages. It was also be unclear how many families of boys would respond at all.

Discussion with Dr. Alschuler, my chairperson, led to the revisions in this part of the proposal. First, it was seen that the project sample needed illustrations on a continuum of academic accomplishments, not necessarily groups of people in a similar gender category. If the students who replied to the letter represented a continuum running from doing very well in the regular classroom to doing poorly in special education then this would serve the function needed for the project. This function was to identify natural support connections of special class and non-special class Puerto Rican children. It was decided that excluding girls would not serve any clear purpose at this stage of research. The research was to identify service connections in a descriptive manner, not to prove a statistically significant fact.

Letters of explanation and inquiry had to be sent in both English and Spanish. University letterhead paper was used in order to help assure the families of the legitimacy of the study. Enclosed was a pre-stamped, addressed envelope and letter to be signed by the family indicating their interest or lack thereof and an assurance of confidentiality

of information.

For those people who responded with 'yes' I confirmed dates and times of an interview by letter. Enclosed was another post card which they could return to me changing the interview time if necessary. In all cases a statement of consent would be signed before the interview began (see appendix) and a thank you letter written on termination of the contact.

### Description of the Families

First of all, what did the families "look like?"

All 16 of the children interviewed attended the same school, were in grades 4 through 6 and between the ages of 10 and 15. 11 students were in transitional bilingual education classes, 7 in special education and one child had just been referred for special education. 12 students had repeated at least one grade and over half had absences averaging more than 20 days a year.

In all 15 families (2 students were siblings), the children were living with their natural mother, but in only 6 families was the natural father present. 6 children had stepfathers and 4 were living only with the mother. Families had from 1 to 8 children, although in 9 cases some were

already grown and out of the house. In 5 families these children were teenage girls who became pregnant and moved out with the young father. They would, at different points, come back into the family with or without their partners for periods of time depending on the emotional and financial pressures in their lives.

Among extended family members, there seemed to be more support between close relatives (such as parents and children, siblings, nephews, nieces and grandparents) than among friends or ritualistic relatives. None of the families interviewed had "hijos de crianza" living with them and only 2 had any type of contact with godparents. In only 4 of the families was anyone besides nuclear family members (where, in this case, nuclear family will be defined as including the stepfather) living in the same household. Of these people, all were in a "close relative" category, being either an aunt, first cousin, grandparent or grandchild. This tends to support the idea that the Hispanic families in the United States are following a "modified extended family format." Such an arrangement is defined as a series of nuclear families bound together with a strong emphasis on maintaining extended family ties. (Jaime Sena-Rivera in Valle and Vega, 1980)

The families came from generally similar neighborhoods,



living in or on the edge of the ghetto area. No families owned property or occupied a single family house. All rented apartments in old tenement buildings or projects except for 2 who each rented half of a duplex house. Most dwellings had 3-5 rooms. While one family had only 3 rooms, 9 families lived in 5 room apartments. 7 of the 15 families had phones, and 8 owned their own cars or had close relatives, such as a daughter or father-in-law, who did.

Educational levels ranged from no schooling to one or 2 years of college; however, the majority of parents had completed the 6th grade (only 5 adults out of 24 reported less than a 6th grade education).

Economically, the families belonged to a lower class income range. All but one family were, in some measure, dependent on government relief (Welfare or SSI). Only one mother was currently working. Her job was mandated by Welfare and took place in a sheltered situation. 9 mothers said they preferred to stay inside (this included the one mother who was working) while 4 went out primarily to attend church or child-related activities (ie: school meetings, ball games, etc). Only 2 mothers said they simply liked to "go out"--to take walks, go window shopping and so on.

3 of the 11 available male guardians held jobs; 7 were

considered incapacitated and 1, although physically fit, was unable to find work. All parents in the sample and 10 of the children were born in Puerto Rico. 9 families had been in the United States 10 years or more while the 6 others had been here for at least 2 years. All families spoke Spanish although some children preferred English. Only 5 of the 15 families had one or more adults who could speak English well enough to use it in complex situations.

When people were asked about use of botánicas and espiritistas, (see Figure 2 at the end of this chapter) only 2 families said they used such services. Another mother said that while she had gone to espiritistas in Puerto Rico, she did not trust those that were here and so did not use their services. Other families said, no, they did not use an espiritista and dropped the topic abruptly. Since adherence to the beliefs of spiritism is a highly sensitive issue in the Puerto Rican community, I did not explore the issue in any depth if there seemed to be some resistance. Since this was a question on utilization only, an expanded answer was always of great interest, but not necessary for the interview. My preference was to let the family decide whether or not to elaborate on their answer beyond the initial yes or no response. However, had I been visiting the family a number of times I would have re-surfaced this more delicate topic to gather more in-depth information, both

about utilization and family feelings about such services.

All families generally reported shopping at the same 4 or 5 supermarkets and local "bodegas" (small community groceries).

Fourteen families reported using only recreational facilities in or closeby to Holyoke. Only 1 family mentioned using a recreational site at some distance from the city. There seemed to be no major use of community recreational facilities beyond the "parks." 6 families mentioned using parks and lakes, several specifically mentioned an amusement park located about 3 miles from the city center. 5 families said church related activities were enjoyable and relaxing, including reading the Bible. Other activities included cooking, fishing, dominos, visiting with friends and sleeping. Only one person mentioned going to the movies and no one mentioned using libraries, museums, organized clubs, or other community supported facilities or activities besides those which were church related.

The children, like their parents, did not seem to participate in many organized community activities other than church related. Many mentioned summertime swimming at a nearby community pool as a favorite activity. 4 children talked about bike riding, and 8 said they played ball. Only

one child said that the ball playing was an organized community game. No one went to summer camps or said what activities replaced these during the winter months. It might be assumed that television watching, a favorite of 10 children, would become more important as the winter approaches.

What specifically was the religious profile of the families in the sample? Of the 15 families in this study, 7 stated that they were Catholic, 5 Pentecostal, 2 Jehovah Witness and one family was unaffiliated (see Figure 3 at the end of this chapter). More importantly than the sect was the intensity of involvement in the religious practice (see Figure #3A). Of the 7 families who stated they were Catholic, less than half (3) were practicing. Of these 2 families said they went to Church services regularly each week, and one also attended church activities besides Mass.

Of the 5 Pentecostal families, however, the level of intense involvement was quite high. 4 out of the 5 families attended church 4 times a week and were also responsible for some type of function in the church. The one other family was assessed by a local mental health center as being clinically disturbed. The mother stated that irregular church attendance was due to "psychological episodes" on the part of the mother.

The families of the fundamentalist religions were very clear about the type of practical help they received from their churches. For instance, one woman needed airfare to bring her family to the U.S. because she was concerned about their education. Church members in Puerto Rico raised that money; once here they helped her with housing and transportation, and social activities. Another woman spoke of church members as lending their telephones or automobiles, or being used as interpreters at meetings, etc. One man even said the church gave him spiritual guidance in helping his son with homework. Such types of help are normally requested of family members. These individuals felt that a major source of their support came from the church brother and sisterhood.

As far as community supported institutional resources (see Figure 2 at the end of this chapter) every family used one of 2 hospitals and several clinics available in the city. All families had used welfare at one time and 14 of 15 families were currently receiving benefits. Mental health clinics had been used by 7 families although only 3 families said that they had used them with any frequency or regularity. Use of mental health facilities in the Puerto Rican community, like the topic of spiritism, is often a delicate subject. It appeared that family members were being



straight-forward with their responses. But it must be kept in mind that more complete information might be considered too delicate to share in such a one-time only interview/visit.

The legal system (police, courts, legal aid) had been used by 9 families. 3 families specifically used legal aid for advice around apartment problems (of which there are many in Holyoke), while the other 6 had called on police to intervene in family or individual conduct.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) had been involved with 4 families but in 3 of these instances the intervention was brought on by an outside person (ie: reports of child neglect by an outreach worker, truant officers called in, etc.) rather than the agency being looked upon as a supportive resource for the family. Homemakers and visiting nurses had only been used by 1 and 2 families respectively. Educational programs for the adult community (ie: English lessons, sewing, etc.) had been used by only one adult.

Most families were familiar with the concepts of visiting nurses and homemakers. However, in one or two cases I did need to explain before the family was able to answer. This was not the case with the DSS services. In most of the

interviews, families confused DSS with Welfare and did not have a clear concept of the differences. This might explain the low voluntary involvement with the Department of Social Services.

#### Criteria for Organizing the Data: Students

With all this descriptive data, it is important to describe how the information will be organized. The research design required that students chosen to participate in the study provide a range on the academic continuum from good to poor. The children were rank ordered, comparing one to the other on 3 factors: teacher assessed ability, appropriate age for grade level, and appropriate reading achievement for grade level. In order to establish the order children were scored according to the 3 criteria. The lower the point score the better the student. Students were then placed on the continuum, from good performance to poor performance, according to the scores they received. (See Figure #4 at the end of this chapter).

How were scores determined in deciding which students showed good performance, and which showed poor?

Teacher verbal assessment of student skill and age were the first and second factors. Points were given in the following manner:

- 1 point given if student was failing
  - 1/2 point given for "poor" work
  - 1/4 point for "medium" work
  - 1/8 point for "good" work
  - 1/16 point for "very good" work
  - 0 point for "excellent" work.
- 
- 1/2 point given for each year older than grade level (9-10 yrs. for 4th grade, 10-11 yrs. for 5th grade, 11-12 yrs. for 6th grade)

It is important to note that this categorization for students working at grade level is created only in order to have some visual means of comparison between students whose work is adequate. It is not meant in any way to value only those children whose performances are "excellent" or demean those whose performances are good or average for their grade level.

For example, someone doing very well would be higher on the continuum than someone doing only average or "medium" work. However, a child who was older than grade level would be dropped behind 1/2 point for each year older than grade level. So on the academic performance continuum, a student one year older than grade level who is doing "very good" work might be ranked behind a student doing "good" work" because of the year difference in ages.

Reading level scores were given in the following manner: A child reading below grade level would be scored 1 point for each year below grade level reading. However, if the teacher assessed the student as one who is working to potential, and/or making good effort or progress, then the grade level reading score can be increased by 50%; a child

whose work the teacher assesses as poor, cannot or will not do anything, low motivation, etc. receives no percentage increase; a child whose academic abilities fall between those two categories receives an increase of 25% in grade level reading score.

A sample of how scores were computed follows:

One student in 5th grade is reading 2 years below grade level, is 1 year older than standard for 5th grade and is assessed as "many absences, not keeping up." The student is scored 2 points for reading 2 years below grade level, 1/2 point is added for being 1 year older than grade level. This gives us 2 1/2 points. Since she is not assessed as either being a poor worker or a good worker, we place her in the middle. This allows us to subtract 25% off the reading score ( $.25 \times 2 \text{ points} = .5$ ) which leaves us with a total score of 2 1/4 points. When the raw data is compiled on a chart including all students, we then see the range of academic performance from good to poor. Also included on this same chart (see Figure 2) is an indication of whether a student is involved in special education or not. This extra information will be referred to in the analysis chapter.

Figure 2 shows the research sample does satisfy the requirement that the students range in their academic skills from good to poor.

### Categorizing the Data: Families

The next information which needs categorizing is that concerning the families.

The description of data about the 15 families interviewed showed a number of similarities between them (ie: living in the same general area, having the same

general income levels, association with a religion or church, born in Puerto Rico and emigrated to the United States, in the same stage of family development [raising children]). As these overt similarities emerged between the families, the question I began asking myself during the interviews was:

"Is there any factor here which might organize our ideal as to why certain Puerto Rican children are being successful in school while others, in seemingly similar circumstances, are not?"

After much exploring it seems that Paulo Freire has pointed to a possible answer which might structure our thinking. Freire has described certain behavioral and psychological characteristics which form what he terms the "culture of silence." Some of the families I interviewed exhibited characteristics inherent in this "culture", while others, in fairly similar circumstances, did not.

This sounded very similar to the question I was asking myself of why children in seemingly similar circumstances had such different adaptive levels in school. Perhaps the culture of silence characteristics might make the difference between them.

For instance, take the example of one Puerto Rican girl who was having academic trouble in bilingual 6th grade. She is 14 years old and has repeated this grade several times.



The graduation to junior high will be a social promotion only. In 2 years she can drop out of school legally; her current teacher feels it more likely that an unplanned pregnancy will call her away sooner. The mother, illiterate herself, struggling with financial, physical and emotional difficulties, has little knowledge of the school situation, being hard pressed to even remember what grade her daughter is in.

This family showed many of the attributes of the culture of silence. In another family, the parents, although also poor, unemployed and living in crowded tenement conditions were literate, involved with school and church and kept their 6 children's academic progress under close supervision. Culture of silence characteristics were not evident in this second family.

Freire has described identifiable characteristics which people exhibit when they are caught in the culture of silence. It seemed feasible to use these characteristic as a way to identify within the Puerto Rican population the difference between families with culure of silence behaviors and those without. If we return to the section in Chapter II entitled Behavioral Characteristics of the Culture of Silence, we can list the following behaviors from the material presented:

1. Lack of motivation ("laziness, "lack of interest in improvement," "inability to change," etc.)
2. Experience with actual violence or fear of violence in some form (involving children, spouses, street violence, etc.)
3. Poor self concept, inferiority feelings
4. Sense of dependence, inability to plan for or shape the future
5. Poor behavior control (lack of impulse control, present time orientation without realization of consequences, tolerance for psychological pathology)
6. Family and authority structure is inconsistent and does not provide adequate guidance for its members
7. Lack of participation in the larger social structures (lack of organization beyond the nuclear or extended family, distrust of basic social institutions)
8. Low levels of skills and resources (poor wage earning power, unemployment, low food reserves in the home, poor housing, overcrowding, illiteracy, poor education)

How many families in our sample met enough criteria to be considered as part of the culture of silence?

It was decided that if a family exhibited 6 out of the 8 characteristics listed (75%) then that family would be included in the culture of silence category. This amount was chosen in that 6 categories was well beyond half of the total. Having 2 out of 8 characteristics which did not have to be present allowed for variation within individual families as well as interviewer oversight during information

gathering sessions.

Each family was assessed on the 8 characteristics. The scores were then distributed on the academic continuum chart, so that the family score appeared in the order of the student's academic performance in school (with an indication also of participation in special education). This arrangement can be seen in Figure 5 at the end of this chapter.

Six of the 15 families had enough of the 8 characteristics to be included in the culture of silence. The implications of using this as an important criteria in the research will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

What has been established here are 2 major categories to be used during interpretation of the data: academic performance and culture of silence behaviors.

### The Family Interview

The family interview was designed to last approximately 1 1/2 hours. It was to allow for a relaxed atmosphere organized around an interview questionnaire.

"In the broadest sense--to conduct a good interview is to hold an interesting conversation. The importance in stressing the conversational aspect of interviewing is to reinforce the notion that qualitative work involves considerable human interaction."

(Rist, 1980, p.443)

Gathering the data was both exhilarating and frustrating. Perhaps this is the price one pays for attempting a non - quantitative investigation, especially in an area where little information is available.

Since I had worked both as a special educator and family therapist with Puerto Rican families, I held certain impressions and vague concepts about the support systems of such children. I was in no way certain that this information would be a help rather than a hindrance. According to Bott (1971), anthropo-logical methods of study basically consist of...

"...messing about with a lot of variables and bits of information in a condition of acute uncertainty, in the hope that eventually one will see relationships one had not thought of before...(p.309)"

This is quite a different method from starting with a formulated hypothesis that one tests statistically. Although not a statistical survey, this study did require systematic ways of pulling together thoughts and observations so that the information could be analyzed. The questionnaire was reviewed a number of times before its first use. It then evolved several more times as I saw which questions elicited the most valuable information during field work. The easiest part of the data to handle was the section which asked

simply, "Have you used this community service, or that one?" The answers were specific and comparisons between different types of usage could be made easily.

In this study I was not assessing individual personality issues. The development, strength and use of natural supports are affected by personality factors.<sup>1</sup> However, the scope of the research will not be involved with this aspect of support system usage.

Because of this, questions focused on behavioral issues. What did you do, when did you do it and with whom? There were several important abstract questions at the end of the interview asking the family's opinion about what they felt were general problems in the community, which behaviors they would like to change in their children and which problems did they feel were best/least resolved. Many families (12 of 15) had great difficulty trying to answer these questions. I revised them several times seeking a more easily answered question. But still this did not alleviate the discomfort or inability to answer the questions.

This remained a puzzlement to me during the interviews and I felt that family difficulty in answering the more abstract questions might itself be important information. It was this puzzlement that began to lead me to the idea of



Freire's culture of silence and how these characteristics might manifest behaviorally. Perhaps, if such families are not accustomed to "dialogue" (referring to Freire's definition of being able to observe and analyze the situation in which one is participating), then the type of abstract question I was asking would not be answerable.

Interviewing of the families was done over the course of 2 months from April 15 to June 15, 1985. As soon as the majority of replies from families were returned, I set up interviews with the teachers to discuss their impressions of the student. For those students in special education classes, I spoke with both the regular and special class teachers. Teacher discussion about each child lasted from 5-15 minutes. Most of these discussions were done in person. However, after a rapport was built several phone conversations took place with teachers at home. When the family interviews were completed, I recontacted each teacher and discussed with those interested the results of the home visits. This was done with the permission of the parents. I also reviewed school files for preliminary information such as address changes, family composition, birthdates, school performance, etc.

A master schedule for 3 to 4 interviews a week was made covering the month of May and June. I preferred to interview

the parents at home first and thus have the children know their parents approved of my visits. In many cases I met the children first at home. Interviews were most often scheduled for 9:30 am or 1:00 pm on weekdays. At these times some of the children were at school, and one of the men was at work. However, since most men were unemployed, these hours did not prove to be an obstacle in speaking with husbands. In a number of families children were home due to illness, or would come home from school while I was still interviewing. No family chose to reschedule an interview for a weekend day although some did reschedule for a later hour or another day.

An appointment letter was sent out approximately 7-8 days before the assigned date. This would allow time to have the letter delivered and a rescheduling reply returned if necessary. 3 postcards were returned, only one of which was received after I had already visited. This family had requested a later hour on the same day. However, the mother was at home and politely did not mention that I had come early.

Some families did not return the postcards and phones were not reliable communication. I rapidly discovered that the school records of phone numbers were often inaccurate. Phones were disconnected, numbers changed, or some families

had phones where none were listed. After several attempts at calling I found it more reliable to await a post card or simply to go to the appointment as indicated in the letter without needing to reconfirm the date.

In 2 cases the home addresses of the children as recorded in all the school records were inaccurate. This did not seem to affect delivery of mail. The children were then asked for the correct addresses while at school.

One such change precipitated a mini-crisis. With only 2 weeks of school left it was discovered that the child had not been living in the proper school district for over 2 months. The parents, however, had received my letter and, through a misunderstanding, had come to school for their interview with me while I was out in the community searching for them. I returned to the school hoping to find a correct address but missed the parents by moments. The principal, overhearing these discussions in the office, felt that in order to comply with school regulations as well as safety due to a longer walk through city streets, the child should be transferred the next day. This, of course, was quite upsetting to the family and took several days to straighten out. The situation was finally resolved by the father who went to the superintendents' office. Permission was granted for the child to remain the 2 weeks until the end of the

year.

Although most interviews were not quite so dramatic, each visit helped draw a clearer picture of which services and natural supports were important and how they were important for each family.

Four families were not at home or were unavailable for interviews at the originally appointed time. I spoke with neighbors to find out when they were generally at home or I was able to speak to the individuals themselves. In the latter case the family was usually in too disorganized a state to be able to deal with an interview at that moment, requesting that I come later. This "coming back later" was actually a much more natural, less formalized and culturally appropriate way to contact them. I did not send another card, but simply came by, sometimes once, sometimes more. But eventually the families were available for the interview and would discuss the questions as best they could.

Two of the families although at home during the appointed time, seemed confused at my arrival. One family needed to be roused out of bed at 9:30 am. I was not at all certain they had remembered my visit, however they were quite polite and helpful during the interview. The other family I later realized had requested a later appointment

hour but I did not receive the postcard until the next day.

8 of the families were clearly expecting my visit at the appointed time.

All but 2 of the interviews were done in one sitting of approximately 2 hours. Those that required a second visit of 1/2 hour had included lengthy discussions of their religious beliefs and so required extra time for the interview questions.

I had decided to record the information given by the families directly on each questionnaire form either as the family shared the information or right after the interview. In most cases my note taking did not disturb the conversations. Where I felt full documentation might interfere with the discussion, I postponed jotting down some of the information until immediately after I left the family. In some cases this recording of extra information might take upwards of an hour and a half after the interview.

It was decided not to tape record the interviews for several reasons. First, the information required did not need nuances of inflection or exact wordings since we were seeking general descriptions of service connections. Also,



the interviews were a one time visit. Since some time is needed to build rapport, I felt that the information could be gathered effectively through efficient note taking rather than introducing a tape recorder which can often create tension as well as recording difficulties in a one time only confidential family interview. I had learned this type of detailed but unobtrusive note taking through years of working as a family therapist and field supervisor of students in various disciplines.

All family interviews were generally conducted in either the living room or dining room, sometimes moving from one into the other. Everyone was invited to participate. Children often drifted through and listened for a short time but rarely for more than 10 minutes or so. Occasionally, adult children might be called upon to help answer questions. Sometimes friends would participate also. However, the main interviewee was considered to be the individual whose name was on the signed permission slip. It was this individual for whom I asked when I came to the door and who was expected, by the family also, to be responsible for the interview even though the spouse might be present and actively involved. This was true in all but one case. The husband, who had signed the permission slip, was out of the house working and the wife did the interview on her own.

The conversation generally began with my stating why I was there and what purpose the study served. They were then asked to sign the Statement of Consent (see appendix). After this I usually guided the conversation into topics that would answer the questionnaire. In some cases we were more work oriented and would discuss the questionnaire directly from the beginning. This decision was based on how comfortable I felt the family was. Comments on household articles (ie: an old restored victrola cabinet, large dolls, the television set, etc.) often created a more chatty conversation. In some cases the story of their lives, either in Puerto Rico or the United States was recounted so intriguingly that the conversation clearly became a dialogue rather than a series of questions.

Often, the family would offer me a refreshment. This happened more commonly towards the middle or end of the interview and would consist of coffee or a soft drink. Several families invited me to visit again; some requested information about services they needed which, if I did not know at the time, I returned with later. This usually consisted of phone numbers or people to contact.

Interviews of children at school commenced as soon as most of the family visits were complete. This required 4 mornings at school with each interview lasting approximately

20-30 minutes. Teachers arranged for their students to be absent from class at a time which would not be too disruptive for either the class or the child. The purpose was to speak privately with the child so that she or he would not be influenced by peer or family pressures when responding. A half hour of privacy did not allow for great rapport to be developed, However, it did allow candid answers and enjoyment of the time. None of the children appeared reluctant to speak with me. The two children whose families had not yet been visited (one due to an incorrect address, the other because of a late reply to my inquiry) seemed somewhat confused about the purpose of the talk but openly shared information. One child was consistently absent during the last weeks of school so I re-visited the home. This interview was conducted with the family present and listening.

As previously stated, teachers were contacted one last time to summarize with those interested what had been learned. I thanked each teacher or staff member by letter; those with whom I had had many contacts were also thanked with a small gift of baked goods. A letter was composed thanking the families for their participation and sent to each home. I also indicated that a short summary of my recommendations would be sent to the families when the research was completed.

### Interviews with Professionals

In conjunction with speaking to the family, an interview with the school professionals who worked with the child took place. The child was also interviewed at school (See appendix for sample of questionnaires.) The purpose of these school interviews was not only to gather specific data but to compare the school's perceptions of the child's academic and behavioral performance with those held by the family.

A number of interviews with professionals were also scheduled to obtain first hand knowledge of the care giving practices within the Puerto Rican community. The questions were designed as a guide to discussion rather than for statistical data collection. Several of the interviews lasted up to 2 1/2 hours while others were completed in 30 minutes. This depended on the extra data that was offered beyond the more formal questions. In some cases, particularly towards the end of the data gathering, I asked questions that were more directly relevant to the individuals specialized knowledge rather than asking for answers to the theoretical questions that I had designed. This I was able to do since, after a number of interviews, the questions I was asking had been answered redundantly several times thus assuring me that the information received was "correct." Also, the field data was essentially

conforming to information in the literature reviews.

The individuals interviewed for this study worked in human services and school oriented professions. They are listed below.

1. Head of Hispanic Programs at a Holyoke mental health center. This individual has been directly involved in developing cooperative programs between school and community resources, as well as developing services which better meet the needs of the Puerto Rican community.
2. Director, Catholic church servicing the Puerto Rican population in Holyoke, providing outreach, community activities and other services.
3. A member of the local Puerto Rican community. This individual has done healing, struggled with her family to settle in Holyoke and serves as a local community resource person among her own circle of friends and acquaintances.
4. Holyoke Assistant Superintendent of Schools (and previously Director of Bilingual Programs).
5. Director of Bilingual Programs in Holyoke.
6. Bilingual School Counselor
7. Social worker, MSW. Family Therapist and member of the Puerto Rican community in Holyoke. This individual has had first hand experience with the difficulties Puerto Rican migrants face when they come to the United States. He migrated from Puerto Rico at the age of 15 and was diagnosed (inappropriately) as being mentally retarded. He is also involved with the espiritista tradition.
8. A chapter "766" programmer (individual who guides the special education process for those students who are referred).
9. Teachers: 2 special education teachers (1 bilingual, 1 English), 8 regular class teachers (bilingual classes and English classes).

The results and recommendations of this dissertation will be shared with members of the Holyoke schools. The



Director of Pupil Services and the principal of the school where the research was done specifically requested this information. I will be in contact with them to ask if they would prefer the entire document or appropriate excerpts. It was suggested by the Superintendent of Schools that there might be other ways of sharing the research data, such as workshops. I will discuss this with the appropriate personnel upon completion of the dissertation.

### Summary

This dissertation is a study of interactions within the support network of Puerto Rican elementary school children. The research is specifically concerned with how these systems currently relate to the child's school achievement, particularly Puerto Rican children with special needs. One of the limitations of this study is that the focus will be on generating information rather than the rigorous testing of hypotheses. In developing the proposal and research design, it became clear that what existed were studies on specific aspects of the problem. No systemic overview effectively linked the related parts in a discussion of the influence which families and communities have on educational performance of children. This was especially true when discussing services to Puerto Rican or Hispanic children. Very few studies in the current literature address this issue. Therefore, the research has concentrated on obtaining

an overview of the problem.

What has been important is to interview sufficient numbers to assure that redundancy of the information has been achieved. In order to do this it was decided to use an interview format. The primary purpose of the interview was to obtain first hand information about natural support systems from community members.

Interviews of approximately 1 1/2 hours were structured around a questionnaire which allowed for gathering basic information while encouraging the family to share other unsolicited data. The questionnaire underwent several revisions both before and during the field work as it became clear which questions elicited the most valuable information. This would be inadmissible in a statistically oriented study. However, in this case it permitted a deeper investigation of the natural support systems as issues unfolded.

Fifteen families, their children, 10 teachers and 8 other school or human service professionals were finally interviewed. although the size of the sample was large enough to obtain a redundancy of information about the natural support resources for those interviewed, it may be limited when attempting to draw more generalized conclusions

about a larger population.

Another factor which may limit the generality of conclusions is that the sample of people interviewed was itself limited by the way in which families had to be contacted. Due to confidentiality laws, families were sent letters of inquiry without having met the interviewer. Only those families who responded affirmatively became part of the interview sample. This type of written approach is generally not syntonetic with the more personal approach many Puerto Rican families might favor. Thus, the families interviewed have already been self-selected on this particular point. It should be noted that an overtly skewed sample did not appear to be a problem and family characteristics seemed fairly varied. However, research was not designed to investigate why some families responded and other did not.

One other problem with this particular format of interviews should be mentioned. A one time interview by a stranger with a family may not allow for openness around certain sensitive issues, ie: use of spiritists or mental health resources, or, for welfare recipients, who is actually living in the house or working. The interviewer may ascertain that information is being withheld. However, it would be difficult to probe deeply for the data without

offending the family and thus having them withdraw even further.

The strength of this study lies in that it has focused on connecting aspects of what is currently a fragmented state of research. The interviewer is freer to explore lines of investigation as they occur in the interview than would be allowed in a statistically oriented study. In other words, our thinking is allowed to expand and so do our options for success. The next chapter will discuss the results of the field interviews and offer an analysis on what underlying patterns might exist.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1 describing Bonfenbrenner and Nuttals levels of support. The first level is that of personal resources, of which personality strengths and weaknesses are a part.



Figure 2: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT WITH COMMUNITY SERVICES

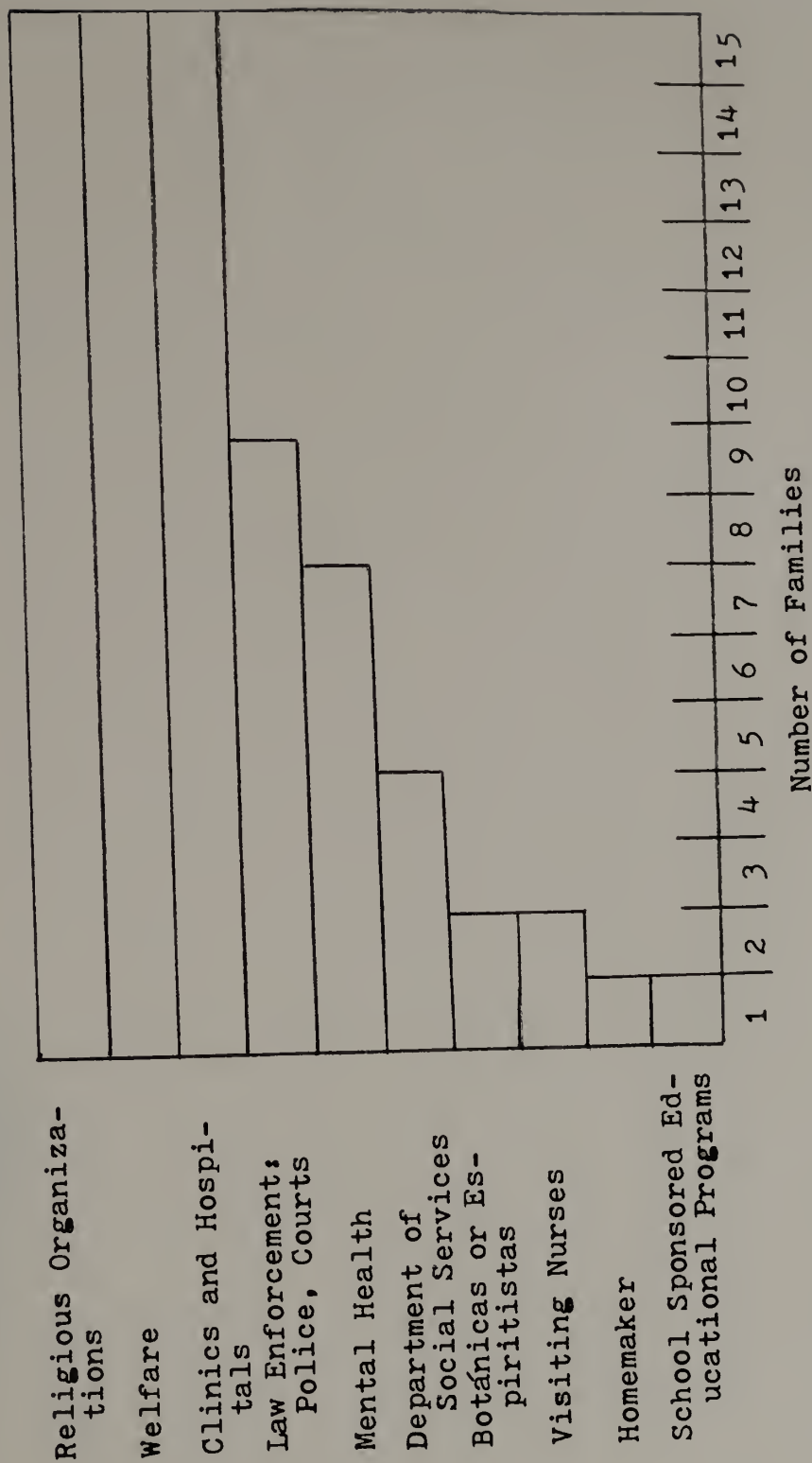


FIGURE 3: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS

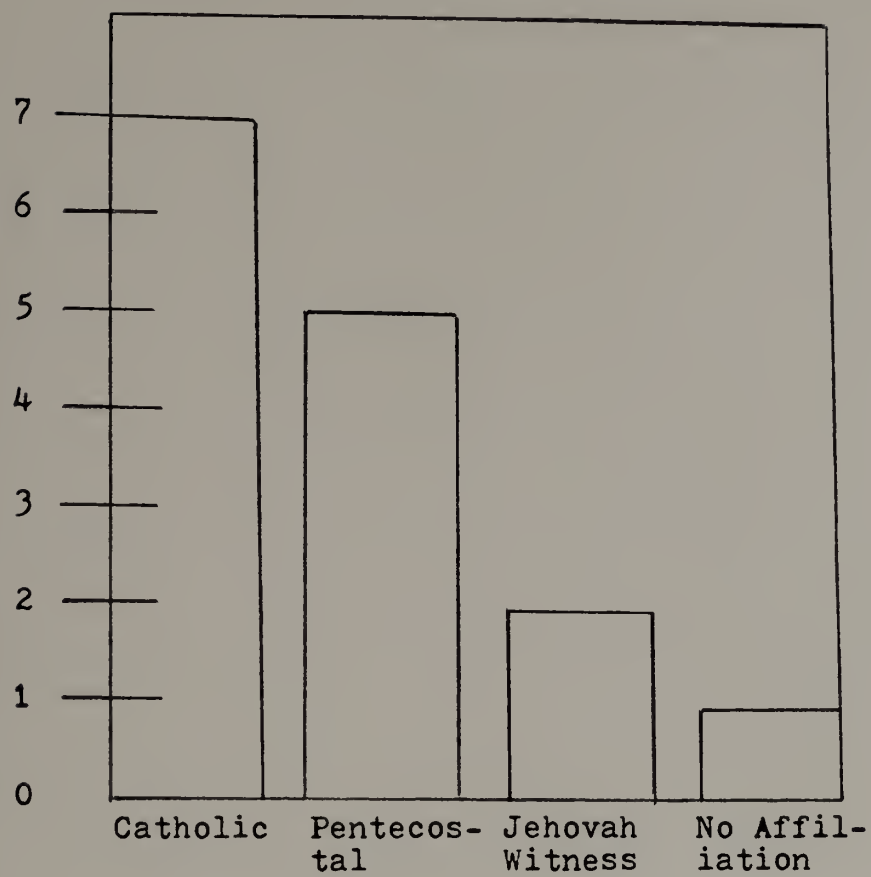


FIGURE 3A: INTENSITY OF FAMILY RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT

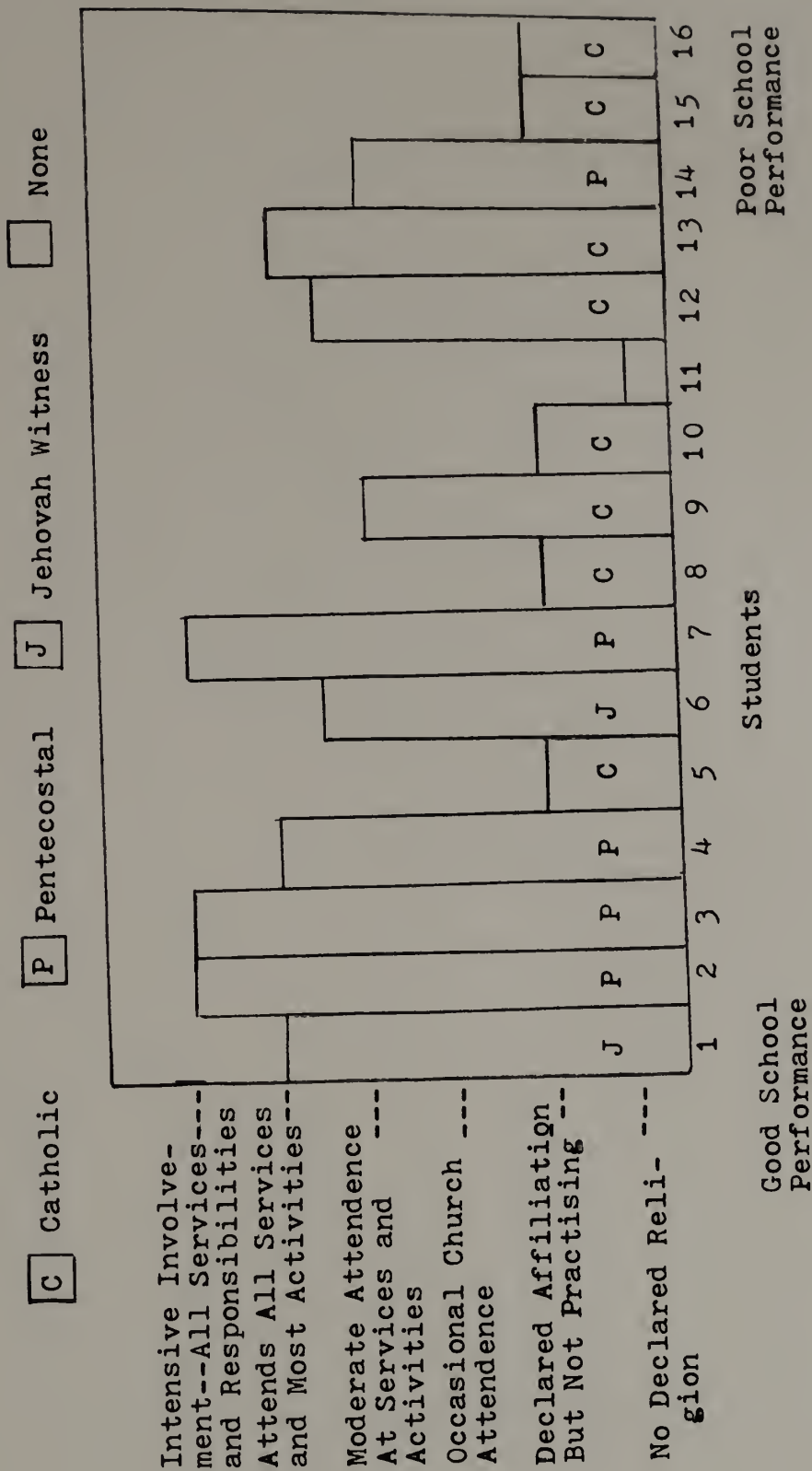
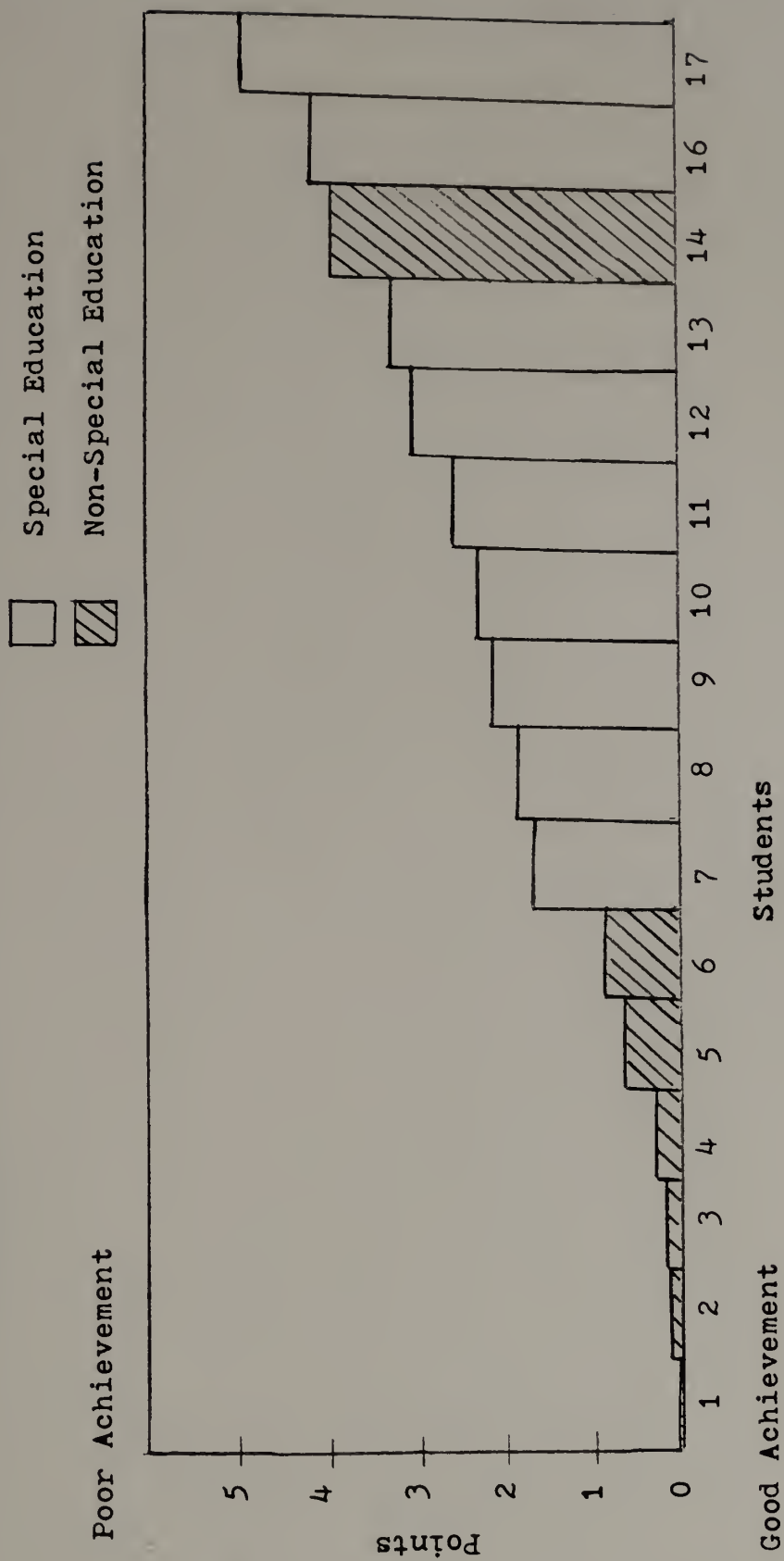


FIGURE 4: STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL ON AN ACADEMIC CONTINUUM



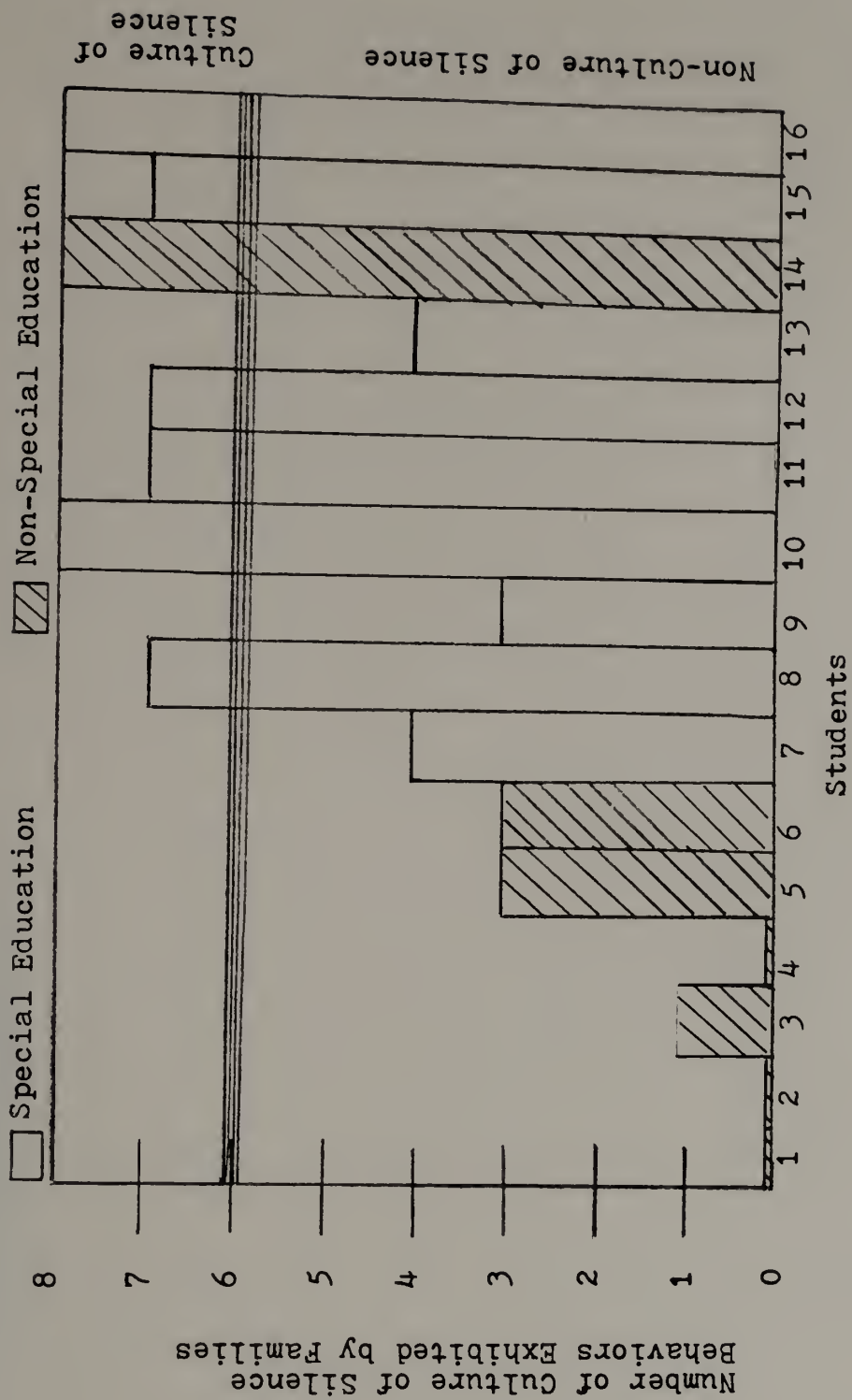


Figure 5: Number of Children from Families in the Culture of Silence Compared to children from Non-Culture of Silence Families



## CHAPTER VII

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research is to investigate whether we can expand school and family views of problem issues for Puerto Rican children so as to increase the options from which corrective action is taken. This dissertation proposes that by working with and strengthening the Puerto Rican natural support systems we may be able to reach larger numbers of children more effectively at a source closer to the core problems. It is suggested that this involvement with the natural support systems will leave school resources more available to children who need just the specialized services of special education. Currently, there are few effective options besides special education available for Puerto Rican school children who are having problems in school. These options are even further restricted by the language and cultural differences.

The value of this study rests in its interpretations, not in the statistics or details. Although statements are meant to apply only to those interviewed, an attempt is made to develop interpretations of overall relevance.

It should be noted that most of the research data applies to working class families. Middle class families

were not part of the sample interviewed. This was expected, since the school from which the students were selected was located in the poorer section of the city.

### Interviews with Professionals

It is important to understand the perceptions of the professionals who work with the Puerto Rican community. From their thought and actions grow the services which help define the daily life of community residents--schools, businesses, churches, clinics and hospitals, banks, welfare, stores, theaters, parks and so on.

The individuals interviewed worked in human services and school oriented professions.<sup>1</sup> There was an overall feeling among these people that the city of Holyoke was doing a credible job in dealing with the complex issues in the schools. Over the past 6 years the city had improved its policies, was moving forward in an open-minded way, and was experiencing success in many areas. The personnel with whom I spoke were dedicated and hardworking. This is not to say that there were no difficulties or room for improvement. What it does indicate is that the city is working on and open to positive changes.

### The First Question: Natural Support Systems

The first question asked for comments on what were the 3

most important natural support systems for Puerto Ricans in the United States. The entire group of professionals unanimously responded that the family was the first and most important resource for children as well as adults. One person called it "keeping in contact with roots. If the family is fine, everyone functions better."

The second important resource mentioned was, in most cases, extended family and friends. It was clear though, that the network of family, kin and close friends had been weakened significantly by the migration from Puerto Rico to the United States. The clash of new ways versus old, the intense seduction of the U.S. culture with its liberties and prejudices has effectively worn away at already stressed migrant families.

Another factor weakening the extended family structure is that many relatives have remained in Puerto Rico. Most Puerto Ricans are accustomed to maintaining close contact with relatives. Because of this and other issues (such as the fact that many Puerto Rican girls give birth at an early age), grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, etc. have an important place in the child rearing process.

When key figures in the support network are left behind, Puerto Rican spouses begin to depend on each other in ways

that were never expected before. Besides being culturally unprepared for the new role expectations, these adults are profoundly in need of help themselves. They are under great personal stress from language, social and financial pressures.

"The helping network, in many instances," said one professional, "exists more in the wishful thinking of the people than in reality. "Everyone is in need of help. With such numbers in need, the traditional healing characteristics of the family and community are almost obliterated.

"What exists here are vestiges of the natural support systems, not the real thing any more."

As a quick measure of what is happening to the Puerto Rican extended family in the U.S., we might look at the kinship system of *compadrazco*.<sup>2</sup> Twelve families were asked if they maintained contact with any godparents (see Figure 6 at the end of this chapter).<sup>3</sup> All families replied positively; that is to say, they had named godparents for their children. However, only 2 of these families were in any kind of contact with the *padrinos*. That contact might be called "absentee involvement" since it was carried on (infrequently although regularly) by phone or letter.

Seven families replied that their children did have godparents but that they had no contact with them. Some said that the godparents were in Puerto Rico and contact had ended after the move to the United States. Three families

said they no longer believed in the system of compadrazco. They had converted to the Pentecostal religion and the religion did not adhere to such beliefs.

Since all families had named godparents for their children we might conclude that this system had been an integral part of family life at some point. What appears to be happening is that this once powerful support system, like the family itself, has been weakened. For many Puerto Ricans it is now superficial, nonexistent or replaced by more dynamic resources.

The third important system most frequently mentioned by the professionals was the church. As explained previously,<sup>4</sup> the Catholic Church has suffered from a sense of alienation on the part of many of its followers. Many people have a sustaining sense of faith but do not link it up with the Church or its activities. The director and pastor of one of the Catholic churches in Holyoke told me the following:

"We're the largest Spanish speaking church in the community. We work with approximately 7,000 people but when you talk about who comes to church you're talking about a real variety of people. Some are really active and others just come on Sunday. The vast majority of the community, though, doesn't connect with the Church. It comes in a poor third (referring to natural support systems)."

He also spoke of a family dilemma called the "transitional generation child." This child is born or fully



raised in the United States but with family roots in Puerto Rico. In such a family conflicts usually exist between parents and children. On a practical level the conflicts come up around language. If the child speaks English and the parents speak Spanish, do they go to an English mass or a Spanish mass?

"They usually go to none," he says. "The difficulty is that there are very few people who seem to be able to balance being American and being Puerto Rican."

This should not deny the support that the Catholic Church does bring to the community. It is still a powerful and organized body which can and does provide services--spiritual, material and emotional--to those of the community who feel affiliated.

Of the families interviewed, a number were practicing members of the fundamentalist churches (Pentecostal and Jehovah Witness specifically; see Figure 3). These groups differed from the Catholic practitioners in a number of ways. However, few of the professionals interviewed distinguished between the different church movements when they mentioned "Church" as a natural support system.

It is clear that the church is still an important and functioning support system for the Puerto Ricans. However, not all families are involved in church activities. In fact,

families who are "most in need" by school or community standards may be the ones who do not take advantage of the church as a resource.

Not everyone agreed that extended family and church were the most significant natural support systems. One person commented that after the family, the second most important natural support was actually the cultural background and milieu, not the extended family. He felt that these traditional functions and beliefs (bodegas, botánica, churches, etc.), although not as strong as in Puerto Rico, helped Puerto Ricans reconnect to their roots in a stronger way than the overstressed extended family in the United States could.

If we use Bonfennbrenner and Nuttal's descriptions of concentric levels of support as described in the chapter on support systems, then this comment suggests that the distant resource levels (such as culture and institutions) can help the migrant families more than the intimate resources (family and personal skills).

Research has shown that the distant support systems are more helpful than closer ones in situations where some psychopathology is present (Hammer 1963, Croog 1972, Garrison 1978). However, there has been no research to

investigate if this might be a normal side effect of migration for Puerto Rican families.

If, for migrant families the less personal support systems (institutions and culture) are more helpful than the closer support networks (family and personal resources) then we need to re-evaluate our help to children in trouble. The traditional school interventions for such children (ie: speaking with parents, referrals to counseling or special education) deal with "fixing" the more intimate support circles. Perhaps we should begin to think about strengthening the family connection to their own cultural roots or other supportive institutions instead. This will be discussed in the final chapter.

In summary, there was general consensus among the professionals that family, extended family and church were the three main natural support systems available to Puerto Ricans in Holyoke. But, as a group, there was no clear statement or broad understanding of how support systems were functioning for the individual or families in Holyoke.

Evidence suggests that these basic support systems have become sufficiently weakened so as to no longer function as they once did. Deterioration occurs because of the stress of migration, acculturations and the large numbers of people

needing help. This was particularly evident in the decline of godparenting for Puerto Rican children in the U.S.

Another factor which seemed uncertain during most interviews was a lack of distinguishing between different religious sects when discussing the church as a support system. The field research however, showed a very large difference in support depending on which sect a family belonged. This general lack of distinction added to a general impression that among most professionals there was not a clearly integrated understanding of the way in which the natural support systems functioned within the Puerto Rican community. Unless service professionals who work with the Puerto Rican community conceive of community resources in a broader, more integrated manner, the social program they design to help the community will end up dividing it.

The Second Question: Natural Supports-Constructive or Destructive?

The second question for professionals was whether natural support systems might be destructive or hold back a healthy adjustment to the U.S. environment for Puerto Rican families and children.

First, what does "healthy" mean?

"Healthy" evolution of a migratory group has previously been seen as complete assimilation into the dominant culture. Today this is not necessarily true. In fact, it might be argued that this was never "really true," and that individuals who did "completely" assimilate suffered at a number of other levels. People today are more articulate about wanting a clearer idea of their identity as individuals and as a community first. From here, they can progressively and more healthfully integrate into the dominant society or choose to remain autonomous (such as with the Amish).

The family, besides being a support, has the potential to obstruct "healthy" adjustment for its children. This is especially true in situations where value differences are concerned, particularly for the highly acculturated older child. The child may wish to join activities, go on trips or speak only English. The family may overreact and create a deep rift among themselves rather than becoming able to find a mutually agreeable compromise.

Particularly in close knit families certain behavioral patterns are strongly reinforced among network members. These behaviors, negative as well as positive, can hold back adequate adjustment to the new culture. There are individuals so sunk into their current support systems that



they have no desire to expand outside the group. For example, one professional said that:

"...if certain people have a job where they don't need to learn English, or are being paid by welfare, there is not much incentive to go to school, get your license, etc. What happens in Holyoke is that people get into routines and are 'happy,' at least, happy in the sense of belonging. For the short term this can be very helpful, over the long run it can jeopardize your future."

A pattern often reinforced by the natural support network is giving birth to children at a young age. It is not that families "believe" birth so young is desirable. However, the life styles, environment and role models available support this practice.

"It is not uncommon for a woman of 21 to have 3-5 children and desire to be sterilized before she is old enough to sign the papers for her own operation," said one individual.

In many cases these detrimental patterns come not from the ethnic background, but from patterns of poverty and oppression. However, many Puerto Ricans are below poverty levels, and their behaviors continue to afflict the group.

In summary, migrant families must find a healthy balance between what they bring with them as values and behaviors and what the host society offers. This balance is difficult to achieve. Destructive patterns of poverty and oppression in the minority group can cause the host society to create a "cultural invasion." This pressure to change is meant to

help eliminate destructive behaviors, but in fact, it often destroys many supportive elements as well. One professional concluded that:

"...In order to identify with more constructive behaviors the migrant group must put energy into identifying and strengthening their own sense of self and community. For the Puerto Rican community this seems to have been a difficult thing to do."

### Third Question: The Schools and Special Education

After inquiring about natural support systems in the Puerto Rican community, the next question dealt with special education for Puerto Ricans in the public schools. People were asked to comment on what factors they felt underlay the imbalance of Spanish speaking children in the public school special services programs. For the full text of this question see Appendix A.

First of all, it was noted, Hispanics are different. They come from a culture different than the host culture; they speak a different language; they act a different way. These behaviors are perceived as threatening because they are unknown. It is easier to label their behaviors as "not right," antisocial or difficult rather than to understand them. That comes much later. It is a fact, though, that these children do have more problems than most of their peers (poverty, transiency, poor housing conditions, conflicted cultural values, illiteracy, language, racial

discrimination, etc.). All of this translates into academic and behavioral problems which supports the idea that Hispanic children are not only different, but they are difficult.

A second factor concerning why an Hispanic imbalance exists in special services was considered institutional in nature. Since Hispanics are not well understood and their behaviors are difficult, it is easier to develop custodial care than to develop appropriate care.

"Anyone can be custodial," said one professional. "That just requires force. Being non-custodial requires many more things--an understanding of the people, the language, a sense of what is going on in the community and at least a suspicion of the profoundly different socioeconomic conditions involved."

Thirdly, several individuals mentioned that such school issues were still clouded by the element of racism. Racism is always difficult to expose, they said, and still creates problems in assigning students to special education.

"How a behavior is labeled", commented one individual, "is very related to class and racial background. Similar behaviors gain very different reactions depending on which group you belong to. So it is easy to think of these children as "trouble makers" rather than "having trouble."

However, some progress has been made in this respect.

One professional stated that:

"...Although laws cannot force attitudes to change, they can change behaviors. At least now (since desegregation) while people are at work they practice multicultural education--

this means respecting the language and the culture of the students we serve."

Holyoke's own reaction to the racial imbalances in education has been focused on improving school services to minorities. Although first mandated by federal statute, the city seems to have gone beyond the 'letter of the law.' Statistics show that Holyoke no longer suffers from disproportional placements of Hispanics in special education. One professional said that the city was now approaching a fairly sophisticated level in assessing students for such classes because of strong evaluation teams.

"I think we're the only school district in Massachusetts that has a majority of bilingual, bicultural psychologists (4 out of 6). However, the assessment instruments (see p. )still need much improvement."

How should we summarize this particular issue?

First, it seems that the people in Holyoke are not strangers to the issues in question--difficulties in assessment, prejudices, cultural issues, etc. A full awareness of them may not be present in every situation, but certainly the city is opening itself to improvements at all levels.

Many of the professionals felt there were an adequate range of services in place for the children. Where things

seemed to break down the most was in the day-to-day implementations--the practical problems--such as having enough time to write a report, do an evaluation or consultation, or finding enough money in the budget to pay for an increase in services and personnel.

This does not mean there is no need for new ideas, programs or increased cultural awareness. But most people felt movement on these issues had occurred even though improvements were still needed. It also means that improvement might take place by making the currently available services work more efficiently and creatively (as will be discussed in the chapter on recommendations).

"Efficiently" does not mean having people work longer or harder. It means working effectively--cutting out the obstacles which prevent the right people, ideas and resources from connecting to the right children. It seems that if professionals feel that enough resources are available in most cases, then something else is blocking the way. As far as I could see, people were already stretched to their limits. For instance, one professional stated that testing a student for learning difficulties meant having only one hour available for testing when several more were needed:

"...All the write up time is done at home.  
With the other reports and administrative work



I have, this takes about four hours nightly. I should be doing more things outside to bring into the classroom but there is very little time for any of that."

Several others had job time divided between 2 schools. This doubled the load while cutting availability in half. One individual said that valuable creative ideas were shelved due to lack of time.

These professionals often see the shortcomings of what is being done. They often have suggestions about what would alleviate the situation. However, there is very little time to work beyond the demands of their current job, or else very little power to do so.

#### Question Four: Natural Supports Already in Place

The next question asked what kinds of natural supports the professionals felt already existed in Holyoke for Puerto Rican children.

The most commonly mentioned existing supports were family and church. On the family level it was felt that the various members of a family network have different tolerances for difficult behaviors. This helps dilute the intensity of any problem and can give the child a wider range of guidance techniques.

For example, in one case, a particular third grader had been the major school headache for months. Teachers, counselors and administrators were constantly involved with disciplining or running after this boy. A special report written by an outside consultant was requested to see if any relief might be found which was not already being tried. In the midst of this chaos, the child's mother asked an acquaintance of hers to keep her son for some time, a not uncommon practice among Puerto Ricans. The child was transferred to another elementary school in the same city. When the consultant went to check on the child at this new school, the principal and teachers were quite surprised to hear he had ever been a problem. They found him to be an average to low-average student who was adjusting well to the new circumstances.

The "mystery" was explained by a neighbor who said that the child's "aunt" (actually a distant friend of the mother) had a more stable household, was organized and firmer than the mother. The boy, she said, seemed to calm down and feel more secure in such a setting. Thus we see that the family has resolved its own problem in a more profound way and with less effort than the school could do.

The second support system mentioned were the churches. They were felt to emphasize the importance of education and

were clearinghouses for local information. Also, some mention was made of spiritists and botánicas as an existing community resource.

In summary, as mentioned in the final paragraphs of question one, the issue of what natural support systems are already in place or how they operate in the community or at school does not seem to be well thought out or well researched by most professionals. People do not tend to think of the community (with its full range of resources), the family and school as one integral unit for a child. Such ideas seem fragmented and without interlocking detail. A major shift in perspective would be required to begin acting as if these three groups were one unit for the child and to combine the resources of each.

#### Fifth Question: Further Suggestions

The final question in the interview asked for further suggestions in helping Puerto Rican school children, particularly those with academic and behavioral problems.

First, on the school level, several professionals mentioned that awareness of cultural issues would help, both on the part of the school and the families. For instance, some said families need to understand the differences in values between Puerto Rico and the United States. Schools,

on the other hand, need to understand the magnitude of the cultural breakdown for Puerto Ricans and the differences in social behaviors. In order to grow, this type of joint awareness must be cultivated. It does not happen on its own. One professional summed up this dilemma of awareness:

"I think," he said, "it would be helpful if the Puerto Rican parents could be more active in the formal activities that the school considers traditionally important."

"But let me not put the blame on parents. The school needs to be more available in providing transportation, being more aggressive toward reaching out to parents and making them feel glad that they have come. This is just basic human behavior and you should not need to remind people of that. But it happens, even though the schools are trying hard."

In general, while the individual suggestions from the professionals seemed creative, the value of these ideas proved to be of limited scope or conflictual. For instance, one of the teachers estimated that only 10% of his students' parents showed interest in their child's work. He attributed this mainly to a lack of awareness on their part and suggested that workshops might be helpful. At the same time he was not sure parents would attend such workshops. For example, the bilingual department was already providing workshops for parents of children in the program. However, attendance was low (ranging from 30 to 80 drawing from a population of 1,000+ students) even though the parents who did attend requested further workshops. At other events,

though, attendance was very high, such as at "Día de Las Madres", a program honoring mothers of children in the bilingual program, 300-500 people attended.

Another such conflicted recommendation was a parent newsletter. This was suggested by several people, but another professional said such a newsletter had already been tried. This letter had been considered unsuccessful because too much work was required to produce it. There had also been attempts at training parents to work with other parents, but this had had limited success with Puerto Rican families.

From these few examples it was clear that people did not systematically understand why some ideas produced successful events while others did not.

Was there anything the professionals felt could be done within the school setting itself? One idea proposed was that the phenomenon of cultural breakdown could be presented as an academic subject in schools so students would begin to have a context for their anger and confusion. Career awareness programs could start in grade 1 and continue yearly, in order to give the young people strong ideas of possibilities beyond their own experience. More direct support of the teacher in the classroom was mentioned. This



could be in terms of consulting or actual teaching by people with special supplementary skills.

In the context of the family, it was suggested that parents should clearly define what their expectations were for their children. The challenge would be for each individual to accept modifications in his or her life and to take into account the new environment. It was acknowledged that for many people a mediator, such as Church pastor or family counselor, would be needed to do this.

At a level beyond the family, political organization was mentioned. Unfortunately, Puerto Rican political organization in the United States has had a conflicted history. This lack of political power may be a key issue in the difficulties which have faced Puerto Ricans living in the United States<sup>5</sup>.

In summary, suggestions from professionals on what else might be done to further help Puerto Rican school children were individually creative. However, the value of these ideas was often conflicted, limited or unconnected with other events taking place in the system.

Recommendations which had broader perspectives included the teaching of courses on cultural issues and career

awareness. Of special interest was the need to support the migrant family through the transition period when their families and support systems are divided between new ways and old. The underlying problem with these suggestions is that they basically form a "band-aide" approach. They do not spring from knowledge of the problems origins, but attempt to treat symptoms. Essentially we are proposing "more of the same old thing:" better programs, more teachers, more support, etc. All of these are valuable, but in the long run have proven to be ineffective solutions for many children.

Most professionals are not proposing that society restructure its ways of relating to families of relating to families of school children. We need to think differently about how community, family and schools can truly integrate resources and work together. If we do not, our institutions will be overwhelmed by the numbers of people in need. We will find ourselves continuing to build a divided society where some are "in" and others are "out" and where the numbers keep growing.

These past pages have been a summary of the interviews with human service and school professionals in Holyoke. The next pages will summarize and comment on information from the perspective of the nuclear family.

## ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH NUCLEAR FAMILIES

Fifteen family and sixteen students (two were siblings) were interviewed. As explained in the methodology chapter, two major criteria around which the data were analyzed are a) academic performance of the students and b) whether or not the families belonged to the culture of silence. Since this dissertation is concerned with Puerto Rican students having problems in school, the importance of the first criteria is self evident. the culture of silence criteria emerged as a possible answer to the question, "What might be the cause of behavioral differences in families who have overtly similar characteristics?" We will now discuss the data with these two parameters in mind.

### Culture of Silence and Special Education as Correlated to the Data

Let us examine how these two issues show up among our particular students and their families. If we refer to Figure 4, the Academic Continuum Chart, we see 16 students, 9 of whom (56%) are currently enrolled in special education, and 7 of whom (44%) are not. Using the scoring system as described in the methodology chapter for the rank ordering of student academic performance, the higher the number, the poorer the achievement. The achievement levels, in points, for special education and non-special education groups are added and an average score for each group determined.

Non special education  
group

.82 points

Special Education  
group

2.86 points

As can be seen, the special education students have an average score over 2 points higher than the non-special education children. If we refer back to the criteria in the methodology chapter for which points were assigned we see that this could indicate things such as below grade level reading (1 point per year), number of years over the expected grade level age (1/2 point per year), failing in class (1 point), etc.

It is, of course expected that special education students will exhibit more difficulty in school than non-special education students, since they have been specifically selected for such a factor. So such a point difference is expected to exist.

However, let us now add the culture of silence vector into our calculations. We are looking to see if this might be a factor in understanding why certain Puerto Rican students from families with overtly similar characteristics succeed, or can make use of help offered, while others do not.

We will refer back to Figure 5 showing families in the

culture of silence, first discussed in the methodology chapter and located at the end of that chapter. This figure shows that 6 of the 15 families (40%) had at least 6 out of the 8 characteristics of the culture of silence. This defined these families as belonging to the culture. We also know that 9 of 16 children in our sample are involved in special education. How can we compare these figures to see if there is any correlation between a child's being in special education and that same child being from a family which exhibits culture of silence behaviors?

In order to assess this we will use a non-parametric statistical measure of relationships called the Chi Square Test.<sup>6</sup> The chi square formulation involves what is called a "goodness of fit" test. If a

"...marked difference exists between the observed or actual frequencies falling in each category, and the frequencies expected to fall in each category on the basis of chance or previously established distribution, then the chi square test will yeild a value large enough to be interpreted as statistically significant." (Popham and Sirotnik, 1972, p.273)

So now we will apply this test to a chi square in the manner as illustrated in Figure 6A located at the end of this chapter. Calculations show that when special education and culture of silence are correlated for our sample, the chi square is solved as being 4.4. When a Distribution of



Chi Square Probability Table is consulted, we see that a score of 4.4 is significant to a .05 degree. This means that there is only a 5% probability that such a relationship as defined in the problem would occur by chance. Thus, if the degree to which such a relationship would exist by chance alone is so small (5%) we assume that the factor in question (culture of silence) is involved and has created a relationship between these 2 occurrences (special education and culture of silence behaviors).

Significance to a .05 degree is usually considered acceptable proof of relationship between 2 variables in educational and psychological research. In this study, we will use this .05 level as the indicator of a significant relationship between the parameters being discussed.

Now that we have shown a relationship exists between special education and the culture of silence, what does this mean for our study?

First, what it does not mean is that only children with culture of silence characteristics are in special education. What it does suggest is that factors other than academic difficulty are involved in such cases, that these non-academic factors will not necessarily be remediated with special education techniques, and that academic remediation

in these cases will be especially difficult.

### Other Factors for Examination

Now let us examine a number of other factors that might indicate which Puerto Rican students show vulnerability to poor school performance. The six factors examined (mother's educational level, effect of home-school meetings on children's behavior, school absences, single parent vs two parent families, intensity of religious involvement, close knit family networks) were chosen for several reasons.

First, this particular cross section of characteristics represents a balance between school and family/community issues. Secondly, these factors were clearly identifiable phenomena within each child's family. And thirdly, each of these factors is a strong representative of its group. For instance, the issue of school absences is one which can lead to a variety of problems if allowed to continue--legal problems, learning deficits, school drop out, etc. Intensity of religious involvement implies the presence or absence of community involvement and support, and so on. The selection of these characteristics does not mean that other factors hold no importance; it does mean that, according to this author, these six are representative of the information available.

In order to examine these factors, we will need 2 chi square tables for each characteristic discussed. One table will examine the correlation between the factor being observed and the culture of silence, while the second table will examine the relationship between the same factor and special education.

### Mother's Educational Level

Now let us examine the mother's educational levels and how this parameter relates to the culture of silence and special education. This is done in Figure 7 at the end of the chapter. We are only exploring mothers' educational levels because information on parental educational levels was available for all mothers in the study. However, information on almost half of the fathers was missing. It is interesting to note that, of the 7 fathers about whom we did have information, there was no greater than a 2 year grade level difference between the father and mother, and the father always showed a higher attained grade. This suggests that the information gathered about mothers might be equally true for fathers.

By taking an average of the educational levels of mothers from non-culture of silence families, we find they have an average education of 7 years in school. Mothers from culture of silence families have an average educational

level of 4 years. This gives us a good division of categories for the chi square: 0 through 6 years of education and 7 or more years. When the chi square is solved we see that mothers' educational levels in our sample are correlated to a .05 level with culture of silence characteristics, but not with special education. This indicates that the lower the level of education of the mother, the more possible it is that culture of silence characteristics exist in a family. However, mother's educational level would not be a predictor of a child's need for special education.

#### School Behavior Changes in Children After Parents Meet with Teachers

We will now examine the correlation of behavior change to special education and culture of silence characteristics. This is done in Figure 8 at the end of this chapter. Contact is considered "effective" if a change was perceived in the student's behavior after home-school contact had taken place, and/or that some type of dialogue became established between teacher and parent. "No change" means that there was no perceived difference in the student's behavior and/or no ongoing dialogue between teacher and family was established.

When we solve the chi squares we see that both culture of silence and special education are significant factors in



home-school contact beyond the .05 level. We also note that culture of silence has a greater correlation (.01) than does special education (.02).

What significance does this have for the study? It suggests that, in general, families of children in special education and particularly those with culture of silence characteristics will have more difficulty with outreach or requests from the schools as currently structured, than families who do not have these characteristics. In other words, those children who most probably have greater need for home-school coordination will have less chance of getting it. Conversely, students who are doing well with their academic work are more likely to have parents in contact with the schools, although they are less "in need" of such coordination.

If teachers and administrators continue trying to involve all Puerto Rican parents in ways that are geared generally for non-culture of silence families, then parent involvement with the schools will continue to be inconsistent and disjointed. What is needed is a home-school contact program that can differentiate between and accommodate the different types of family receptivity. In this manner a much greater number of parents will be perceived by the school as interested, involved and



motivated in their children's education. How this might be accomplished will be discussed in the last chapter on recommendations.

### School Absences

Is there a significant relationship between school absences, culture of silence and special education? In this chart students were divided between those absent a substantial number of days (more than 20) equivalent to approximately one month of school, and those absent 20 days or less. Only 14 students were used in this chi square since information on 2 of the students was unavailable. This information can be seen in Figure 9 at the end of the chapter.

When we look at the chi square tables we see there is a significant correlation between culture of silence characteristics and school absences, but not between special education and absences. This is an important point. It begins to suggest that culture of silence characteristics may define more clearly than placement in special education which student may have difficulty in school. This also suggests that if we can identify families with such characteristics before a child is referred to special educations we may be able to initiate help as a prevention rather than as a remediation. How such identification might

take place will be discussed in recommendation three in the last chapter.

### Single Parent vs Two Parent Families

A single parent home in this study is considered one in which only one adult lives in the same household with the children in question. A situation where the father lives nearby but not in the same apartment is still considered a single parent family. Conversely, a situation in which mother has had a stable, live-in partner for a length of time is considered a two parent home. No mothers in this study at the time of the interviews mentioned having a partner who "came and went." All children were living with their natural mothers.

It should be noted that welfare regulations often reduce financial assistance to families if an adult male is living in the household. Because of this, certain families prefer not to disclose the presence of a father or stepfather to an outsider who is not yet trusted. One mother in the sample appeared fairly uncomfortable during the interview. I later learned that she had felt it necessary to keep the presence of her partner a secret. This I discovered when her daughter began speaking about a stepfather during the school interview. I then listed this family as a two parent family. None of the other families showed such discrepancies or

discomfort. However, such information can be skewed in certain situations because of the pressures of the welfare system.

The chi square for this factor can be seen in Figure 10 at the end of this chapter. When solved the table show that, in our sample, there is no correlation between single parent families and culture of silence characteristics or special education. This means that being from a single parent family is not a good predictor that culture of silence characteristics exist within that family or that a child will need special help in school.

This is an interesting finding since "logic" might indicate that single parents have less time to devote to their children if they alone are responsible for all the tasks of daily living. It might be of value to pursue other specific family constellations which do affect the child's school performance. This has been partially explored in the following section on the correlation between close knit family networks, the culture of silence and special education. However, the factor of "close-knitness" does not specify which particular relatives were involved in the family (grandparents, godparents, aunts, etc.), only the numbers and frequency of interaction.

### Intensity of Religious Involvement

Another important factor in this study is the intensity of involvement that families had with their chosen religious denomination. All families but one declared themselves to be either Catholic, Pentecostal or Jehovah Witness. The one exception declared no religion at all.

Of importance is that levels of involvement with the religious activities varied greatly between families. The church is considered to be one of the more important natural support systems in the community. Does a significant correlation exist between levels of religious involvement, the culture of silence, and special education? (See Figure 10A at the end of this chapter). In answer to this, when two chi squares are computed, it can be seen that both are significant to an .05 level.

What is the importance of this information for the research?

First, it provides further evidence that families who are or who can become involved with social structures beyond the family tend to be in either the naive-transitive or critically conscious stages of Freire's schema. In other words, families with high involvement do not tend to belong to the culture of silence, as opposed to families who remain



more isolated. A question to investigate would be whether certain families transcended the culture of silence due to the influence of the organization or whether none of the families in the church had culture of silence behaviors to begin with. Secondly, this evidence also suggests that families who have stronger natural support systems have higher functions children, as exhibited by more successful school achievement.

#### Close Knit Family Networks

Finally, let us look at close knit family networks. A more operational term than "close knit" is network density as defined in the chapter on support systems by Mitchell and Trickett. Dense networks are those in which the network members frequently contact each other independently of the focal person, thus exerting pressure on the members for conformity. Is there a correlation between culture of silence characteristics, special education and close knit vs "open" (not dense) networks?

Two chi squares constructed to determine such a relationship are seen in Figure 11 at the end of this chapter. They indicate the following: Network density has a significant correlation with culture of silence characteristics (to the .05 level of significance) in our sample. However, there is no significant correlation between



special education and networks density.

Once again, the question becomes, how is this information important for the study? Network density is important in this study because it will give us a clue as to how "penetrable" a network is to outside resources or involvement. A dense network is less open to outside influences. One reason for this may be, as Birkel (1983) mentions, that dense networks are often able to provide more readily available aid than professional resources. Another possibility is that dense networks create peer pressure to conform to certain network standards and values. These values may obstruct "outside" resources from entering the family system.

Understanding these factors about dense networks may be critical in delivery of services to families in need. For instance, a culture of silence family with a dense network may be extremely close to outside help. Certain teachers may become "burnt out" and thus less available to students from such families. After a number of well meant but ineffective overtures to the child and family, the teachers may "give up." Had the teacher been aware of the different needs of culture of silence families, and had alternative options been available, the situation might have been resolved differently.

It may be more difficult to understand and remediate for a child whose family exhibits culture of silence characteristics than for other children. Such characteristics seem to create subtle but profound problems for students which, in many cases, the schools do not assess properly.

At the moment, most schools screen for academic or emotional difficulties with a narrow range of assessment tools. These tools lend themselves to narrow interpretations of the reasons behind the problems. Often the school symptoms are treated rather than the underlying problems. Take an example of two children in the same class who exhibit poor concentration and memory skills. It is most likely that the two will receive very similar remedial assignments. However, in one case we might find a true learning disability; in the other the problem might lie in a chaotic home structure which prevents the child from sleeping or eating or concentrating properly.

Let's take this example a little farther. Suppose that the school does discover the chaotic home environment. If culture of silence characteristics exist in this family, then the usual school interventions (counseling, talking with parents, tutoring, extra home support, etc.) may be

ineffective. We must remember that families caught in the culture of silence perceive issues very differently than families who have reached either of the other two stages of consciousness (naive or critical consciousness). They do not act as many in the host society would expect. They would not necessarily participate in "opportunities" as currently presented by the school system and do not become "involved" in ways familiar to the dominant society.

Interventions with families who exhibit culture of silence characteristics must be very different from those designed for a child whose family does not show such behaviors. Which support systems can be mobilized to help and how effective they might be may greatly depend on the family's approach to problem solving. What seems to happen now, however, is that the "system" becomes discouraged and frustrated when working with culture of silence behaviors. What often happens is that these behaviors are finally labeled by the establishment as "unmotivated," "uneducated" or "uncaring" people. Less and less hope for accomplishment is held out for such children by the schools. Eventually many of them do drop out as statistics have indicated.

We must remember that oppressed peoples in general will exhibit such behaviors and ellicit such reactions. These behaviors do not represent Puerto Rican culture, but the

culture of oppression.

### The Importance of Assessing for Culture of Poverty Characteristics

We may now want to ask the following question:

"Assume that we can now identify certain concrete differences in families who have seemingly similar characteristics. What caused these differences and why is it important to know if a child's family belongs to the culture of silence?"

Unfortunately, this dissertation does not research how certain families have been strong enough to reach or maintain a level of naive-transitive or critical consciousness while still living in oppressing circumstances. They are, in some manner, beginning or have been able to transform the debilitating narrowness of vision which accompanies a dominated cultural consciousness. The fact that they have this strength and their children are finding success in the mainland schools is impressive. Perhaps these are the students upon whose skills future research should focus. However, this dissertation is concerned with Puerto Rican students having problems in school, particularly those who might be referred for special education.

The importance of assessing whether a child and his or her family belong to the culture of silence lies in being able to design effective educational and social



interventions for both schools and community. "Effective" interventions are those which allow both students, teachers and families to break through failures which occur, in many cases, because of "naive" (in Freire's terminology meaning "person blaming") interpretations of what the students problems are.

It will be important to create a pedagogy which can help those families caught in the culture of silence to transcend it. A pedagogy is both theory of education and its application in order to secure the best results in instruction and training. If this is not done, then identification of culture of silence, "at-risk" students becomes merely and exercise in labeling. This will be discussed further in the final chapter.

If people with a culture of silence mindset are not able to make use of the available institutions of society (political, educational, religious, etc.) to improve their life circumstances, then we can assume several things of their natural support systems, and thus about interventions which might be planned:

First, these families, if they are to survive, need to continue to have a closer knit network of friends and kin than families who make more extensive use of the community support resources. This then becomes self perpetuating in that close knit networks generally resist use of outside resources except in very specific instances. (Bott, 1971).

Secondly, these families will eventually have to rely on



the formal support systems provided by the host society anyway. Why is this? With a natural support network already weakened by the migration, and with low levels of education, motivation and resources, there will be continuingly less chance to find employment in an increasingly technical society. These families will be less able to take care of themselves in the future than they are now; the natural support systems will collapse even further from extreme stress. In these cases, the only supports left will be the institutional ones such as police, welfare, hospitals, mental institutions, DSS, and so on.

So essentially, at its worst, the culture of silence, in an increasingly expensive and technical society, is caused to destroy its own natural support systems. At best, the greater social system allows it to perpetuate a system of painful conditions and inadequate nurturing.

We can also surmise that families, particularly those with culture of silence characteristics, will resist "outside" attempts to influence them, NOT because they are personally opposed to bettering themselves, but because of the way in which their networks and their lives continue to be structured within and by the larger social system. This is a social system that, through the educational process can maintain stratification (and thus status quo) in the social system (Nieto, 1985). Many individuals, particularly Hispanics, never make it through the school hurdles to graduate. Often they become labeled early in their school careers and drop out, thus continuing a trend of low socioeconomic achievement and educational levels. (National Commission on Secondary Education, 1984)

The data strongly suggest that the most successful approach to change would come from within the natural support rather than from without. Such an approach would be particularly important in families who find themselves caught within the culture of silence. The data also suggest that if we do not help create and apply a pedagogy of transformation out of the culture of silence, then such identification merely becomes another label for such children.

#### Family Support Networks

Let's now discuss what the families described as their support networks.

Most of the field data supports other research which says that low income, high risk groups tend to have minimal participation in organized community services, particularly human service programs (Birkel 1983, McKinlay 1973, Croog 1972). However, this should be modified by indicating that the "participation" in question refers to participation in services offered by the "establishment." It was suggested by several professionals that many Puerto Ricans do join organized community activities, but they join groups which are culturally syntonetic. This means churches, men's clubs,

espiritismo groups, etc. Organizations such as the Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, and so on, spring from the roots of the dominant U.S. culture. These organizations, without so meaning, may make Puerto Rican children and families with their different traditions, feel uncomfortable or unwelcome.

Thus, we might surmise that these people are finding their supports in their natural networks and community and thus are selective about the types of institutionalized services that they do use. Or else, they are doing without.

For instance, every family had used the services of physical health care facilities and welfare. 40% (6 of 15) had been involved with police to help them with violent behaviors of family members. It was other formal community services that were minimally used (Department of Social Services, Mental Health, homemakers, visiting nurses, etc). Perhaps the services that are used address basic survival issues, not the more value-laden ones of emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth. These latter issues appear to be the more profound ones in terms of socialization processes. These are the issues over which the Puerto Rican community may want more control in their daily lives. These, then are the issues that the dominant culture must approach with more awareness and respect.

Unfortunately, what is done in the community for personal and cultural growth, particularly for those Puerto Rican families not intensively involved in church structure, seems haphazard. Such growth for children depends mostly on the ability and integrity of the adults in charge. While this may be true in most situations, the Puerto Rican adults and families are already under severe pressure. Thus, they may be even less available for their children in need, who themselves face a new and strange environment fraught with stress.

In summary, the field data shows that the Puerto Rican community in Holyoke tends to prefer its own network of support systems when dealing with issues other than physical health or financial distress. If we are to attempt to broaden the range of effective services to Puerto Rican families, this must be done, not only in a culturally syntonic manner, but with goals which will not become a "cultural invasion." How this might be done will be discussed in the final chapter.

This brings us to an end of the interview questions which ask only factual questions. The next section deals with more abstract concepts of what the family felt were problems for their children.



THE MORE ABSTRACT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
WITH THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

The First Question: What Are Children's Problems?

At first, the questions in this section appeared to be composed of fairly straight forward inquiries, even though they were more abstract than in the first section. For instance:

What does your family consider to be behavior or study problems for children in school or at home?

If a family had trouble with this particular phrasing, an alternate way of asking was:

If you could change one thing in the behavior or studies of your child, what might that be?

However, there was an underlying complexity to this question. For instance, a number of people did not perceive their children as giving them any "problems" even after I had said it was natural that all children would cause some problems for their parents.

In reviewing the responses, I see that there are several levels of information being given. The first level is information about the family's child in particular. Secondly, this question was answered on an abstract level, that is, what the family felt was poor behavior for children in general. A third level was having no concept of what was being asked at all, particularly in the abstract sense. The



interpretation seemed to be:

"My child has no problems (or I will not define them as "problems"), and so the question needs no further answering."

I attempted here to give examples of a variety of situations that might be considered problematic, such as not wanting to do school work or having to buy enough clothing for growing children in many types of weather, etc. This helped stimulate an expanded answer in some cases, in others the response remained the same.

This is an example of a family's inability to answer what, at first glance, might be thought a straight forward question. However, if an individual is still submerged in Freire's semi-intransitive thinking (culture of silence) they

"...cannot apprehend problems situated outside their sphere of biological necessity...their perception is limited and...challenges of the environment (are confused). They fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend true causality." (Freire, 1973, p.17)

In such circumstances, the child becomes torn in the conflicts between two different worlds--school and home. It is no wonder that such children may show symptomatic behaviors in school.

Regardless of how we describe these conditions, an important aspect of this information is whether the family

perceives that a problem exists at all. Regardless of what that problem is, if it is not perceived as such by the family, then they most likely will not be motivated to help modify it.

A note of caution should be taken here. Those "assessing" such a situation must be careful. Another explanation behind such responses may be that the family is already heavily stressed. By recognizing that a problem exists, it may become just one more burden with which the family must deal. This may be particularly true if most interactions have been complaint sessions. Suggestion on how to create more culturally syntonic interactions will be discussed in the final chapter.

#### Correlations Between Perceived Problems, Special Education and the Culture of Silence

Now is the time to ask if there is a correlation between culture of silence characteristics, special education and whether a family perceived that any problems existed for their child at school.

We will draw 2 chi square charts as seen in Figure 12 at the end of this chapter. These figures show that both special education and culture of silence characteristics correlate with a family's perception of problems. However,

in our sample, special education is correlated to a higher level (.01) than culture of silence characteristics (.05). What this indicates is that families with either of these parameters will not necessarily understand that a "problem" exists with their child--at least not the problem that the school has identified.

This suggests that some parents need to be approached about their child's problems differently than current practice dictates. Current practice is often a letter mailed to the parent, a phone call discussing the "problem" and what the school can offer, etc. However, such parents may first need to have a dialogue about what an offer of extra school help for their child means, or the school may need to assess more carefully and expand or redirect its ideas of what level intervention should take place.

It should be understood that remediation of any difficulties actually begins with the first contact. If this first contact with parents shows a lack of affinity or awareness, the state is set for future contacts to be more difficult.

The importance of this particular issue lies in whether home-school coordination in the Puerto Rican community is a viable idea and with whom. It seems from our chart,

that the children most in need of school help are least likely to have parents who understand what is being asked by the school. This is not necessarily because the parents are uninterested in their children, but because the parents perceive these "problems" in very different ways.

Now let's look at the specific behaviors that people named as being problems. What did the parents think and how did this compare to what the teachers thought?

Parent responses were compared with teacher replies in Figures 13 and 14 on the following pages:

FIGURE 13

PROBLEMS FOR CHILDREN IN SCHOOL WORK OR BEHAVIOR  
PARENT REPLIES:

The behavior:	Number of parents mentioning this, either for their child or other children
Does not or cannot do the work.....	4
Difficulty in the school setting--such as:	
lack of respect.....	4
"inquieto," restless, overly active.....	4
fighting in school.....	2
talking dirty (swearing).....	2
not obeying school rules.....	2
school tardiness.....	1
teasing other children.....	<u>1</u>
	TOTAL (9)
Difficulty outside the school setting--such as:	
street problems (destroying property, being wild, stealing, etc.).....	4
the wrong friends.....	<u>1</u>
	TOTAL (5)
Lack of home support (parents not concerned about their children.....)	2
Illness.....	1
Maturity levels	
Early pregnancy and associated school dropout.....	1



FIGURE 14  
PROBLEMS FOR CHILDREN IN SCHOOL WORK OR BEHAVIOR  
TEACHER REPLIES

The behavior	Number of students the teachers mentioned with this problem
Does not or cannot do the work due to.....9 poor skills: excessive absences, poor concen- tration, true learning disability, works too slowly	
related attitude problems: low motivation, emo- tional issues such as anger, rebellion, de- pression, etc.	
Lack of home support.....8 Some parents do not attend conferences, do not communicate with the school, or seem gener- ally unconcerned, unaware. Some parents cannot help child because of their own lack of skills Some parents cannot speak English enough to help their English speaking children with their all English work (Those children who are not in bilingual classes since they speak English well). Child's school work disrupted by chaotic home events	
Maturity levels.....5 Some children are emotionally immature for their grades, causing silly or inappropri- ate behaviors Other children are too mature physically for their classes (ie: 15 yrs. old in 6th grade). They need to be socially promoted to Jr. High but cannot handle the looser structured setting Possible early pregnancy and drop out in several years	

What were the discrepancies? For one thing, there seemed to be more desire for home-school coordination on the part of the teachers than the parents. Parents did not express the same need. Another example of discrepancy occurred around student maturity levels--particularly pregnancy and school dropout. We see that the teachers begin their concern over these problems in the upper elementary grades. The parents did not articulate this concern, even though statistics and family histories bear out the need for such concern. Also, if Figures 13 and 14 are reviewed carefully, we see that in eight cases teachers "blamed" parents for poor student performance, yet none of the parents blamed any of the teachers for "poor teaching."

What might these discrepancies signify? The situation seems too complex to attribute to a "lack of concern" or "unaware." As mentioned in the section on cultural values in Chapter II, Puerto Rican parents are very devoted to their children, and the children play an important part in the family life. So we may assume that there is a great trust on the part of the parents that the teachers know what they are doing.

For instance, in Puerto Rico, the "locus parentus" is surrendered to the teacher for as long as the child is in the school. So parents do not have a sense of the teacher

needing parental aid. Conversely, in Puerto Rico, the parents are expected to assume the role of teacher in the home. These are very different expectations than are found in the United States where expectations of home/school collaboration are very high. It may also be that Puerto Rican families tend to feel that personal matters are to be kept in the family and home. They might not even think that the school should or would become involved in certain matters.

So what these discrepancies may signify are, once again, certain deep cultural misunderstandings and systemic oppression. The teachers, on one hand, feel disempowered to make changes occur. They "blame" the Puerto Rican parents for not acting properly, becoming frustrated and "burnt out" around certain children or behaviors. Puerto Rican parents, on the other hand, are respecting the teacher's professionalism and knowledge, and thus do not intrude or complain about the teacher's or school's actions.

A very important thing to note is the discrepancy in perception. It is probably unless both come to a more coordinated perception, that the idea of mutual support between home and school will not become a viable resource.

Unfortunately, if initial misunderstandings continue

they can cause both teachers and parents to be "turned off" to future involvement. Parents may begin to feel that school contacts will be negative and difficult, while teachers may begin to sense a refusal of support from the home. This type of atmosphere does not induce good home/school relations.

In summary, we see that Puerto Rican parents may have very different perceptions from the teachers as to what is happening for students in school. These differences in perception may be, in part, due to different cultural expectations of what are the roles of the home, child and the teacher. It was shown by the Figure 6A chi square that such misunderstandings will be particularly evident for children in special education or who come from culture of silence families. Because of this it is suggested that the current approach to Puerto Rican children's school problems (such as informing parents of difficulties through a letter or phone call to discuss the "problem", very formal and impersonalized testing procedures, separations of the "different" child in a special class, etc.) may be inappropriate and ineffective in many cases. How this might be modified will be discussed in the final chapter.

### The Second Question: Are Parent/Teacher Techniques Effective?

Once the range of problematic behaviors for our sample of student has been identified, the next question becomes,



"So what's been tried, and did it work?"

Parent responses to this were varied. A guidance or discipline strategy might work in one family but not in another. Interventions such as "talking to and counseling the child" or "being firm," can be carried out in a number of different ways with different levels of success. Certain parents relied partly on their support systems to provide some of the needed guidance. The community resource most frequently mentioned were the fundamentalist churches. One mother made an indirect reference to the police. On being prompted for a way she might use to guide or discipline her 13 year old child she stated:

"I told him I wouldn't help get him out of jail the next time."

No other community resources were mentioned by parents. One, however, was mentioned by a teacher. This was the big brother/big sister program, a community organization which attempts to match an older person with a younger person. The big brother or sister then spends time with the young person, going places doing things, talking, etc.

#### Correlation Between Discipline Strategies, Culture of Silence and Special Education

In order to see if there was a correlation between discipline strategies, culture of silence and special education, 2 chi square charts were set up as seen in Figure



15 at the end of this chapter. Parents who had several discipline strategies available to them were defined as being "more effective" than parents who had only one strategy or who could not answer the question. When the chi squares are solved we see that both parameters, special education and culture of silence, are correlated at the .01 significance level to effective discipline.

This means that parents who exhibit continuing difficulty in disciplining or raising their children, more probably belong to the culture of silence than those who do not, and that these children are also likely to be found in special education.

In summary, most families did not say that any particular method was better than another. Finding effective discipline methods was more like a developmental process within the family. Rather than the particular method itself being powerful, it was the parents' competence as individuals administering those methods which created the successful discipline and control. Some families were more able to effectively discipline and guide their children than others. Families with culture of silence characteristics and children in special education seemed to have more difficulty in this process than others. The only exception to this developmental process within the families were 4 of the

developmental process within the families were 4 of the families involved in fundamentalist churches. These parents were very clear about how the church helped guide their children.

Assuming the success of guidance techniques is more dependent on parental competence and integrity rather than the technique itself, then what are characteristics that might point out whether a family or parent is functioning well?

First, effective functioning of the marital pair or single parent in daily living tasks of the family: This means an ability to "work" (not necessarily having a "job" but producing some type of meaningful action or duty in the family or community), to provide for and run the household, nurture as well as control the children, and exhibit generally normal abilities to relate to people in the environment (ie: not depressed, manic, withdrawn, suicidal, unavailable, etc.).

Secondly, health issues: Families under constant stress due to chronic illness (psychological or physical) do not function in the same ways as healthy families. Sometimes a closer knit family is created through overcoming the crisis; many times it is not. Whatever the case, illness is always stressful, regardless of whether the outcome is positive or negative.

Thirdly, the children's behavior and general outlook on life: This means whether the child seems to be fairly balanced in his or her emotional life and whether the child is judged to be maladaptive by parents and/or teachers.

These are 3 fairly broad categories but they do give a sense of family integrity.

Now let's put this information first on a chart (see Figure 16 at the end of this chapter) and then in 2 chi squares (Figure 17 at chapter's end). Figure 16 divides culture of silence families from other families on an academic continuum. We see culture of silence families grouped together ranging from poor school performance to better performance, and non culture of silence families are arranged in the same manner. In this table, one point is given for each of the 3 characteristics that exists and functions normally, 1/2 point if there is a partial problem, and no point if the problem is extensive.

We also see that the children's behavior becomes less problematical as we move toward the right hand side of Figure 16 that health problems are less frequent and that the family's effectiveness as a unit increases.

From the Figure 16 chart we can compute 2 chi squares as shown in Figure 17, to see if there is significant correlations between culture of silence characteristics, special education and integrity of family functioning. In these chi squares we shall define integrated family functions as one in which scores of 2 or more are received, where one point is given for each of the three family characteristics mentioned previously that exist in the family. As is shown by the squares, there is an extremely

high correlation (.001) between integrity of family functioning and the existence of culture of silence characteristics in a family. There also is a high correlation between integrity of family functioning and involvement in special education (.01) although it is not as significant as the previous correlation.

The chi squares show that integrity of family functioning is a very important indicator of the existence of culture of silence characteristics and special education involvement. This also suggests that effective discipline depends less on any one guidance method, and more on the total functioning of the family as defined by the 3 characteristics previously mentioned. A family involved in the culture of silence is most probably less able to function in an integrated manner, and therefore less able to apply effective discipline particularly as defined by the dominant culture systems.

When outside agencies offer support to a family (ie: schools, language training, occupational rehabilitation, etc.) assessing the integrity of family functioning becomes important. Families functioning at marginal levels focus more on survival than improvement. Offering certain types of services support to a system that may be unable to use (or even evaluate) the service is discouraging for everybody. It



may even damage future attempts to improve the situation.

### School Techniques

How does this correlate to what the schools have been doing?

It would be a good idea to first review the charts on what parents and teachers felt were problems (Table 11). Since we have already discussed the issue of guidance in the home, we now need to look at what techniques the teachers used to deal with these behaviors and whether these techniques were felt to be effective. Below is a general list of general behavior techniques as mentioned by the teachers interviewed.

- praise and positive reinforcement
- work lowered to level or extra visual aids and practice used
- being firm
- giving extra attention and support when possible
- keeping a check on the students
- speaking with parents
- prizes and behavior charts
- male teacher as role model
- referral to special education

Most often mentioned were the revised work loads, extra praise and support, and speaking with parents. Referral to special education was not specifically mentioned as a "method." However, it is an option teachers have often used. Let's look more closely at the 4 most used interventions used.



"Praise and support" is a complex behavior to measure and would require a study in itself. However, it is clear that this is one of the primary methods used for encouragement of students. The effect of teacher praise and expectations on students in general has already been studied. However, an investigation of the effect of teacher praise with Puerto Rican students, particularly special education and culture of silence children has not been researched and might yield some very interesting information.

"Revised work loads" is a more easily definable intervention. Teachers felt that, in 6 of 10 cases where this was being used, the students were benefiting. They were either able to follow the regular class work but at a lower level, had less to do, or had different lessons with lower skills required. With 4 children teachers felt the students were falling behind or not motivated to work up to potential, even with the revised loads.

Unfortunately, this particular intervention reaches a point of diminishing returns as the student grows older. After a certain level, content becomes very important and skills taught build on skills previously learned. Structuring such material for lower skill levels would

require far more time and coordination than would be possible or practical.

"Speaking with parents" was a third intervention. The success rate here was clearly stated. In all families with culture of silence characteristics and 2 families not included in this group teachers felt that parental support and involvement, although attempted, was unsuccessful or non-existent. The other families had been able to establish some type of rapport with school and teachers. They came on a drop-in basis or attended more formal conferences and activities. It seemed that children having the most school difficulty had the least benefit from this intervention.

Finally, we come to use of special education as an intervention. 8 of 16 students were involved in special classes and one referral was in process. Of these 8 students, the special education teachers felt 6 were benefiting from the lessons in some way. However, for 3 of these 6 children the teachers stated that they themselves were not clear as to what had caused the "turn around" in the students' behaviors and work:

"It seems like he was hit by a truck and he's really doing well now."

When I asked one of the students what had caused this sudden change, she replied,

"Cogi casco (I got smart)."

In a similar fashion it was unclear to the teachers why 2 special education students were not benefiting from the special classes. "Low motivation," or "does not exert him/herself," does not answer this question satisfactorily. One is prompted to ask immediately, "Why are they not motivated?"

So it seems as far as special education is concerned, much of what happens is not clearly a result of increased or revised academic attention. There are a number of factors at work, many of which probably relate to the child's life at home and in the community.

### Summary

In summary, we can say that the major Puerto Rican natural support systems have been weakened in the migration to the U.S. and specifically to Holyoke. In many cases, the traditional ways of dealing with family and personal issues are no longer strong enough to be sufficiently effective under the stresses of the new environment.

Some of these pressures seem to come from the host society not having a full appreciation of this extra stress exists and how it affects school performance of Puerto Rican students. Language differences, racial prejudices, poverty,

illiteracy, poor nutrition, cultural differences, climate changes, loss of support systems, migration, etc. help create symptomatic behaviors in Puerto Rican children which disrupt the ability to function in school.

Professionals are aware of many difficulties and much is being attempted in an effort to alleviate the distress on families and schools. The school system is open to change and professional are interested with student problems. However, current programs are overburdened and, in a number of cases, still ineffective to an uncomfortable degree. Many ideas for future changes seem to increase the work load on an already burdened system (such as the many meetings and documentation required of special education teachers and administration) or are fragmented and without the interlocking detail which would prevent duplication of effort.

The sixteen families and children interviewed showed a wide range of resurces and skills even though, demographically, they had very similar characteristics. It was suggested that a parameter which might distinguish between such overtly similar families was Paulo Freire's "culture of silence." This is a subculture found within any culture born out of the structural relationship between the "dominated (oppressed) and the dominators." One can



transcend the stultifying behaviors of this type of world view by moving through several different stages of awareness until critical consciousness is reached. Freire describes a special "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" which helps individuals pass through these stages. This program is fully described in his book of the same name.

Submersion in the culture of silence creates characteristics behaviors within families and individuals. This research shows that, in the sample studied there was a correlation between the numbers of students in special education and those whose families showed culture of silence behaviors. This suggests that a child whose family has such characteristics is more likely to be involved in special education than children from non-culture of silence families.

It was also shown that effective home-school contact, school absences, level of parental education, and network density were affected by culture of silence behaviors. This suggests that factors other than academic difficulty are involved in children assigned to special education classrooms, that these non-academic factors will not necessarily be remediated in special education and that academic remediation in any case will be difficult. This brings us to an end of the data analysis. The next



chapter will begin with a brief summary of the preceding chapters. Recommendations will then be drawn from the material presented. Some of these recommendations will be very practical. Others will have a more idealistic character. A balance of both is necessary in order to implement plans for the future.

These behaviors are often frustrating and discouraging to the teachers who work with children of these families. Parents and children perceive "problems" from a different viewpoint than the schools would like. Parental discipline and the integrity of family functioning is, in most cases, not as supportive for school achievement as it is in other families. Unfortunately, the more well used teacher techniques for remediation of such difficulties become more and more ineffective as the child grows older. From verbal responses to interview questions, it even seems that much of what happens in special education is not clearly a result of increased or revised academic attention.

Because the Hispanic population is young and increasing in numbers, these issues, unless dealt with, will continue to distress the school and social systems. This is particularly true if those families submerged in the culture of silence behaviors continue to be unable to make use of the available institutions of society. What may eventually

happen is that, in the end, these families will succumb to the stress of their environment. Their continuing low level of skills in an increasingly technical society will insure that they will find few jobs or other opportunities. Their natural support systems will continue to deteriorate under the increasing stress until the only support left will be the institutional ones such as police, welfare, hospitals, mental institutions and so on.

Unfortunately, we might predict that families, particularly those with culture of silence characteristics will resist these "outside" attempts to influence them. This is not because they are personally opposed to bettering themselves, but because of the way in which their networks and lives continue to be structured within and by the larger social system.

Special education seems to have become one of the major educational techniques for attempting to alleviate such distress. Unfortunately, this solution does not seem to be effective in many cases, either in terms of cost or success. The data strongly suggest that the most successful approach to change for Puerto Rican children with school problems would come from within the natural support system, rather than from without. Such an approach would be particularly important in families who find themselves caught within the

culture of silence.

This study has shown that, in our sample, certain identifiable behaviors can suggest which families are more likely to be caught in culture of silence behaviors. By using these behaviors to identify such families, the schools may be able design more appropriate interventions for these children which would be either a) more effective than current interventions, or b) may prevent rather than remediate school problems for higher risk Puerto Rican children. These behaviors have been discussed previously in Chapter II, and are listed in shorter form under Recommendation Five in the final chapter.

The information gathered in this research does not mean that such children should be removed from special education or are inappropriately placed. Clearly 6 of the 8 special education students in this sample so placed were benefiting according to teacher evaluations. However, it does suggest that, for certain children, other alternatives might increase the amount of success experienced in the special classes. In some cases the need for special education might be eliminated by replacing it with a more appropriate alternative.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VII

<sup>1</sup> See 176 for a list of those human service professionals interviewed.

<sup>2</sup> The system of compadrazco is more fully explained on p.

<sup>3</sup> This was one of the questions added to the questionnaire after several families were interviewed. Since this is not a statistical study, I did not re-interview for the information. From the chart it seems that a trend could be suggested which is all that was desired. In order to "prove" anything a much larger sampling would be needed in any event.)

<sup>4</sup> Puerto Rican involvement with the churches has been briefly described in Chapter II under the "Religion" section.

<sup>5</sup> Puerto Rican political history in the United States has been described in Chapter II, in the "Political Issues and Migration" section.

<sup>6</sup> The equation used is:

$$x^2 = (\text{Sum of}): \frac{([\text{Observed Frequency} - \text{Expected Frequency}] - .05)^2}{\text{Expected Frequency}}$$

The Yates correction for continuity (-.05) is only employed when  $x^2$  is calculated from a 1x2 or 2x2 cell. Otherwise it is eliminated.

<sup>7</sup> Again, these are culture of silence characteristics. A more complete description can be found in Chapter II.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the adults in several families had created satisfying child rearing situations. For instance, a father, chronically unemployed, became his children's advocates in the schools. He volunteered as a physical education aide, attended school conferences, etc. His wife did the home related chores and went to numerous church activities with the family. Another family divided up the responsibilities differently. For instance, the mother took care of one child's needs while father took care of another. Shopping was the mother's chore, but transportation for the trip was the father's responsibility, etc. These roles were complementary and mutually supportive for the adults. Particularly interesting here is that both the unemployed husbands now had meaningful "jobs" to do within the family structure.

9

When speaking of open and closed networks, we must do so in perspective. What is needed for all families is a balanced, permeable boundary--one that is neither too rigid nor too loose. It is clear that an open network which admits any and all influences can be destructive and unsupportive to its members. Equally destructive is a rigidly closed network, one which admits no new influence or adaptation



FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF FAMILIES IN  
CONTACT WITH GODPARENTS

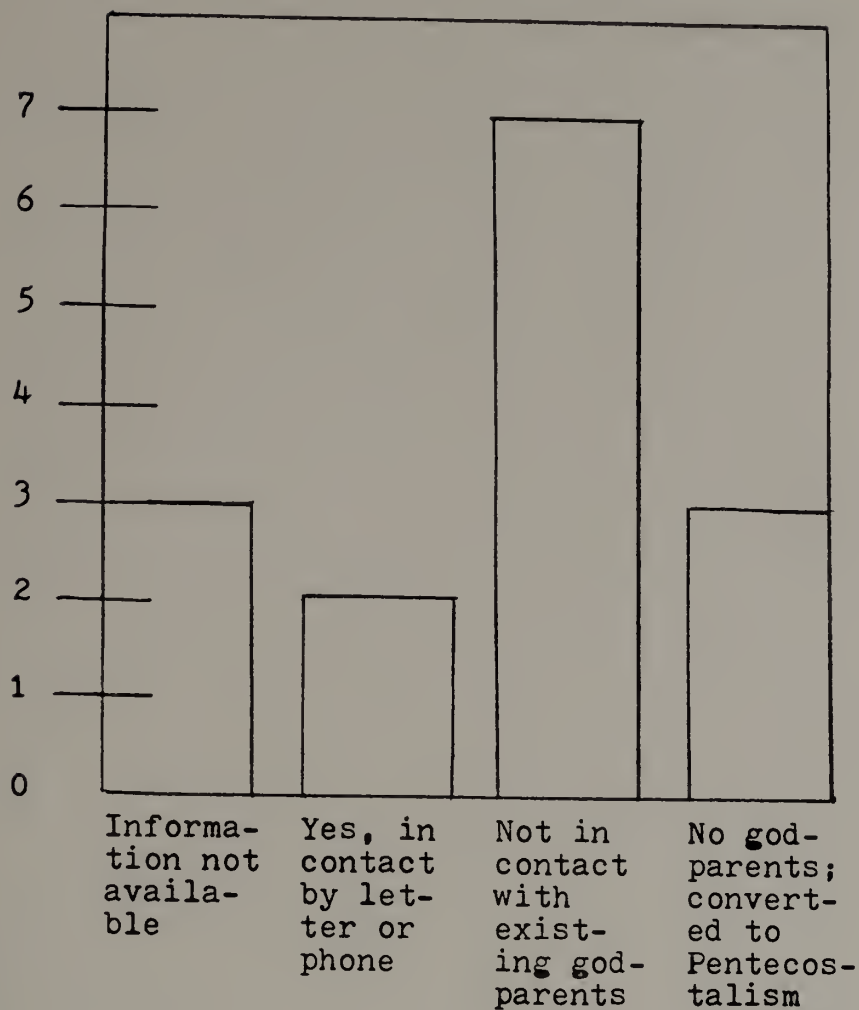


FIGURE 6A: CORRELATION BETWEEN SPECIAL  
EDUCATION AND CULTURE OF  
SILENCE CHI SQUARE

	Number of Children in Special Education	Number of Children Not in Special Education
Number of Children Not From Culture of Silence Families	(5) 3	(4) 6
Number of Children From Culture of Silence Families	(4) 6	(3) 1

$\chi^2 = 4.4$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8

FIGURE 7: CORRELATION OF MOTHER'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL TO CULTURE OF SILENCE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION CHI SQUARES

Culture of Silence	0-6 years education	7 or more years
Non-Culture of Silence Families	(4.5) 2	(4.5) 7
Culture of Silence Families	(3.5) 6	(3.5) 1

$\chi^2 = 6.6$  where .01 level of significance is 6.6

#### Special Education

	0-6 years education	7 or more years
Children Not in Special Education	(3.1) 1	(3.9) 6
Children in Special Education	(3.9) 6	(5.1) 3

$\chi^2 = 4.9$  where .05 level of significance = 3.8

FIGURE 8: CORRELATION OF RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S SCHOOL BEHAVIOR AFTER TEACHER MEETINGS WITH PARENTS TO CULTURE OF SILENCE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION CHI SQUARES

Culture of Silence	No change	Change
Children From Non-Culture of Silence Families	(5.1) 2	(3.9) 7
Children From Culture of Silence Families	(3.9) 7	(3.1) 0

$\chi^2 = 10.1$  where .01 level of significance is 6.6

Special Education

	No change	Change
Children Not in Special Education	(3.4) 1	(2.6) 5
Children in Special Education	(5.6) 8	(4.4) 2

$\chi^2 = 5.2$  where .05 level of significance = 3.8

FIGURE 9 : CORRELATION OF SCHOOL ABSENCES TO CULTURE OF SILENCE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION CHI SQUARES

Culture of Silence	Absent 21 Days or More	Absent 20 days or Less
Children From Non-Culture of Silence Families	(.6) 1	(4.6) 7
Children From Culture of Silence Families	(2.6) 5	(3.4) 1

$\chi^2 = 4.8$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8

Special Education	Absent 21 Days or More	Absent 20 Days or Less
Children Not in Special Education	(2.6) 2	(3.4) 4
Children in Special Education	(3.4) 4	(4.6) 4

$\chi^2 = .8$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8



FIGURE 10: CORRELATION OF SINGLE PARENT VS TWO PARENT FAMILIES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CULTURE OF SILENCE CHI SQUARES

Culture of Silence	Children of Single Parent Families	Children of Two Parent Families
Children From Non-Culture of Silence Families	(2.8) 2	(6.2) 7
Children From Culture of Silence Families	(2.2) 3	(4.8) 4

$\chi^2 = 1.34$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8

Special Education	Single Parent Families	Two Parent Families
Children Not in Special Education	(2.2) 1	(4.8) 6
Children in Special Education	(2.8) 4	(6.2) 5

$\chi^2 = 2.1$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8

FIGURE 10A : CORRELATION OF INTENSITY OF FAMILY RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CULTURE OF SILENCE

Culture of Silence	Low Involve-ment	High Involve-ment
Children From Non-Culture of Silence Families	(3.9) 2	(5.1) 7
Children From Culture of Silence Families	(3.1) 5	(3.9) 2

$x^2 = 4$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8

Special Education	Low Involve-ment	High Involve-ment
Children Not in Special Education	(3) 1	(5) 7
Children in Special Education	(3) 5	(5) 3

$x^2 = 4.7$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8

FIGURE 11: CORRELATION OF DENSITY OF FAMILY NETWORKS  
TO CULTURE OF SILENCE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Culture of Silence	Dense Network	Open Network
Children From Non-Culture of Silence Families	(3.9) 2	(5.1) 7
Children From Culture of Silence Families	(3.1) 5	(3.9) 2

$\chi^2 = 4$  where .05 level of significance is 3.8

Special Education	Dense Network	Open Network
Children Not in Special Education	(.9) 2	(3.9) 5
Children in Special Education	(3.9) 5	(5.1) 4

$\chi^2 = .9$  where .05 level of significance = 3.8

FIGURE 12: CORRELATION OF PERCEIVED PROBLEMS,  
SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CULTURE OF  
SILENCE

Culture of Silence	"Yes, our child has a problem"	"No Problems Exist"
Children From Non-Culture of Silence Families	(5.1) 7	(3.9) 2
Children From Culture of Silence Families	(3.9) 2	(3.1) 5

$\chi^2 = 4$  where .05 significance level is 3.8

Special Education	Yes, Problems Are There	No Problems Exist
Children Not In Special Education	(3.9) 7	(3.1) 0
Children In Special Education	(5.1) 2	(3.9) 7

$\chi^2 = 10.1$  where .01 significance level is 6.6

FIGURE 15: CORRELATION OF PARENTAL DISCIPLINE TO  
CULTURE OF SILENCE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION  
CHI SQUARES

Culture of Silence	Had Sever- al Clear Strategies	Had One Stra- tegy	Could Not Answer
Children From Non-Culture of Silence Families	(2.8) 5	(3.9) 4	(2.3) 0
Children From Culture of Silence Families	(2.2) 0	(1.3) 3	(1.8) 4

$x^2 = 11.1$  where .01 significance level is 9.2

Special Education	Several Strategies	One Strategy	Could Not Answer
Children Not in Special Education	(2.2) 5	(3.1) 2	(1.8) 0
Children in Special Education	(2.8) 0	(3.9) 5	(2.3) 4

$x^2 = 10.3$  where .01 significance is 9.2



FIGURE 16: Integrity of Family Functioning Where One Point Is Given For Each of Three Characteristics Which Exist In the Family (or One-half Point for Partial Involvement)

	Poor School Performance						Good School Performance					
	.5	.5	0	.5	0	.5	.5	0	.5	1	1	1
Effective Functioning of Spouses	.5	.5	0	.5	0	.5	.5	0	.5	1	1	1
Good Health	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Appropriate Child Behavior and Outlook	0	0	0	0	0	.5	.5	1	1	1	1	1
Total Points	1.5	.5	0	.5	0	1	.5	2.5	2	1.5	2	3

Culture of Silence

Non-Culture of Silence

FIGURE 17: CORRELATION OF INTEGRITY OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING TO CULTURE OF SILENCE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION (WHERE ONE POINT IS GIVEN FOR EACH OF 3 CHARACTERISTICS EXISTING IN THE FAMILY OR 1/2 POINT FOR PARTIAL INVOLVEMENT)

Culture of  
Silence

0-1.9 pts. 2 or more pts.

Children From  
Non-Culture of  
Silence Families

(4.5)	(4.5)
1	8
(3.5)	(3.5)
7	0

Children From  
Culture of  
Silence Families

$\chi^2 = 12.8$  where .001 level of significance is 10.8

Special  
Education

0-1.9 pts. 2 or more pts.

Children Not  
in Special  
Education

(3.5)	(3.5)
1	6
(4.5)	(4.5)
7	2

Children in  
Special Education

$\chi^2 = 6.6$  where .01 level of significance = 6.6

## CHAPTER VIII

### FINAL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

Two hundred pages of information could use a good summary before we begin to make recommendations. So essentially and briefly, what has been said up to this point?

First of all, Puerto Ricans are inextricably linked to their culture and their history, a history with very different roots and a culture with very different customs. These are ongoing links, continually refreshed by trips back to Puerto Rico, visits from friends and relatives and a constant influx of new migrants.

Yet Puerto Rican children are educated in a system not of their parents' values, a system which, in many cases, is not very welcoming. The migrants are young. For instance, over 50% of the Hispanic population in Holyoke is under the age of 17. So schools, as institutions which deeply affect children, loom even more important for the Puerto Rican family, since so many Puerto Ricans are of school age.

Within such a system, Puerto Rican children face the challenge of learning differently from their parents and this has the potential to create problems for children,

home, school and community.

Usually, the home and community give strength, encouragement and stability to a child facing the transition into the school world. But for many Puerto Rican children in the United States, their home and community supports have been fragmented by the need for and the pressures of migration.

In situations where the child's home and community supports are weakened, the strength of the school structure should provide stability. However, recently there has been much upheaval in the schools over how to deal with the needs of special students. The rapidly increasing Hispanic population in the United States has forced the schools to take into account certain obvious differences, such as language. Other differences are not so obvious and not so easily approached.

Under a United States congressional mandate schools were required to provide special education for handicapped children. Follow-up research studies began to show that special education enrollments for minority children (Puerto Ricans in most cases belonging to linguistic and racial minorities) were significantly different than for non-minority children. There were all kinds of reasons for

why this was so. But perhaps we can succinctly sum up the reasons in one sentence, as stated by one professional:

"Those kids are different, and it's hard to understand, and even harder to work with, folks who are different."

In working with these children who are "different," we can work within the school system, as is being done with special grants and mandates to schools. We can work outside the school, as is being done through mental health centers and community based programs. We can also study what strengths the families and communities create to help their children meet life challenges. It is these support systems which could actually be considered the most important of all.

Society assumes that the home and community are functioning with some level of integrity. The normal social and community supports, particularly the public schools, are built to complement, not replace, a functioning family and community network. It is only as a family or its members become disorganized that society begins to replace, rather than supplement, parental or familial guidance (counseling, foster homes, special schools for disturbed children, jail, mental institutions, etc.). This is done at much cost to all concerned and is unfortunately a growing concern in the Puerto Rican community.



What do functioning support networks do for children? Essentially they provide a place to grow and learn in safety and with caring. Functioning support systems buffer rather than increase the intensity of stressful situations and thus reduce the need for "outside" help. They provide help with the tasks of daily living as well as transmit attitudes and values about the world in which the child lives.

Puerto Ricans have their own unique complement of support systems. These include extended family, religious groups and folk healers. A cultural milieu is recreated in the new country by establishing familiar types of businesses and activities, such as bodegas, botánicas, social clubs, etc. Puerto Rican values greatly influence how these support networks are utilized. Foremost among their cultural values is having a sense of personal contact and trust of the people with whom one deals. This is often in distinct contrast to the systems in the United States where much of our business is carried on through impersonal bureaucracies.

There are times when the natural networks do not or cannot provide the support or guidance needed for a variety of reasons. When families are having trouble, the problems are very likely to be reflected in children's school behaviors and performance. School response to substandard or disturbed performance has been formalized by governmental

regulations. Unfortunately, the institutionalization of the school response has overlooked the innate influence and power which the natural support system has.

The purpose of the field research in this thesis was, first, to shed light on the dynamics of the natural support systems surrounding Puerto Rican elementary school children in the city of Holyoke. Secondly, it was to see if these support systems might be mobilized to help children in trouble rather than first referring them for special needs services.

The field research included interviews with 15 families, 16 children, a little less than half of whom were in special education, and a number of school and human services professionals.

The data showed that the parents in our sample were the main sources of child guidance. It seemed their effectiveness in guiding their children was more dependent on the integrity of the family and network functioning than on the specific strategies used. While this may be true for other people also, Puerto Rican families are under severe stress (due to migration, poverty, cultural and language differences, intergenerational conflicts, illiteracy, racial discrimination, etc.) which makes parenting tasks even more

difficult. Their natural support systems are fragmented from the migration, traditional values systems are being challenged and they are not well integrated into community networks that could aid them with their responsibilities. Thus, children from these families are at great risk.

However there seemed to be certain families who operated more successfully than others. An important question was to see if there might be any factor which could point out those families, and particularly those children, who might be more "at risk" than others. Paulo Freire's concept of the "culture of silence" seemed to provide a possible answer this question in a number of different aspects.

First, what is the culture of silence?

It is a subculture, born out of the structural relationship which the oppressed, or dominated, individuals and groups have to the larger economic system which defines and maintains their status. It is a cross cultural phenomena and can be found in any ethnic group. Some of the characteristics which are seen in persons belonging to this subculture are a lack of participation or integration in the major institutions and traditions of the dominant society, poor employment histories, low levels of education and literacy, high levels of frustrated aspirations with minimal

avenues of attainment, abandonment of families, extreme poverty and nutritional deficits, and an overall sense of helplessness or fatalism.

The self-perpetuating mindset of this subculture can be released, according to Freire, by learning how to "dialogue" with the social environment. This type of dialogue can be taught through a special type of pedagogy. He says, however, that those who engage in such dialogue as well as those around them must be prepared for true social change. This changed occurs because the oppressed people are not taught to concur to the tenets of the oppressing system. They are taught first to see and then to act upon those aspects of the system which oppress. Thus everyone come to live in a more equal, more liberated system which allows both the oppressor and the oppressed to become more fully human. It means a true disruption of the "status quo," a prospect uncomfortable for most people. Therefore, engaging in such dialogue is difficult. However, this philosophy and pedagogy allows professionals working with Puerto Rican children and families to have a better understanding of the problems faced and a wider range of options with which to work.

It seems that the school and human services professionals in Holyoke are not strangers to many of the problems facing Puerto Ricans children in school: language



problems, prejudices, cultural issues, difficulties in assessment, etc. A full awareness of these issues is not present in every situation and some students are not receiving the full range of services they could use, but certainly the city is opening itself to improvements at all levels.

Where things seemed to break down the most in the schools was in the day-to-day implementation--the practical problems--such as having enough time to write a report, finding enough money in the budget to pay for personnel and services or finding a teaching method or new way of understanding in order to reach a difficult student.

This does not mean there is no need for new ideas or programs. It does suggest that much improvement might take place by making the currently available services work more efficiently and more creatively. What could be perceived as a need might disappear substantially if the already established programs were operating at full potential.

Part of a program running at full potential includes mobilizing the natural support systems in the home and community. However, the issue of how the natural support systems operate in the community does not seem to be well thought out or well researched. Professionals have not begun



to think in terms of the community, family and school as one integral unit. There was no real knowledge of why some families might be successful and others not.

Some school and community programs have been successful in aiding Puerto Rican children and families. Others have been only minimally helpful. For instance, of the children and families interviewed, those with culture of silence characteristics seemed to show more problematical behaviors and backgrounds than families without these patterns (ie: low parent educational levels, many school absences, poor home-school contact, minimal participation in community activities, more intense involvement in special education, etc.) If we want to be able to design or support programs that can reach a good percentage of the population as well as being successful in other ways, we need to understand why this is so. The culture of silence mindset may be only one of several factors involved. More time must be spent researching these issues to find the elements that provide or prevent success.

Another major issue which needs to be investigated would be how to bring information or motivate groups of people who do not generally participate in organized community activities. Also, it was clear that parents in our sample often perceived problems differently from the teachers.

Either a family did not perceive that a problem existed at all or they perceived an entirely different one. This would imply that home-school coordination around "problem" students could be minimal. What these differences in perception were and how they could create misunderstandings would be an important research topic.

It could be surmised that families, particularly those with culture of silence characteristics, would resist 'outside' attempts to influence them NOT because they were personally opposed to bettering themselves, but because of the differences in how they perceive life situations and the way in which their networks and their lives were structured by the larger social system.

It was also pointed out that those families, particularly who exhibit culture of silence characteristics, if they are to survive, would need to continue to have a closer knit network of friends and kin than families who make more extensive use of the community support resources. However, closeknit networks tend to resist even more intensely, outside interventions. Thus a self perpetuating cycle of problematical life patterns is reinforced.

Paradoxically, these families may eventually have to rely on the formal support systems provided by the host

society. This is because, in the future, they will be less able to support themselves than they are now. With their already low skill levels they will be less able to find employment in an increasingly technical society. At this point the institutional supports take over with increasing intensity (mental institutions, jails, DSS, etc.). Although not meant to do so, institutional interventions are likely to rupture what remains of the family network. This all implies that culture of silence families in particular may eventually destroy their own natural support network.

How then is it possible to prevent, particularly for closeknit, culture of silence families, such an inwardly spiraling pattern of self-destruction? The dissertation research strongly suggests that the most successful approach to change for children in Puerto Rican families should come first from within the natural support system rather than from without. Does this finding contradict previous statements that many culture of silence families are either resistant to outside interventions or may be so fragmented that effective natural support systems do not exist for them?

The answer to this question is no, but it is a subtle no. Working from "within" the natural support system is a concept, a way of viewing a problem.

Assume we encounter a culture of silence individual whose support system is so fragmented that he or she is the only representative of the family. No close contacts exist with anyone by phone or letter. One way to approach this is by referring to Bronfenbrenner and Nuttal's formulation of the various levels of supports as described in Chapter III and Figure 1. Working with such an individual might entail beginning with the most distant levels of support, such as culture, values or community. This might involve discussions of cultural values and encouraging action around those values, meeting with culturally similar individuals, participating in special cultural events, etc. This would be in contrast to a major focus on the presenting symptoms such as depression, loneliness, unemployment, etc. Clearly, if presenting symptoms are life threatening, these must be dealt with, but there should always be a recognition that even the single individual belongs to a network--however distant it may appear.

Culture of silence individuals are often more resistant to change than individuals not in this culture. This means change is more difficult for them, but we must not assume that change is impossible. Those who understand the culture and who understand how or who may become part of the "trusted circle" will be able to engage those who live in a

culture of silence mindset. Such engagement is, in fact, engagement with the natural support system. This change can be initiated from the special vantage point of being accepted within the natural support system as a "trusted advisor and counselor" who can guide the initial phases of change. Such a trusted counselor will always be looking to strengthen the natural system so that it can then grow and create changes from within rather than being pressured by forces from without.

This then leads us into the next section of this chapter which deals with suggestions and recommendations. Please note that this study includes interviews with children who exhibit problems in school and those who do not. For children who have primary academic learning problems the special education resource room classes are very appropriate. For other children this situation can be ineffective in many regards. It is for these "other children" that the research in this paper is particularly appropriate.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

When we talk about recommendations we are actually speaking of recommendations for change. Change makes people feel uncomfortable at least for a while if not longer. So when we talk about good ideas or new ideas we need to also talk about the best ways to produce change. This change needs to occur in institutions as well as in people. Without systemic changes, individual changes have little effect.

Change is a process which has its own rules. It starts by first selecting good ideas in appropriate amounts, properly planting and nurturing those ideas and then having a plan in mind of where to go once the ideas take root. A change agent, unaware of the dynamics and rules involved will find some very dry soil (See appendix for references and basic guidelines for change agents).

There are a number of models for special education instruction. As previously stated, I will be referring only to public school special education for behavior or learning disabled children where the program takes place within the confines of the school itself. I will not be discussing special programs for physically handicapped or developmentally disabled children.

We may now ask what are the recommendations which have come out of the research done in this study?

Recommendation One: Connect Currently Existing Resources Through Creation of A City-Wide Bilingual Directory and Paraprofessional Resource and Referral Center Located in the Community

There are many programs and human services existing in Holyoke, based both in the schools and the community. More are being created, especially as state and federal funds focus on the Holyoke area. Much information and expertise already exists among the city programs, agencies and businesses. However, in many cases the available resources are not connected with the people in need of the expertise. This can happen because people, including working professionals, are not aware that the service or program exists, or are not aware of the potential of the existing services.

So, a basic first suggestion is that a bilingual informational list and summary of services should be kept up to date and widely available of such existing programs with current phone numbers and contact people if possible. There have been previous directories, but no ongoing local informational resource has survived nor have they been widely available to public as well as professionals.

Ideally, this should include programs in schools (including listings of grants and their proposed goals), government agencies, private organizations, doctors, hospitals, museums, libraries, movies and theaters, conference and meeting spaces, camps, churches and their resources, parks, stores, restaurants, etc. Actually, it might be thought of as a complete bilingual city directory of services and programs. Ongoing revisions would be needed to make it a reliable resource.

A project like this expands as it continues, with new ideas and sections being included or extended, old ones removed. The idea of a one time resource directory would not be reliable enough over time to serve the community well. For instance, a first directory might list thoroughly only the schools and their programs, such as adult education classes, and human service agencies. A second edition might be able to include businesses that cater to special ethnic commodities, restaurants, hospitals, bookstores and mass media. Such a directory, creatively used could serve both as a resource and a text for classroom use with students.

Any attempt to design such a directory would require an understanding of the purpose. It is not "just a list" but can be an important tool for integrating a child's and

community's support systems. Professionals and others attempting to do this need to know what is available, and what is being tried.

The creation of such a bilingual community directory, however basic, easily available at libraries, schools, and city agencies could begin to redefine psychologically the boundaries and systems which surround children, especially if the directory is well named and a broad category of services, programs, grants and businesses are included.

Let's do a little imagining first. We are interested in redefining the psychological boundaries and systems surrounding Puerto Rican students so as to more fully use community and school resources in the education process. However, we have a population which is difficult to reach, and who do not often become voluntarily involved with bureaucratic agencies as these are currently set up, especially social service agencies. What good would a school affiliated information and referral service do this population if community members would not use it?

My contention is that such a service would be used by the community if appropriately designed and appropriately staffed. "Appropriate design" means culturally sensitive, ie: perhaps a storefront office, open on a drop-in basis in



the local neighborhood, staffed by paraprofessionals from the community who have children in school. These parents would receive training as necessary from the school department.

Mention should be made here of the PAC's (Parent Advisory Council) which are part of the Holyoke schools parent involvement programs. Would this information service not duplicate efforts already in progress? The answer is that, without proper monitoring, there would probably be some type of overlap, and that it would be in the best interests of everyone to eliminate any duplication of services. However, PAC's are not focused on expanding the broader community resources and options available to a child but tend to focus on schools. They are not highly visible in the community nor available at predictable day-time hours in a culturally sensitive setting for parents and professionals needing information. The PAC's do not provide an available community location for developing, investigating and learning about community and educational resources. As stated earlier in this study, the PAC for the bilingual program is active. However, it represents only a small number of parents (approximately 30-80 attending out of a population of 1000+ students), and would not necessarily involve the parents of English speaking Puerto Rican students. The PAC's in many schools will not



necessarily concentrate on issues of concern to Puerto Rican parents. All of this means that many Puerto Rican families will not use the resources of the PAC's.

However, the function of the PAC's actually serves a very different purpose than the information services being discussed. PAC's are used to improve school programs, increase parent skills, and create a place where parent input can be heard. The information office would be a referral source to PAC programs and resources, rather than being a duplication of those resources. Such an office should reduce reluctance on the part of many Puerto Ricans to consult such resources around issues which concern their children. It would also increase the respect and visibility of the staff members in both the Anglo and Puerto Rican community, and create another place in the community where leadership can develop. The initial service that could be offered by this office would be the city directory. Word processing and list capacity would be available on computer. A basic directory could be distributed to professionals and community people with referral to the office for more detailed resources. This might not only bring Puerto Ricans and professionals in to use a common city facility, but it could become a major resource in gathering information about the needs of the community.

The services would be educationally and informationally oriented. For Puerto Ricans it might prove to be less threatening than going to a mental health agency or approaching the school bureaucracy for information. However, if such a service were to be set up, then cultural sensitivity would be extremely important both in speaking to Puerto Ricans and in creating a welcoming environment. Since few Spanish books, newspapers, or other reading material is available, the offices might also be able to meet some of these needs.

The information service might become a focal place around which parent and community volunteers could be trained or approached. Students from the schools might do research in this office about the city, and so on. There are many other possibilities that a bilingual, school affiliated, parent-run para-professional referral resource center might create. But most important of all is that it has the potential to become a school-and-community sanctioned center where educational resources and needs could come together.

Let me return to the more practical level. There is a need for information to flow more easily between existing programs, professionals and community people. A widely distributed, yearly, bilingual resource directory, however

small, would be a good beginning for the networking of services for Puerto Rican children.

Recommendation Two: Research on What Makes Current Programs Effective or Ineffective

It is known that Puerto Ricans have low levels of involvement in community programs whether these programs are service or information oriented. More information needs to be gathered on what makes some programs successful with the Puerto Rican community and children while others are not. "Successful" in this sense means that the planned event has succeeded in its task and has done so with the estimated number of people. Sometimes, this will be a small number of people. However, as long as the planners know this will occur, and why it occurs, then the event and its outcome can be intelligently designed.

For instance, a school event for Mother's Day (Día de las Madres as mentioned in Chapter VII, Question 5) was considered an enormous success with 300-500 people in attendance. What might have been the reasons that this program was successful?

First, it was focused on a celebration which was already an inherent part of the culture. Secondly, the program

organizer actually had parents personally called to encourage them to attend; people with transportation offered rides to those without. This method addresses the style of "personalismo" so preferred by the culture. It addresses the fact that a number of parents are illiterate and cannot read school notices either in English or Spanish. It offers material aid to individuals who are in need, and it fosters a sense of community involvement. Thirdly it was scheduled on a day and in a place (Saturday afternoon at a local school) that was culturally acceptable for women and families (ie: women going out alone or at night is not widely approved), as well as available for most family members. And finally, the program made people feel WELCOME. This means that they were among people who could "speak their language" both figuratively and in reality. This sense of welcome was enhanced by the event itself which had its roots in the community and culture; it empowered and enhanced the natural support systems in Puerto Rican families rather than creating a situation in which families and parents are "talked at" or "done to."

Other events, such as workshops, may be partially successful, meaning that those who attended were enthusiastic but that a small ratio of the numbers invited attended. This partial success may be due to the way in which the program and methods of inviting are carried out.



More families might become involved if more personalized contact were initiated, or the meetings held at more personal places (ie: at homes or churches vs. schools) or if meetings focused on making people feel welcome rather than focusing more on imparting information, or that concrete results be shown to the participants that their involvement did make a difference.

These are only a few of the possible answers. In many cases, professionals are not so clear about why an event has been successful or not. Therefore, future errors cannot be planfully avoided nor future successes assured. If a lack of cultural awareness is the issue then aspects of the programming may actually "push away" prospective participants rather than encourage them to come. Thus, I suggest that a systematic study be done of past and current events, programs, and projects done with Puerto Ricans in order to clarify this issue and make recommendations.

This study should include such issues as:

- What are the differences in the way parents perceive their child's school experiences and the way teachers see them
- How do the community and homes support/not support their their children's work in school
- Why do Puerto Ricans drop out of programs once they have begun attending (this would call for an interviewer with an understanding of cultural issues, or else the answers to such questions will not reflect "real" reasons)
- What factors cause underutilization of programs in Holyoke



and specifically, what are these programs

- What previous city or school consultants have been hired; what have they said about the school systems Is there a way to document this information in an ongoing file so as to make it easily available for researchers and historians?

Recommendation Three: Create a Facilitator Position Within the School and Mental Health Facilities

We know that studies and directories produce information. The 2 previous suggestions are "information providers." However, they do not guarantee communication. Communication between people must be considered a goal in itself. Without a plan for fostering the proper use of this information, the pure providing of it becomes a meaningless exercise.

What might such a plan be?

As already stated, the data gathered in this study strongly suggest that the most successful approach to change for children in Puerto Rican families should come first from within the natural support system rather than from without. But how do we deal with the practical problem of gaining entry or access to the natural support systems? Without this access we cannot easily design or implement any changes, or even share whatever useful information might be available, much less assure that it is used.

The same question can be posed for the professionals-- how do we gain trusting and not just mandated access to the professionals involved with these children? How do we gain this access so that whatever useful information is gathered will be used effectively and with an overall plan in mind? Similar rules must apply when working with either professionals or families. Children, families, teachers and administrators must be approached with the same respect for personal competence.

Who could then make the initial approaches into these 2 systems?

#### Gaining Access to the Natural Support Systems and the Schools

For this I would suggest a unique resource position be created for a bilingual individual and assistant if possible. This position might be called a facilitator. Ideally, such a position should be funded half through the school department and half through a community agency, preferably a mental health center with experience in outreach and community development and family therapy within the Puerto Rican community.

The individual who works in such a position should think

of their task as "working themselves out of a job". Ideally, once connections are created between resources, and either newly created or more traditional community groups begin functioning in a manner which includes the schools, the facilitator should stand back and withdraw influence, acting only as a consultant.

In order that lines of command and supervision are clear, this individual should be supervised directly by the mental health - community development director who has an educational consultant based in the school system. If the primary supervisor of the facilitator is outside the school system there will be less pressure from the hierarchical demands of that system. Community outreach programs in mental health agencies, although bureaucratic, can be somewhat more flexible. The educational consultant should be, if possible, a program director (such as bilingual director, special education director, etc.) since policy level decisions may need to be effected.

A strong concern was expressed by one professional over the complexity of supervision and line of command issues in such a position. These issues are very complex and can interfere with the success of such a program, especially when dealing with such diverse groups as school principals, teachers, families and clinics. In order to avoid problems,

it would be important to think through in detail the problems that might occur when crossing "boundaries" between the schools and the mental health clinics.

The facilitator should be familiar with both the fields of education and psychology, know the community, and be comfortable working in a personalized manner. This person should also be willing to commit to working for a length of time since continuity of personnel is very important. Record keeping is essential, but should not be a main focus of the work. For this reason, the facilitator must develop a system which briefly, but with organization, documents what is being done. If the facilitator becomes caught in administrative requirements, either by his/her own lack of organization or through demands from outside sources, the effectiveness of this individual, especially during the initial stages, will be minimized.

One might ask whether such an individual should be Puerto Rican. The answer to this is "not necessarily." Having a bicultural, bilingual individual would be very helpful. However, more important is that the individual have a grasp of the cultural, sociological and educational interplay of forces which affect the city's population. Along with this overview, it is essential that the professional hold a philosophy of action which does not



place blame on those who are victimized. This does not mean condoning irresponsible behavior. It means understanding the effects of oppression and how they manifest in daily living.

One of the effects of oppression is "assimilation." This is a state in which individuals of the dominated group strive to be and act just like those who are dominant, wanting, at any cost to resemble them. It is, according to Freire, especially prevalent in the middle class oppressed,

"...who yearn to be equal to the 'eminent' men of the (more privileged) class." (Freire, 1970, p.49).

It might be difficult for an individual who has been overly "assimilated" into the mainstream culture to keep a non-blameful perspective on certain issues. I mention this because one may assume that by hiring professionally qualified bicultural personnel, one hires a person "who understands." This is not always true. However, it can be stated that a qualified Puerto Rican professional who does have the broad perspective needed would most likely find an easier acceptance in the community than a non-Puerto Rican with similar training and outlook.

If enough funds are available, an assistant (part or full time) ideally a paraprofessional from the Puerto Rican community, should be selected by the facilitator. The assistant's position does not require the breadth of



perspective needed by the program coordinator. More important are the working connections with the community and knowledge of the culture. For this reason, a bicultural individual would be preferable in this position. It would be the responsibility of the facilitator to supervise the assistant in order to screen the interactions of the assistant, making sure such connections follow the program outlook. Above all, these two people must be able to work together very closely, be open to new ideas, and hold nonjudgementally, the concerns of both the community, family and schools.

#### Responsibilities of the Facilitator with the Families and Students

What responsibilities would such positions entail?

First, the facilitator should become a resource of information about the families and their natural support systems. Anyone attempting to work with such a system needs to be well aware of the profound cultural disorganization that has taken place for migrant Puerto Rican families and communities; the insidious effects of poverty on these systems, and the psychological heritage of never having experienced political or economic self determination. Personal contact (personalismo) and trust (confianza) are basic to successful longterm interaction with these families

as well as the concepts of respeto and dignidad. This means that one must know the culture, respect it as equally valid as its United States counterpart, and that any work or change to be accomplished is best done mutually with both parties gaining, growing and accommodating.

I suggest this occur in the following way. For at least the first year, the facilitator should work with only one elementary school and with complete classrooms, such as all bilingual 4th, 5th and 6th grades. All students and their families should be visited at least 2 or 3 (and possibly more) times over the year for an informal get-together (unless the family indicates they prefer not to have such a visit).

In approaching parents for these visits, schools could indicate that a new outreach program has begun. It is hoped that through home visits the schools can become more personally acquainted with a child's strengths. In such visits, information about school and city educational/social programs can be shared. In addition, it will be mentioned that schools would be very open to learning about those resources which the families might be able to share with the community.

Such visits, especially first visits, can be made no re

comfortable if there is a loose structure to them. This structure could be created, for instance, through a flexible and nonthreatening interview format. However, the facilitator would need to focus on making such meetings enjoyable as well as informative. Such an approach might begin with a letter in Spanish and English to families with a stamped return reply enclosed. Parents who would prefer no visits or that the visits occur at school could so indicate. Those parents who did not return an answer would then be visited at a time mutually convenient for family and facilitator. Families who stated they wished no visits could be sent a follow up letter or phone call encouraging them once again. If the reply is still "no", then no visit should occur. However, other ways of involvement with the family should be explored when possible.

Since everyone is included in the outreach, such visits do not single out problem students. Thus, families may come to feel more relaxed and open. Visits may give important information about all families and children, such as how families of successful as well as unsuccessful students function. It may also show whether an educational, rather than clinical, approach allows for more productive interactions between home and school.

The main purpose of such visits will be to establish a

feeling of "personalismo" (meaning personal and direct contact) with the parents and children to see if there are resources within the families that might be mobilized for the child or the community, or if there are unmet needs within a family that have not been mentioned and might be addressed.

For instance, during one of my field interviews, a parent, well educated in Puerto Rico, mentioned that she would very much like to learn English, but that her husband would not allow her to go out of the home to the English classes in the city. Another family had relatives coming from Puerto Rico and needed information about colleges and special accommodations for handicapped students. These are issues that would not necessarily be attended to on their own, yet affect the well being of the family members. If trusted, the facilitator who is "just visiting" can become a connector of resources. In some cases, he or she might even become the actual educator or therapist.

Through these across-the-grade-level visits the facilitator can acquire a visibility and a positive reputation in the whole community. If the contacts have been culturally sensitive, then access to information about the natural support systems will become available. Also, certain family problems, previously unavailable to community support



networks, may be opened to interventions. By alleviating such family stresses, children may then be able to perform in school with better concentration and development of skills.

The facilitator will also want to identify key community members who would like to participate in various community and school projects. Chapter IV described the concept of "link" persons (people who are distinguished by their roles as helpers within the Hispanic community) There are 3 categories of such individuals: those with organizational qualities, those who prefer working with individuals although aware of formal agencies, and neighborhood helpers. Once identified, these people should be supported in their natural functioning. If this can be done with cultural sensitivity, then real contact with the indigenous networks has begun.

This kind of "rapport establishing" takes much time initially. It requires visits not only to families but to agency and project personnel. It requires an effort on the part of the institutions involved not to "hook" the facilitator into being a crisis counselor dealing with problem children or a fund-raiser dealing only with those cases which can produce billable hours. However, in the long run the facilitator should be cost effective. This is



because she or he should have the ability to link resources together, to work in a preventive rather than crisis oriented mode and accomplish tasks more efficiently because of clearer communication lines.

### Responsibilities in the Academic Sphere

Now let us see how this position might work in the academic sphere. The facilitator would want to routinely report to the teachers about whatever home visits were made. Again, since all students in the class are receiving such attention, the information is "mainstreamed." Teachers, after an initial adjustment, will come to expect supplementary information about all students, not just the problem situations. Teachers would be able to informally alert the facilitator to children about whom they have concerns without initiating a special education or even a Project PREP referral. Both of these processes become formalized and create bureaucratic complications without the fuller picture being available for the teachers' decisions. This is information the facilitator might quickly provide. By providing information both to the family and the teacher, certain referrals for special services might be reduced while increasing the efficiency of services which are provided.

Hopefully, teachers will come to see the facilitator as

a resource of information, not a "fixer of problems." The solution for any "problem to be fixed" should come more naturally from the family, child and teachers involved. The facilitator should serve as a resource or catalyst for this process and may include academics as well as social issues.

For instance, one father had a particular talent refurbishing worn out mechanical things. He had an old wind-up phonograph in the livingroom which he had refinished and fixed so it now played records. It could be suggested to both teacher and parent that he come to class. He might share how he did these things, as well as explain how old phonographs used to run without electricity.

Such resource linking helps unite the still separate spheres of home and school. It helps build self esteem within the family and for the child while also providing the teacher with an already planned and valuable activity. At the same time it allows a respectful space for teacher and parent to create a mutual dialogue, one founded on issues other than how their child is doing.

Actually, these types of tasks might be accomplished by parent aides, volunteers or paraprofessionals. However, a working model of what needs to be done and how to do it needs to be created first. At this point the facilitator can

step back and serve in a coordinating or consulting capacity, thus leaving more professional time to develop other aspects of the program. Interested teachers might want to make informal visits to families themselves. Once the facilitator identifies such interest, a substitute teacher should be obtained to take over the class for perhaps 1 1/2 hours once a month. It is important that this home visit time be legitimized by the school for the teacher; that it not take place on the teacher's "own time." Or if a visit should occur after school, then legitimized release time (up to 1 1/2 hours be granted to the teacher). By such legitimization the school system begins philosophically to stand behind the integration of the now separate spheres of home, school and community.

The important thing with such a program is that it not be haphazard. Teachers should be briefed, probably by the facilitator on what to expect during home visits and how to structure visits for success rather than disappointment or shock. An interested teacher should commit to doing a series of visits and reflect on what might be accomplished in general through contact with the home. Records of the visit, minimal, but concise should be kept. This might be done in a 10 minute debriefing with the facilitator. The one thing we do not wish to create is more administrative work for the teacher.

It might be useful to hire a permanent substitute who would remain within the school and come to know the classes well. This would encourage teachers to do home visits and might even create release time for creation of more innovative programs. One of the major stumbling blocks for instituting any new ideas and programs is that the teachers and other school professionals are currently working very hard. There is little spare time or energy to put into developing "more." This is not to say that teachers are uncreative. It means that new projects take extra time in the initial stages. If we want our professionals to work for such changes, we must consider how their current job demands impinge on their ability to do so.

Such teacher involvement could show, in the long run, a more effective home/school coordination and understanding. It is, at least by the schools, an effort to extend outward into the community.

Another important effect of a constant and regularly expected dialogue about the students between teacher and facilitator is that he or she comes to know, informally, the needs of the teachers. Similar to what happens within the families, she or he can suggest connections of resources to the teacher that might be helpful or become a consultant to



the teacher in certain situations.

It is clear that the position of facilitator, if properly approached, has the potential to mobilize the natural support systems as well as increasing and supporting effective classroom interactions. But how does it help specifically with special education issues?

### Recommendation Three as it Refers to Special Education

It has been shown that Puerto Rican children in the United States are more at-risk than their peers due to severe environmental stresses. One way in which the school have responded to this has been to provide special classes to remediate poor school performance. The author contends that many of these students' difficulties are actually secondary problems. Remediation of secondary issues, however, important, will not resolve the underlying problems although such efforts may help contain the problems to some degree and reduce side effects.

What is the difference between primary and secondary problems?

A primary problem is considered the basic disability. Secondary problems are actually offshoots of the primary



disability, even if the secondary symptom is severe. For instance, a child whose parent has died may exhibit severe emotional and academic problems due to grieving. Although the primary issue is the grief process, the secondary symptoms are often withdrawal, depression and academic disinterest which all lead to academic failure.

The importance of diagnosing a problem as primary or secondary comes in designing the intervention. Some secondary symptoms will disappear as the root cause is alleviated. Other secondary symptoms may need to be dealt with right away, regardless of the primary cause. Do you want to design to alleviate the symptom, the cause, or both? Knowing this information and designing a program around it can make the outcome much more effective.

Let us take the example of a 4th grade student who is in special classes because of poor reading and concentration skills. The special class teacher provides proper remediation with minimal success. The student works too slowly and has poor retention even though seemingly motivated.

None of the remedial measures taken in school will change some of the other factors in this child's life: she lives with 7 people in a 3 room apartment, her older sisters

have previously dropped out of school due to pregnancy, adolescence is quickly transforming the child's interests and body shape, and the mother shows little involvement in school or community.

In this situation it is unclear whether this child is primarily learning disabled or whether these are secondary symptoms of other issues. Certainly it is proper to focus on academic remediation . However, unless something alters what else is occurring for the child, we can sadly predict that this student will probably follow in her sisters' footsteps.

It is important to assess such high risk children within their fuller environment rather than within the narrower sphere of school performance. In order to prevent rather than remediate difficulties, we need to be able to do these assessments before the problems show up in school performance. If we play the game of prevention then students can spend their time learning, rather than unlearning.

Children's cognitive performance is intimately linked to many other factors in their lives. They do not have the ability to isolate their performances. So cognitive remediation is only a small portion of how we might help a child, especially one who has been labeled in need of special services. Until we expand our alternatives of

working with deviant academic behaviors, we will find ourselves faced with partial or minimal success because most of our special classrooms are designed with learning problems as the focus. But many of these students in special classes bring more than their learning as problems.

With our current approach to special help we are also saying something about a child who does manage adequately in school. We are saying by our actions (although we may think differently) that this child, who is also from a high risk population, does not need advocacy. But could we do something now, such as supporting and encouraging the strengths these children show, to prevent problems later? Perhaps with these children, just a little bit of support at the right time might go a very long way. Many children not currently recommended for special classes are in need of such preventive help or encouraging support.

Take the example of a Puerto Rican boy whose mother never returned the summer camp application that the teacher sent home. This camp was a city funded activity only for students whose teachers felt they could benefit from the outdoor experiences. When I visited the home on other business, I asked the mother why she had decided not to return the application. She replied that the streets were unsafe for her children, so she did not let them play

outside. Not being assured that transportation was provided she did not want to let her child be outside walking to camp. When I explained the transportations arrangements she readily agreed to return the application. A 5 minute discussion in person saved one little boy from spending his summer on the third floor of an apartment building.

These are the types of day-to-day situations that the facilitator can help with for all children. They do not have the stigma of "mental health" problems, or of school problems. Many of them may just be "clearing up" things or passing the time of day getting to know someone in a personalized way that will be remembered long after.

### Project Prep

Project Prep as described in Chapter V is a preliminary step in the special education referral process. It is designed to resolve problems within the regular school program before they become serious enough to require special services for the student.

It might be argued that the responsibilities outlined for the facilitator overlap those outlined in Project Prep. The described role of an educator-therapist however, would supplement or precede, rather than overlap, the workings of Project Prep. This would also be true for actual referrals



to special education.

For instance, the facilitator visits all students and then discusses the visits with the teachers. Thus, the teachers have access to information through informal channels that they might only have gained previously by initiating a more formal inquiry. This information has the potential of helping the classroom teacher create alternative methods of dealing with student problems. It may also help the teacher gain a different perspective on the student, or, at least, feel supported (either psychologically or practically). Either case may relieve some of the frustration of dealing with problems.

If Project Prep is initiated for a student then the facilitator's information will probably have been of importance in determining that it was necessary and that in-school changes could help. Let's take the example of a child whose grandmother is the primary caretaker and has just fallen ill. The child's school performance may change radically. If the family has not informed the school either of the importance of this individual or of what has occurred, teachers may initiate Project Prep. If the situation were known, the teacher may very well have chosen to deal with the child's emotional upset and school performance in a very different way. Once initiated, such official steps



a great deal of work for a number of professionals, and yet does not guarantee success, especially if the broader picture is not taken into account.

If needed the facilitator's information can be useful in speeding up the referral process for special education, especially if there is a good rapport with the family. Parent delays in returning signed forms or explaining things to the family which they do not understand can all be done in a more culturally syntonetic, and therefore more effective manner.

### Summary of Recommendation Three

In summary, the description for the creation of a position such as a facilitator has been somewhat involved. However, whether such a position is created or not there are certain essential elements contained within this description.

First, that many of the existing resources within the community are not working together and much could be accomplished simply by connecting the right resource to the right need.

Secondly, there should be some way of "mainstreaming" the help to all children. This is particularly important if we want to work from a prevention oriented basis. Since all children of this population are at-risk, and help now may prevent problems later. It also puts the resources offered to the family in a neutral, and therefore more acceptable category.

Thirdly, and most importantly, changes need to take place systematically, not haphazardly. Haphazard changes create no base on which to build a stronger community. The

lack of joint systematic planning creates many isolated pieces no matter how well intentioned or creative.

If we sensitively integrate our resources, then we can sensitively help our children integrate their lives in what can be for them a confusing, often conflicted world.

#### Recommendation Four: Use of Parental Skills

One of the ways to begin integrating resources would be to use parental skills in the community and school. This has been tried by various individuals with different levels of success. For instance schools have organized different Parent Advisory Councils (PAC's). The bilingual department has found that parents who participate in the PAC are enthusiastic but that only a small percent of these parents attend. Individual teachers have had parents come in to school to do projects with students or act aides. Some parents have been effective, others have not integrated well. Before any new attempts at organizing substantial parent involvement occur, some forethought and organization should take place by a professional in order not to repeat previous patterns.

Phyllis Silverman (1976) discusses the development of a community volunteer program. Interested widows from the community who had passed through some of the grieving stages

were recruited to make home visits to other widows, particulaly during the initial grieving period. Professional involvement was required to make the initial contacts and provides consultation to the visiting volunteers. However, a major focus in allowing the natural empathy and interest of the widows to be the organizing and helping force. I strongly suggest that this article be read by individuals wishing to create a force of parent volunteers for various tasks in the schools and community at large.

Elements to keep in mind during such an endeavor would be, first, a sensitivy to the cultural issues involved in approaching community members and creating programs which affect family members and may redefine their roles within their network.

Secondly, keeping the cultural issues in mind, then the proper selection of key parents in the community (ie: "link persons" as described by Mendoza in Chapter IV) becomes very important. Thirdly, any professional involved should think of his or her position as one of a "catalyst" or consultant, not as director.

This type of organization should not inhibit teachers from contacting parent volunteers for classroom projects or other help. However, I would strongly suggest that each teacher be asked to list names of those parents who have

shown an interest in such involvement, as well as those who have shown an active interest in their child's schooling (ie: visiting the teacher or school, coming in to conferences and other school activities, etc. Unfortunately, we usually try to contact the hard to reach parent. It is with parents interested in being involved in this manner that contacts should begin. We cannot forget, though, that these contact must be done with sensitivity and an awareness of the cultural ramifications which may occur.

Recommendation Five: Assessment for Culture of Silence Characteristics--A Beginning Tool for Identification of Children at Risk

In talking about participation in from within the natural support network, we need to remember that some people will be much harder to engage than others. Assessment for culture of silence characteristics should be a clue for identifying such individuals and groups.

Certain factors as discussed at length in the analysis chapter have a significant correlation to which families in our sample belonged to the culture of silence. These indicators can be used as a tool to identify such families.

They are:

- a. Student's participation in special education classes
- b. Low educational achievement for mother (statistics were not available for fathers)
- c. Difficulty in establishing effective home-school contact



- d. Many school absences
- e. High density of family network
- f. Parents exhibit continuing difficulty in understanding that their child has a school problem
- g. Low integrity of family functioning on 3 levels:
  - effective functioning of adults in daily living tasks
  - health
  - child's behavior and outlook

These factors can help identify children who may be more "at risk" than others. Such identification will also help alert professionals that the child of this family needs different types of goals formulated for her or him than for a child from families who do not exhibit such characteristics. This is because families with culture of silence behaviors have learned different ways to protect and support their families than non-culture of silence families.

Unless these differences (particularly as described by Freire) are taken into account, interventions with children from these families may be minimally effective.

It cannot be expected that all of these factors would be found in one child or family. However, if one were to find a majority of the characteristics existing, there would be a good chance that this family or child is part of the culture of silence and therefore at higher risk than other children.

I have labeled this a "beginning tool" for identification. Any refined assessment tool must be



researched much more so than has been done here. Other factors of importance may not have been correlated, and of those which are, some are more significant than others. It is recommended that a future study be done to refine such an assessment tool. These factors can be used as a beginning base for assessment to be reworked or redefined as necessary. A larger sample of 60 is suggested for such a study.

Identification of culture of silence behaviors is important because interventions and/or contact with these families needs to be designed very differently than for families who do not exhibit such characteristics. Very different goals must be kept in mind.

#### A Pedagogy of Transformation

There is a danger that we might stop our work at identification rather than transformation. If this happens we have simply created another label rather than a way of helping children in need. What must occur is a pedagogy--a theory and application of education--that will help such families transform themselves towards Freire's second and third stages of consciousness as described in Chapter II.

How might this be done? First, we must think of working within the natural support systems. The major work of

transformation out of the culture of silence must come from inside the individual or family. If this is not done then such attempts will appear to be more of an attack than a help. Freire describes the community individuals who guide this transformation as both teachers and students because they are constantly learning from those who come to transform. These community individuals are first identified and trained in the pedagogy by selected outside change agents. In our situation, the outside change agents might be individuals such as the facilitator (as described in Recommendation 3) or other community professionals who have particular skills as communicators, respect among neighbors, a familiarity with both Anglo and Puerto Rican cultures, etc. These community members would then be trained to work within families or groups.

What would this work entail? Freire describes in detail the consciousness raising pedagogy developed in Brazil. It involves studying the specific community culture and looking for key words used among the residents which maintain a dominated consciousness. By studying these particular concept-words, both in terms of learning to read and in terms of what concepts these words encapsulate, the teacher-student encourages a dialogue. As this dialogue evolves, the individuals immersed in the culture of silence begin to question its value concepts as they learn the skill of

reading. Thus, they emerge from their silence and truly begin to speak. Freire calls these sessions "culture circles."

I realize that education theories developed for one situation and culture cannot simply be transplanted into another. However, certain modifications can be made and applied here. I would recommend that Freire's applications be studied and aspects be adapted to a transforming work among families and professionals here. These aspects should include:

- identification of culture of silence families and permission to work with them
- identification of key individuals in the local community interested in working with friends and neighbors
- creation of the practical aspects of the pedagogy such as identification of the key concepts in the community which maintain the culture of silence
- training of the community individuals as well as professionals in how the program works
- identification of long range community issues which might occur as people begin to move from one stage of consciousness to the next

Clearly, this overview of a program for transformation is sketchy and needs much work. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to include a more specific plan. However, it is important to make note that we must do more than simply identify the culture of silence--we have an obligation to help people move out of it.

### What Can Be Done Now?

On a more immediate plane while a practical pedagogy is being developed, we may want to start contacting the teachers of such children. It is likely that these teachers may need some support and clarification of issues surrounding the children. These teachers may be exhibiting frustration, puzzlement or even a "ready to give up" attitude. Supporting and re-explaining the situation to pinvolved with the child, as well as providing them with information on home issues may help modify the way teachers perceive the situation. It may give them a fresh approach and sense of not facing this problem alone.

Supplementary interventions for the child may need to be discussed or designed (ie: homework help, summer camp, big brother/sister program, etc.). However, none of these should be undertaken without the sanction from the home. This means parents must be contacted in a non-threatening manner to help foster success. Making connections with such families will require much sensitivity and ongoing involvement.

For example, in one highly disorganized family, the mother who has only a second grade education, cannot count adequately, and suffers from lapses of memory, likes to keep someone nearby to help when needed. She often does not send her son or daughter to school both of whom are failing. She



keeps her children at home for what she considers an essential filial task (taking care of mother), even though there may be other more "official" excuses for why they are at home.

What could be done in this case? One strategy might be to carefully assure the mother that, yes, she does need help, but perhaps instead of keeping both children home on a particular day, one could go to school for a half day and then alternate with the other, on those days that the mother cannot get other help.

This is a highly unconventional tactic and certainly not in keeping with formal educational policy. From a trusted individual, such a suggestion might well be considered by the parent. If this did occur, then it could mark the beginning of change from within the child's natural support system. If possible, it should be suggested that an outside helper, such as a homemaker might be appropriate even though the parent may not be ready to accept such outside help initially.

Although a truant officer can always be called in, without some kind of agreement from the mother about sending the children to school, the issue of absences becomes a tug-of-war between home and school values. This is a



situation in which the child always loses and no changes are made in the culture of silence mentality or behaviors.

Unfortunately, without careful monitoring, encouragement of parental and school involvement, and communication with other agency services involved with the family (such as mental health workers or DSS) such interventions could be ineffective and wasteful of human resources.

What I am saying is that in order to effect small changes with these families and children, much time and effort needs to be given, particularly in the beginning. These efforts must have different goals and implementation methods than work done with non-culture of silence children. However, if this effort is not made now, then it will surely have to be made later with a much greater cost in human effort and resources. This is because, in an increasingly technical society individuals with minimal skills become less and less able to find employment or other opportunities which might help them improve their lives. Final recourse ends up with government programs and legal interventions (welfare, social services, jail, court, mental institutions, etc.)

Recommendation Six: Change Within the Academic Environment

There has been much discussion on changes which might originate within the families and natural support systems. What kinds of changes might be made in the schools?

A. Creative Time for Teachers

First, an important aspect of new programs is to have the staff be interested in making the new programs work as well as having the full support of the administration. Many very fine teachers are finding their current school duties could fill far more than the hours available to them. Among the tasks required of teachers are many non-teaching duties--student reports, correcting papers, parent conferences, teacher conferences, absence reports, recess, lunch and bus duties, etc. It would be well worthwhile to investigate how some of these tasks could be streamlined, or extra time given in order for professionals to be more fully creative in areas of concern to for the students and the schools. Could a series of special courses or a roving substitute provide such release time for teacher to spend on program development or increased interaction time between teacher, students and community? Are there corners which could be cut, such as with computers, to reduce time spent in report writing and administrative tasks, etc.? Such attention to teacher constraints and time pressures could help improve interest and classroom creativity at many different levels.

B. Courses Which Restructure How Teachers and Students Communicate and Interact with Each Other

Now let's look at what might be offered. "Giving or taking a course" fits in with the traditional idea of what goes on in school. Teachers, parents and community members should feel comfortable with such a format. However, the way in which such a course is developed and organized could be done in keeping with some of the traditional Puerto Rican values.

Let's imagine designing a mini course in Puerto Rican history and migration to the United States. Instead of having a teacher research the information, a number of interested students might do so. At the high school level, selected students could sign up or be selected for a class or project whose end result would be the presentation of the material. Such a project could involve not only traditional academic information, but oral histories, visits to local establishments, surveys of the local population, taking pictures, developing a mini-text, etc. The teacher-student and community involvement, if done properly, should develop on a very personal level. The individual students should experience the effect of their ideas and their importance to the project.

Another possibility besides creating an academically oriented mini-course, might be to create a movies with a Puerto Rican theme. The end product could then be shown both in the school and local community. If done on a regular basis, these films and classes could become a visual catalog of community growth, as well as providing skill and self confidence training.

Self esteem can be built through the research itself--in talking to people, in studying one's own history, in being seen around the community as part of a worthwhile project, and finally in producing and presenting something of value.

Granted the previous suggestions are quite extensive. However, even taking offshoots of such ideas would be helpful. Might it be possible to include a short course in Puerto Rican history (and other national histories as well), or in the sociology of migration, or other subjects where cultural issues can be brought out and discussed on a cognitive level. Also, as suggested by one of the school counselors, a career awareness program, beginning in grades one and continuing through grade 12 would provide young people with strong ideas of possibilities beyond their own experience.

C. Increased Cultural Awareness of School Personnel As Exhibited Through Changed Behaviors

In order to work successfully with such programs, it is important to have personnel who are aware of the cultural dislocation of the Puerto Rican migrants. We must be careful when we talk about "awareness." It is not "awareness that is the final goal, but the actions that come out of being aware. Awareness should translate into prevention and early diagnosis. If this does not occur, then "awareness" is useless.

For instance, it is culturally important that schools not become accomplices of further parentification of children, but should attempt to restore the parents to their traditions roles. So even the convenience of allowing Puerto Rican children to translate for their parents perpetuates the role dislocation and authority loss for the parents.

The difficulty is that most people do not know when they are being unaware. How can a person pinpoint his or her own unawareness? What is needed are "key" behaviors; behaviors that, when they occur, are signposts for unawareness. For instance, one such signpost is "blaming." When a child or family is blamed for their situation, this is an indicator of a lack of understanding of the complexities involved. Blame is a "go-nowhere" solution and usually indicates the frustration of not knowing what else to do or how else to



perceive an incident. It is a punishment, rather than a resolution. This is not to say that families should be excused from responsibility. It does mean that we need to look for solutions that take us somewhere.

In order to help sensitize staff to cultural (and personal) issues involved in working with Puerto Rican children (even among those staff who are Puerto Rican themselves) it would be important to have some in-service training. In this kind of situation I recommend not a system wide workshop, but more personalized groups where each staff member can have a chance to have his or her own cases discussed with the workshop leader. This, in itself, calls for trust of and integrity of the leader and workshop participants.

For instance, on a half day curriculum day, all the 4th and 5th grade teachers might come together. Each of them would have been previously asked to submit vignettes of 2 students (at least one student who is Puerto Rican) who were "of note" in their classrooms--either because of good performance or troubled performance. The workshop leader, trained in cultural issues, would gather these together and select several which would clearly illustrate certain cross cultural or ethnic issues. It is of equal importance in being sensitive to cultural issues to be aware of those which

are cross cultural. A workshop leader working within such a framework must be particularly skilled in knowing how the specific situation is representative of the whole.

D. Expand the Types of Teacher and Administrative Actions Which Recognize Work Done by Students

One of the major problems for Puerto Rican children, especially those exhibiting poor school performance, is also cross cultural. This is the issue of low self esteem. What makes a child feel better about her or himself? A number of answers may come to mind but the first is being appreciated, if not loved. One of the ways to feel appreciated and cared about is to receive attention. How often do we stop to say thank you or recognize someone for the work they have done? A strong recommendation is to give a lot of recognition to things which students are doing, especially in written form to families and individuals of importance to the child. A letter, card or certificate can be mailed to parents or given to children, recognizing work of both children and parents. This can be shown to neighbors and family, and has the potential to create good feelings. Such good feelings can reinforce a basis for more open contact between school and home.

E. Cultural Events Sponsored by the Schools

Another way in which schools could be helpful would be

to make available films or slide shows (or other types of event) in Spanish or about Puerto Rico. Admittedly, these might be difficult to obtain. However, once obtained, rented or whatever, good use could be made of them, particularly in drawing out the natural support systems into the schools. Let me explain.

One of the difficulties in Holyoke is that there are few cultural facilities or entertainment. Movie theaters, museums, parks, playgrounds, auditoriums for large gatherings, etc., are not generally available. This is particularly true for Puerto Ricans, many of whom do not have money or transportation to get to what is available and do not find these activities culturally or linguistically appropriate. Although there are special activities planned every so often for the Puerto Rican community, nothing is done on an ongoing basis.

I suggest, particularly during winter months, the schools might provide a regular Saturday afternoon program (perhaps once a month to start) of a film in Spanish. Perhaps this project could be funded with grant money. If this were to prove viable, then I would suggest expanding to include a community ball game for a time before or after the movie. This type of activity would occur at a generally available time for all concerned. Those mothers who would

like to come would not be involved with meal preparation; fathers could come with their families or children, and children, especially during cold weather, are more likely to be in the house and eager for "something to do." Since almost everyone enjoys going to the movies, the appeal should be fairly widespread.

I do not mean to suggest that entire families would come. The elements involved in the success or failure of this type activity, like any other, would need to be studied. What is important is that here is a school sponsored activity not focused on academics. This activity speaks to another aspect of community life. If properly supervised and done on a regular basis, such an activity has the potential of bringing together many elements of the Puerto Rican community: families and children, the elderly, bilingual and monolingual individuals and Puerto Ricans from many parts of the city. When such a group comes together, it can provide fertile ground for other community activities, issues or dissimulation of information which can help effect large group changes.

#### F. Organization

It is important to have those changes which occur do so in a planned and organized way. Otherwise, much duplication of effort occurs, creative ideas tend to remain isolated

rather than building one on the other, and program growth within the system cannot be easily directed or revised. Thus, responsibility for keeping up with and supervising what is happening should be an issue which is clearly decided by the school system. Up-to-date information should be available when needed by any program or school within the system. When feasible, meetings should be scheduled to share this information so that the different segments of the systems are kept creative, informed, and encouraged.

Recommendation Seven: Use of Mass Media--Radio, Television, Newspapers

The next large group suggestion concerns use of the mass media--radio particularly, but also television and newspapers. There has been much research which shows that low income minorities are more frequently exposed to health hazards than the general population, and that this exposure predisposes them to unfavorable physical, intellectual, emotional and social outcomes. (Boulette in Valle, 1980; Canino, 1980). It is also known that such groups underutilize community health and human services. Dr. T. Ramirez Boulette, senior psychologist at Santa Barbara County Mental Health Services and several colleagues created 50 five-minute Spanish language radio programs entitled Una



Familia Sana--A Healthy Family.

"The series was focused on increasing the target population awareness of negative overt and covert child rearing practices and their unfavorable consequences, on providing information regarding child development, discipline, conflict resolution and utilization of services and on identifying and reinforcing constructive parenting and cultural practices." (Boulette, 1980)

A bilingual manual was also created as well as 10 fifteen minute T.V. programs on video cassette. I would strongly recommend that the school and mental health system in Holyoke review these tapes and encourage use of them (or similar weekly programming) on Spanish radio and T.V. stations. Possibly the 5 minute programs could be supplemented by calls to the station for discussion. The tapes could also be used within the school and mental health system. However, use by the mass media would reach a great many more people. If such programming is aired, then coordination with the health care facilities is needed since a rise in service usage around such programming has been noted (See appendix for address and sample pages).

I would also suggest an ongoing dialogue with the local newspapers to see if creation of several Spanish news and information columns might be possible. I had been informed that local attempts at Spanish periodicals or newsletters had failed and bookstores were nonexistent. But perhaps a case might be made to the editors that inclusions of a small

Spanish section of news, local events and advertisements might increase circulation to a worthwhile degree both on the open market and in educational settings.

For instance, it is not widely known that Hispanics in Springfield, Mass. spend approximately 63 million dollars annually purchasing goods and services (Camayd-Freixas, 1985). Statistics were not compiled for the surrounding cities and towns with large Spanish speaking populations, but these numbers would probably be equally impressive. Initiating such a mass media project, of course, would take organizing and ongoing effort but would certainly be worth an effort on the part of community members. Such a forum for dissemination of information could become an important factor in mobilizing the Puerto Rican community.

Once such a culturally and linguistically sensitive forum is created it can be used in schools. For instance, a student with low reading skills might be much more motivated to read an article in Spanish about an upcoming event she or he might attend, or an advertisement about special holiday foods. Similarly, Spanish classes for English speakers might use the same articles for their own practice. Announcements for upcoming academic and cultural programs would reach a wider population. An ongoing column discussing health or career and job related issues could provide important

information to local residents, etc. This could be of special importance since it is known that underutilization of services is a problem in the Puerto Rican community.

When thinking of other ways to educate or contact parents, we should remember that the research data indicated all families in this study used the hospitals and clinics and had contact with the welfare agencies. It might prove worthwhile to explore how these locations could be used to disseminate information within the community.

#### Final Comments

It is important to note that the research in this study involved only Puerto Rican children and their culture. However, the findings may very well be applicable to other ethnic groups. For example, when we talk of the culture of silence we speak of a cross cultural phenomena. When we speak of building self esteem or becoming culturally aware, we can refer to any child and any culture.

In summary, the common factor in all the previous recommendations is the focus on establishing a working connection to the natural support systems of Puerto Rican children, especially children having trouble in school. The premise is that many students are faced with problems that

are not academically related but whose side effects show up in deficient school performance. Remediation for these side effects (such as poor concentration, low reading skills, etc.) is important and can be effective to some degree but the underlying problems are unresolved. Inevitably these problems interfere at some level and cause greater difficulty as the child grows. However, we can reach out to the natural support system in a culturally sensitive manner. In this way we can begin to systematically focus on alleviating such underlying issues before they reach a crisis stage. This type of focus is particularly important for children whose backgrounds show culture of silence characteristics. Although such interventions take time, they can eventually help foster stronger community and family networks. This will leave the special education classrooms more time to work on actual academic difficulties.

#### Summary of the Recommendations

- One: Connect and utilize resources which currently exist
- Two: Research what makes current programs effective or ineffective
- Three: Create a "neutral" communicator position between school community and natural support systems who would be able to identify key areas of concern, organize and connect resources, etc.
- Four: Use parental skills in the school and community
- Five: Assessment for culture of silence characteristics
- Six: Change aspects of the academic environment (according to specifics recommended in the body of the text)
- Seven: Use of mass media

It should be remembered that the situation in Holyoke is not unique. The large but varied ethnic base, the racial, cultural and languages differences among its residents, the industrial decline, the increased numbers of poorly educated people, many of whom live below the poverty level, and so on, are factors which can also be found in other industrial cities. For this reason, it is felt that the research, although focused in a specific city, will suggest ideas that can be generalized to other regions of the United States.



APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

## PRELIMINARY COMMENTS ABOUT THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

In a broad research topic such as in this dissertation, it is tempting to include in the interviews vast numbers of questions, both relevant and fascinating. However, the skill lies in formulating a satisfactory TOOL.

Such a tool must have several properties. It must be focused enough to clearly obtain the information vital to the research topic. Too much information would be unweildy and difficult to analyze meaningfully. At the same time it must remain broad enough to serve as a tool which looks at interrelationships and not at narrow segments unrelated to the whole.

The questions which follow are divided into 3 sections: one each for interviews with the family, the child (at school) and the teachers/professionals working with the child. This form has discarded a number of questions. Hopefully, those which remain will give a focused account of the hypotheses being researched.

The English section of the questionnaires will include commentary on why specific questions were included in the interviews. The selection of some questions will be self evident--others seek more subtle information which indicate

coping style. Brackets { } such as this indicate commentary about the questionnaire which was not included in the actual working copy.

Some of the questions in the student and family interviews seem redundant. However, we are actually looking for redundancy in order to make sure that the information is complete and correct.

Through hindsight I see some questions that could have been eliminated or possibly even added. This is always an issue in exploratory research (Bott, 1971)--that the researchers could have done a much better job of designing the questionnaires if they'd had the knowledge then that they have now. There is certainly valuable information in the raw data that has not been incorporated in the results. However, the dissertation interview form, although not efficiently streamlined, certainly proved to be a satisfactory tool for the research question.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH PROFESSIONALS

I am interested in investigating the ways that Puerto Rican families help their children grow and cope with life. I am especially interested in coping styles for families whose children might be having problems in school.

1. What do you feel are the 3 most important natural helping supports for Puerto Rican's living in the USA?
2. How can these systems at the same time be destructive or hold back a healthy adjustment for such families and children?
3. Research has shown that there is an imbalance of Spanish speaking students in special needs services in public schools and that a number of these children are improperly referred and improperly diagnosed. What factors do you feel underlie this situation?

More thoroughly explained, the question would look like this:

Special education has been a topic of much concern in the past 10 years or so. In Massachusetts there are several different categories of special help--going from least restrictive (being helped in the regular classroom) to most restrictive (all day help in a separate classroom). There is

also another category in which private services outside the public school are recommended. This is because the public school does not have the proper facilities to provide the services needed (ie: blind, deaf, extreme disturbances, etc.)

It has been shown in a number of studies that there are more Spanish speaking children placed in the most restrictive public school special education programs than the population ratio would suggest. That means they stay out of the regular classroom many hours per day. These studies also show there are less Spanish speaking children referred to specialty programs outside the public schools. Also, there are less Spanish speaking children in special programs which take only a small amount of time per day than the population ratios would suggest. It has also been shown that a number of these children have been improperly diagnosed and improperly referred.

What factors do you feel are the cause of this imbalance?

4. What kind of supports do you feel the family or community now provides outside of school for a Puerto Rican child who is having problems?



5. What other ways do you feel would be effective for helping Puerto Rican children who have academic and/or behavioral problems in school?

Introduction to the Interview for the Family (English Version)

My name is Sydney. A long time ago I became interested in working with children and helping them do well both in school and out of school. I became a teacher in special education. Now I am working with children and their families as a counselor outside of schools. I also lived and worked in Puerto Rico. It was there that I became interested in working with Puerto Rican children and families.

By doing a special University study, I can recommend to schools and families better ways to help children be successful. This study is particularly interested in the difficulties that Puerto Rican children face.

I would like to ask you questions about your experiences here in Holyoke. I hope that none of the questions will seem intrusive. The questions are not meant to be so. Your answers will be confidential and if you wish, you may stop the interview at any point.

In coming here today, I hope that your experiences and opinions can be part of creating recommendations about how

to help children be, or continue to be, successful.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH THE FAMILY

These questions are to be asked by the interviewer. The family will not be given the form. A number of responses to section one may be obtained before the actual interview.

Interviewer will check one:

This child is:

Date:

Special Education :

Referral to Special Education :

Non-involved in Special Education :

Length of Interview:

Who was present at interview:

Any general comments/impressions of the interviewer (ie: atmosphere of interview, description of family, cancellations of appointments, etc.)

#### I. Family Data

A. Name of Child in Question:

B. Address:

Type of Dwelling:

Floor on which the family lives

{The type of housing available to a family and child reflect as well as determine different aspects of the support network; ie: a large apartment may mean that relatives or friends can join the family, or a mother, living on the 4th floor with young children will be more restricted and need more help than if she were on the 1st floor, etc.}

C. Age: Birthdate:

Grade

D. Language preference of child:

Of home:

E. In the United States today, many families find it necessary to move, sometimes for a better job, sometimes for better housing, better community services, and other reasons. Sometimes families change cities, sometimes they change just the house or apartment.

1. How long has your family lived in this city?  
--Why did your family decide to live in this city?
2. How long has your family lived in this house or apartment?  
--Why did your family decide to move to this house or apartment?

{The number of moves a family makes affects the quality and quantity of connections to the community as well as the individual's sense of stability and control. Moves over short distances, ie: from one apartment in the same school district to another) are less disruptive than long distance moves. However, any move causes disruption. The family's history of moving can provide information their coping styles and about how the support network has survived or re-grown after such disruption.}

F. Many people often care for a child during the years that a child is growing up. Sometimes a child will live with the parents, or just one parent, sometimes with grandparents, aunts, uncles, coparents, sisters, brothers or friends. This is natural.

Who does \_\_\_\_\_ live with?

Name	Age	Relation- ship	Education	Other Information of Interest (employment, health, etc.)
------	-----	-------------------	-----------	----------------------------------------------------------------

- 1.
2. etc.

#### Godparents of the children

Name of child	Type and frequency of godparent's contact	Where godparents live
---------------	----------------------------------------------	--------------------------

- 1.
2. etc.

#### Significant Others Not Living in Household (Extended family, friends, etc.)

Name	Age	Relation- ship	How Often Is Contact	Other informa- tion
------	-----	-------------------	-------------------------	------------------------

- 1.
- 2.
3. {The support network for a child consists of those
4. individuals who know and can affect the child
5. through action or through modeling. These people
6. can be family members, friends, church associates,  
etc.}

G. Many families have people who visit them at home regularly. Sometimes these are friends, brothers, fathers,

and other relatives. Other times they are people who help the family, like church members, teachers, nurses, social workers, etc. All these people form a support group which surrounds the family.

--Who visits your house regularly?

--Who does your family visit regularly?

{The 7 subquestions below are seeking responses to the following question:

What are the natural support systems for this child and his/her family?}

Every family has friends and neighbors they call on at different times. I'm going to ask you some questions which will tell me how your family gets help. For example, one way people get help is by shopping at certain stores.

1. Which stores does your family shop at?

--How far are they from the house?

--How do you get there?

--Does this family have a car? Since when? Who can drive?

--Why do you use these stores?

Another way that families get help is through their religion and faith.

2. Does your family/child follow religious beliefs?

--If yes, which?

--Do you attend the church?

--If yes, how often?

--How far is the church from your house?

--How is your church/religion helpful to you in solving your difficulties?

People also ask for help when they need something or if a family member is sick.

3. If your child or other family member is sick who do you go to for help?

--Who helps your child with his/her homework?

--If your child or other family member were sick who would help you and how?

--people in the family

--people outside the family

--Is your child in good health?

--has she/he had any medical problem?

--when and what

{One way of coping with stress is learning to relax and recuperate from the daily tensions. This can make the family itself a more effective resource for its own members or can



indicate the family's ability to make use of outside resources.}

People do different things to relax or to make them forget a little of their daily concerns. Some people go far away to visit, other people cook a favorite recipe.

4. What do people in this family like to do for relaxation, or to simply help themselves forget for a while the concerns of daily living? (ie: social clubs, visits with friends at home, etc.

--mother

--father

--children

--where does your child play when he/she is out of school?

--For what reasons does the mother go out of the house? The father?

{This last question seeks information about the roles of the parents- spouses and their levels of acculturation to the US society. Puerto Rican women and girls are generally expected to remain in the house. Young boys are also expected to follow parental instructions very closely.}

Many families use some community resources for help in certain situations. This is why the community provides the service. I would like to ask you which of your community resources you have used. I am listing all of the services which I could think of. In no way do I wish to indicate that it is good or bad if a family has or has not used these services. What will be helpful is to know which ones your family has used. In this way, after talking to a number of people, we can see what people do in general.

- |                                                             |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 6. Have you ever been to                                    | How often? |
| a. hospital or other health clinic                          |            |
| b. visiting nurses                                          |            |
| c. homemakers                                               |            |
| d. school programs                                          |            |
| e. mental health clinic                                     |            |
| f. police or court or legal aid                             |            |
| g. botanica                                                 |            |
| h. community healer/espiritista                             |            |
| i. Department of Social Services                            |            |
| j. Welfare Department or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) |            |

{The next following section seeks more abstract responses to the following question: What special problems are handled by the natural support system?}

All children make parents think and work at solving problems which come up for the family. Sometimes it is because children have done something 'not right.' Other times it is because, in providing for children, life just becomes harder and more complex. Your answering these questions will help me to understand better how families deal with these situations.

{We are looking for what the family considers specific problematic behaviors. If a behavior is not judged as being problematic by the family, then little will be done by them to "correct" it.)

1. What does this family consider to be problems in behavior or problems in learning how to do something in school?
2. Have you ever had such a problem in reality? If so, what have you done to deal with it. Do you think you were successful or not? Why?
3. Do you know anyone with a similar problem? What have they done?

If the family could not answer the questions as phrased other ways of asking for similar information would be:

1. If you could change one thing about your child's behavior or schoolwork, what would that be?
2. Is there something that has changed in your child's behavior or schoolwork in the last year? What is that?

{The next question is seeking information about whether the family feels it handles problems with the children effectively.}

When a family tries to solve a problem, sometimes it works well and sometimes it doesn't. That is just normal experience. For your family:

1. Which situations that the family has faced around bringing up this child (or your other children) have been most successfully solved?  
--least successfully solved?
2. Do you know of anyone who had a similar problem?  
(or if not, what would you recommend to someone who did)  
--What did they do?  
--Did it work out well or not?  
--What do you think they did to make it work/not work?

## INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW FOR THE CHILD AT SCHOOL

My name is Sydney. We are going to spend a little time together. During this time I am going to ask you some questions about school and about home. I have already asked permission to talk to you from you (mom, dad, etc.) and they said it was okay. I will also be going to your house to talk with them.

None of this means in any way that you did anything that wasn't right. I am talking to other children and other families, too. Your answers will help me understand how to make school an even better place for children to be.

### Interview With the Child

Children have different homes and live with different people. Some children live with mom and dad, some live with grandmother, or friends or sisters and brothers or aunts and uncles. Some children live with other families because their own family needs some extra help at that moment. All this is typical of the many different kinds of homes children live in.

1. Who do you live with? (If not with mother and father try to elicit the reason for this.)

Lots of times brothers and sister go to school, too.

2. Does anyone else in your family go to school?  
--who?  
--where?

When school is over people do different things. Some people go home. Other people play with friends, visit relatives, etc.

3. What do you do, or who do you visit when school is over?

{These next 2 question focus on possible biological deficits that might interfere in the child's school work.}

Everybody eats but every family has different habits. For example, some families eat only one meal a day, other families have food on the stove all the time, some children eat their meals only at school.

4. When do you eat?  
What do you like to eat most?

Everybody needs a different amount of sleep at night. That is natural. Many people share a room for sleeping, sometimes they also share the same bed. Some people have their own rooms and their own beds. All this means is that there are many different ways that people live. That is

natural, too.

5. How long do you sleep at night?  
--do you share a room or a bed?  
--if yes, with whom?

Sometimes families need to keep their children home to help in the house, or some children can't go to school because they are sick sometimes, or are visiting in a far away place. It just depends on who you are.

6. Are you absent from school sometimes?  
--If yes, why?  
--Can you remember when?  
(Note: it will be important, if possible, to check the child's absentee records at school and correlate them with the child's answers)

7. What do you like to do most when you are:  
a. at school?  
b. at home?

8. If you had friends who were getting into trouble with the teacher or not learning very well, what would you tell them to help them?

{This last question asks indirectly about the child's perception of the future and what family influences might have lead to that child's response.}

9. What would you like to do when you grow up?  
a. Is anybody in your family doing that now?  
b. Who would help you learn to do that?



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH TEACHER AND COUNSELORS

1. What is it in this child that makes him\her recommended for special services? (or for the child not in special education: what qualities does this child exhibit that makes him\her able to do well in school)
2. What has already be tried by the school to help the problem?  
What was successful?  
What was not successful?  
(or for the child not in special education: What kinds of activities does this child enjoy most, do best?)
3. What is known of the child's situation outside of school?
  - a. How has this information been gathered?
  - b. Do you think something else which is not addressed in reports or brought up at schoo is at the root of the child's (good/poor) school performance?
4. Are there things that you would change about the situation as it is now?  
--Are there things that you think might help the situation that either haven't been tried--or things for which the school does not have adequate resources?



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SPANISH

Me llamo Sydney. Hace mucho tiempo que he estado interesada en trabajar con niños y ayudarles en casa y en la escuela. Estudié para maestra de educación especial. Ahora estoy trabajando como consejera. También he vivido y trabajado en Puerto Rico.

Me gustaría hablar con Uds. sobre sus experiencias aquí en Holyoke. Espero que ningunas de las preguntas parezcan intrusivas. Las preguntas no son formuladas para ser así. Sus respuestas serán confidenciales y si desean, puedan terminar la entrevista cuando quieran.

Espero que sus experiencias e opiniones me podrán ayudar en hacer recomendaciones sobre como podemos todos juntos, ayudar a nuestros niños vivir (o continuar a) vivir competentemente.

## ENTREVISTA CON LA FAMILIA

Este estudiante es:

Fecha:

Educación especial:

Referido a educación especial:

No esta en educación especial:

Duración de la entrevista:

Quién estuvo presente en la entrevista

Observaciones/impressiones generales del entrevistador  
(ambiente, descripción de la familia, cancelaciones de citas, etc.)

Datos sobre la familia:

A. Nombre del niño(a)

B. Edad:

Fecha de cumpleaños:

Grado:

C. Dirección:

Tipo de vivienda:

Piso en que vive la familia:

D. Lengua preferida: del niño(a):

de los padres (o guardianos):

E. Hoy en día en los EEUU muchas familias tienen que mudarse; algunas veces es por un trabajo mejor, o mejores servicios en la comunidad, o mejor vivienda u otras razones. A veces familias se mudan de la ciudad o aún del país, otras veces se mudan de la casa or apartamento.

1. Por cuánto tiempo ha vivido su familia en esta ciudad?

- Por qué decidieron Uds. vivir en esta ciudad?
2. Por cuánto tiempo han vivido Uds. en esta casa/apartamento?
- Por qué decidieron Uds. mudarse aquí?

F. Muchas veces varias personas cuidan a un niño(a). A veces un niño vive con ambos padres, o con solamente la madre; a veces con los abuelos, tías, tíos, los compadres, hermanas(os) o amigos. Esto es natural. Con quién vive \_\_\_\_\_? (nombre del niño)

Nombre	Edad	Relación	Educación	Otra información de interés
1.				
2.				
3.	etc.			

Padrinos de los niños

Nombre/niño	Tipo y frecuencia de contacto	Dónde están los padrinos
1.		
2.	etc.	

Otras personas de significancia que no viven en casa:

Nombre	Edad	Relación	Frecuencia de contacto	Otra info.
1.				
2.	etc.			

Muchas familias tienen personas que les visiten en casa con regularidad. A veces son amigos, hermanos, padres u otros parientes. Otras veces son personas que ayudan a la familia, como miembros de una iglesia, maestros, enfermeras, trabajadores sociales, etc. Todas estas personas forman un círculo de recursos sociales alrededor de la familia.

Quién visita con regularidad en su casa?

- 1.
2. etc.

A quién visitan Uds. con regularidad?

- 1.
2. etc.

A. Cuáles son los sistemas naturales de apoyo para este niño(a) y su familia?

Cada familia tiene amigos y vecinos que les ayudan en varias situaciones. Voy a hacerles unas preguntas que me ayudarán a entender como su familia recibe ayuda. Por ejemplo, una manera en que personas reciben ayuda es en ciertas tiendas o bodegas.

1. Cuáles son las tiendas/bodegas que su familia use?
  - a. A cuánta distancia quedan las tiendas, y cómo llegan Uds. allí?  
(Tiene un carro esta familia?  
Desde cuando?  
Quién puede manejar? Y quién lo usa?)

- b. Por qué usan estas tiendas?

Otra manera de recibir ayuda es através de la religión y la fe.

2. Practica su familia una religion? Cuál?
  - a. Asisten a la iglesia? Con que frecuencia?
  - b. A cuanta distancia queda la iglesia de aquí?
  - c. De que manera le ayuda la iglesia/religión/fe en resolver sus dificultades?
3. Personas buscan ayuda cuando un miembro de la familia necesita algo o si está enfermo.
  - a. Quién ayuda a su hijo(a) con su tarea?
  - b. Si su hijo(a) u otro miembro de la familia estuviera enfermo quién le ayudaría a Ud. y en que manera?
    1. Persona(s) en la familia:
    2. Persona(s) fuera de la familia:
  - c. Está su niño de buena salud?
    1. Ha tenido en el pasado algún problema medical? Cuál y cuándo?
    2. Cada niño tiene sus propios gustos, especialmente sobre lo que se come. Esto es natural. Cuáles son los costumbres de su hijo(a) sobre su comida--le gusta comer el desayuno? Cuando come por la noche, come mucho, etc.?

Cada persona y cada familia hace diferentes actividades para divertirse, descansar y olvidar un poco sus preocupaciones cotidianas. Algunos viajan a visitar familia o amigos, otros preparan una receta favorita.

4. Qué les gusta hacer a las personas en esta familia para descansar o olvidar un poco las preocupaciones diarias?
  - a. la mamá
  - b. el papá
  - c. los niños
  - d. Donde juega su hijo(a) después de la escuela?
  - e. Para qué sale de casa la mamá? el papá?

Muchas familias usan los recursos de la comunidad para ayudarles en ciertas situaciones. Por eso se provea los

servicios. Quisiera preguntarles cuáles de los servicios en la comunidad han usado Uds. Apunté todos los servicios en que pude pensar. Esto, por supuesto, no quiere decir que es bueno o malo si una familia ha usado estos servicios. Lo que me ayudará es saber los que su familia ha usado. De esta manera después de hablar con varias familias confidencialmente, podremos ver cuales son los más beneficios.

5. Han ido a o usado los servicios de: con que frecuencia y cuándo?
- hospital u otro clinica de salud
  - enfermeras visitantes
  - homemakers
  - programas que ofrece la escuela, cuál?
  - clínica de salud mental
  - policia, las cortes, o ayuda legal
  - botánica
  - espiritista/santero
  - Departamento de servicios sociales
  - Welfare/SSI

B. Con cuáles problemas especiales bregan los recursos naturales? Cómo está movilizado el sistema de recursos para ayudar a estos niños?

Todos los niños les cuestan trabajo a los padres en resolver problemas que ocurren para la familia. A veces es porque los niños necesitan consejos. Otras veces es porque, en proveer por los hijos, la vida se hace más difícil y más compleja en si. Al responder a estas preguntas, Uds. me ayudarán entender mejor como familias bregan con estas situaciones.

- En esta familia, qué considerarán Uds. que serán problemas de aprendizaje o comportamiento:  
--Han tenido Uds. en realidad tal tipo de problema u otro problema? Qué han hecho Uds. para bregar con ello? Por qué piensan Uds. que tuvieron/no tuvieron éxito?
- Conocen a alguien con un problema (parecido) en criar a sus hijos? Qué han hecho ellos?

Si la familia no ha podido contestar a estas preguntas otras alternativas son las siguientes:

- Si podían cambiar una cosa sobre el comportamiento o aprendizaje de su hijo(a) qué sería?
- Hay algo que ha cambiado en el comportamiento de su hijo(a) en este año pasado? Qué es?

Se brega con el problema efectivamente?



Cuando una familia trata de resolver un problema, a veces tienen éxito, a veces no. Esto es normal. Para su familia:

Entre las situaciones que su familia ha confrontado en criar a su hijo(a), cuál ha sido la situación mejor resuelta? peor resuelta?

O

Entre las personas que conocen Uds. que han tenido problemas con sus hijo(a)s en comportamiento o aprendizaje, cuál ha sido la situación mejor/peor resuelta? Por qué piensan que tuvieron/no tuvieron éxito?



## Introducción a la entrevista con el estudiante en la escuela

Me llamo Sydney. Vamos a pasar un rato juntos. Durante este tiempo voy a hablar contigo sobre varias cosas. Te visitaré en casa también. Estoy hablando con otros muchachos(a) y otras familias también. Sus respuestas me ayudarán entender como estudiarían mejor los niños en la escuela.

### Entrevista con el estudiante:

Todos los niños tienen casas diferentes y viven con personas diferentes. Algunos viven con su mamá y su papá, algunos viven con sus abuelos, o amigos o hermanos y hermanas, tías y tíos. Algunos viven con otras familias porque su propia familia necesita ayuda adicional en ese momento. Todo esto es normal.

1. Con quién vives? (si no es con los padres, pregunte por que si se puede.)

Muchas veces, los hermanos asisten a la escuela también.

2. Hay alguien demás en tu familia que asiste a la escuela?  
     --quién?  
     --dónde?

Cuando acaba la escuela por la tarde, cada persona hace diferente cosas. Algunos van a casa. Otros juegan con amigos, visitan a parientes, etc.

3. Qué haces tu, o con quién visitas después de la escuela?

Todo el mundo come, pero cada familia tiene sus propias costumbres. Por ejemplo, alguna familias comen solamente una comida diaria, otras tienen comida sobre la estufa todo el tiempo, algunos comen solamente en la escuela.

4. Cuándo comes tu?  
     -- Que te gusta más comer?

Todo el mundo necesita dormir, y cada persona duerme por diferentes cantidades de tiempo. Eso es natural. Muchas personas comparten los dormitorios con sus hermanos(as), tíos(as) o otras personas, a veces también comparten la cama. Algunas personas tienen su propio cuarto. Todo esto quiere decir que hay muchas maneras de vivir. Eso es natural.

5. Por cuánto tiempo duermes por la noche?  
     --Compartes un cuarto? una cama?  
     --Con quien?

A veces los padres le piden a sus hijos que se quedaran en casa para ayudarles o porque el niño(a) mismo(a) esta

enfermo(a), o porque están visitando en un otro sitio. Eso depende de las costumbres de tu familia.

6. Estás tu ausente de la escuela a veces? (Si es posible, averigue esto en el expediente escolar del estudiante.)

--Por que?

--Puedes acordarte de cuando?

7. Que te gusta hacer más cuando:

a. estás en la escuela?

b. en casa?

8. Si tuvieras amigos(as) quienes tenían problemas con la maestra(o) o quienes no aprendían bien, qué les aconsejaría?

9. Qué quieres hacer cuando seas grande?

a. Hay alguien en tu familia que está haciendo eso ahora?

b. Quién te ayudaría aprender hacer eso?

APPENDIX B

TEXT OF LETTERS USED IN CONTACTING  
FAMILIES

Dear

Every family and community have important ways of helping their children grow and learn outside of school. This is only natural.

Some children grow and learn with few problems. Other children grow and learn with more difficulty. This is natural, too.

Many times it is not understood why one child has less difficulty than another child. Through a study from the University of Massachusetts, I am looking at how families and communities help children grow and learn, both in and out of school. The study is particularly interested in the experiences of Puerto Rican children and their families.

Your experiences and opinions will be very valuable in better understanding the many ways families and communities help children. Sharing your experiences and opinions may help create new ideas for improving school services to all children.

I would like to meet with you at your convenience to explore your ideas about the ways which families here in Holyoke help their children. Please mail back the enclosed letter if you desire to share your experiences and opinions. This will give permission for me to speak at least once with you and your child. All information will be confidential.

Sincerely,

W. Sydney Stern

(Ms. Stern has been a special education teacher for 10 years and has been a family counselor for 3 years. She has lived and worked in Puerto Rico. Due to her experiences there, she became concerned with the difficult issues Puerto Rican children face in the U.S. schools.)

Estimados

Cada familia y cada comunidad tienen su propia manera de ayudar a sus hijos crecer y aprender fuera de la escuela. Es natural.

Algunos niños crecen y aprenden sin muchos problemas. Otros niños crecen y aprenden con más dificultad. Esto también es natural.

Pero muchas veces no se entiende por qué un niño tiene menos dificultad que otro. En un estudio de la Universidad de Massachusetts, voy a investigar como las familias y comunidades ayudan a sus niños, no solamente dentro de la escuela, pero fuera de la escuela también. Este estudio se basará especialmente en las experiencias de los niños puertorriqueños y sus familias.

Sus opiniones y experiencias serán importantes para entender las diferentes maneras que familias y comunidades tienen para ayudar a sus hijos. Sus experiencias e opiniones podrán ayudar en crear nuevas ideas para mejorar los servicios escolares a todos los niños.

Me gustaría que nos reuniéramos a su conveniencia para explorar ideas y compartir opiniones sobre las maneras que tienen las familias y la comunidad de ayudar a sus hijos aquí en Holyoke.

Si Ud. está dispuesto, haga el favor de enviar la carta incluida. Esto me dará permiso para hablar por los menos una vez con Ustedes y su hijo(a). Toda la información será confidencial.

Atentamente,

Sydney Stern

(La Sra. Stern ha sido maestra de educación especial por 10 años y consejera de familias por 3 años. Ella ha vivido y trabajado en Puerto Rico. Debido a sus experiencias allá ella entiende algunos de los problemas difíciles que confrontan los estudiantes puertorriqueño en las escuelas de los Estados Unidos.)



Nombre del niño(a) \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del maestro(a) \_\_\_\_\_

Doy permiso a la Sra. Sydney Stern para hablar con nosotros (conmigo) y nuestro (mi) hijo(a). Entiendo que ella está haciendo un estudio para la Universidad de Massachusetts y que esta información será confidencial.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(firma)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(fecha)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of child \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of teacher \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission for Ms. Sydney Stern to speak with us (me) and our (my) child. I understand she is doing a study from the University of Massachusetts and that all information will be kept confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

Estimado(a)

Gracias por su respuesta y su interés en tomar parte de este estudio de la universidad. Toda la información compartida será confidencial. Espero atentamente hablar con Ud. y su familia.

Dentro de unas semanas me pondré en contacto con Ud. para llegar a un acuerdo de un tiempo mutuamente conveniente para mi visita.

Atentamente,

Sydney Stern

-----  
Dear

Thank you for your reply to and your interest in being part of this university study. All information gathered will be confidential. I look forward to speaking with you and your family. I will contact you in the next several weeks to arrange a mutually convenient time for me to visit.

Sincerely,

Sydney Stern

Entendemos que Sydney Stern está haciendo un estudio sobre como ayudar a niños en la escuela. Para hacer esto, ella nos ha dicho que esta hablando con familias de varios estudiantes, también con las maestras(o) y otros trabajadores que conocen al estudiante.

Entendemos que esta entrevista es confidencial, que no tenemos que responder a preguntas si no deseamos, y que podemos terminar la entrevista cuando queremos. Ella nos ha asegurado que si decidimos retirarnos de la entrevista, esto no hara ningún daño ni a nuestra familia ni a nuestro(a) hijo(a).

También entendemos que Sydney tratará de contestar nuestras preguntas sobre la escuela y sus servicios. Ella nos ayudará contactar las personas apropiadas en la escuela si queremos hablar con ellos sobre nuestro hijo(a).

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Nombre)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Fecha)

-----

We understand that Sydney Stern is doing a University study about how to help children in school. She has informed us that in order to do this she is talking to families of various students, and also with the teachers and other school workers who know our child.

We understand that this interview is confidential, that we do not have to respond to questions to which we do not wish to respond, and that we can end the interview when we would like. She has assured us that if we decide to withdraw from the interview(s) that this will in no way harm either our family or our child.

We also understand that Sydney will try to answer our questions about the school and its services. She will help put us in contact with the appropriate school personnel if we wish to speak with them about our child.

-----  
(Name)

-----  
(Date)

Estimado(a)

Espero que todo vaya muy bien con su familia. Me gustaría visitar y hablar con Uds. el

, a la(s)

Si la hora o la fecha de esta cita es problemática, podemos cambiarla a otra más conveniente.

Si su familia tiene un telefono, les llamaré para confirmar (o cambiar) la cita. Si su familia no tiene te fono, he incluido una tarjeta postal con mi direcci n. Favor de apuntar una hora o d a m s conveniente. Apunt  abajo otras horas y d as en que estoy libre para visitar.

Muchisimas gracias. Atentamente,

Sydney Stern

\_\_\_\_\_ fecha

Lunes (Monday): 9:30-2:00	Martes (Tuesday) 1:00-4:00
Mi�rcoles (Wed.) 9:30-2:00	Jueves (Thursday) 1:00-4:00
Viernes (Friday) 10:00-1:00	S�bado (Saturday) 10:00-4:00
Domingo (Sunday) 11:00-4:00	

Dear

I hope that all is going well and I am looking forward to talking with you and your family. I would like to visit with you on

, the of at .

If this time is not convenient, I will be happy to find another which will be more so. If your family has a telephone, I will call to confirm which is the best time to come. If not, I have enclosed a post card with my address. You can write in a time or day which would be better for you. Listed above are other hours that I am free to visit.

Thank you very much. Sincerely,

Sydney Stern

\_\_\_\_\_ date

Estimado(a)

Quiero darles las gracias a Ud. y a su familia por su tiempo e interés en hablar conmigo. Uds. fueron una de 15 familias que participaron en este estudio. Aprecio su hospitalidad y franqueza en contarme sus experiencias e opiniones. Lo que tengo que hacer ahora es estudiar toda la información. Estoy buscando nuevas ideas y sugerencias sobre la manera en que podemos ayudar a nuestros hijos estudiar mejor.

Posiblemente, en algunos casos, tendré que hablar con Uds. una vez más por unos minutos. Si esto ocurre, espero que la visita no sea inconveniente. Aunque el resto de la investigación tomará bastante tiempo para analizar y escribir, al terminar el estudio les mandaré a Uds. una carta describiendo las recomendaciones e ideas que he hecho. Estas sugerencias han surgido de las entrevistas con Uds.

Otra vez, les doy las gracias por compartir conmigo una parte de su vida.

Atentamente,

---

(fecha)

Sydney Stern

---

Dear

I would like to thank you and your family for your time and interest in speaking with me. You were one of 15 families who participated in this study. I greatly appreciated the hospitality and openness in telling me your experiences and sharing your opinions.

What will be done now is to study all the information which has been shared. I am looking for new ideas and suggestions which will help us understand how to help our children study better.

In some instances I may need to speak with you again for just a few minutes. I hope, if that happens, it will not be an inconvenience. Although the writing will take some time, when it is done I will send each family a letter describing the recommendations and ideas. These ideas will have their roots in the conversations I had with each of the families.

Again, I thank you very much for sharing a part of your lives with me.

Sincerely,



## APPENDIX C

### THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE FOR CHANGE AGENTS

## THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

The following is a brief summary from an article called "Change Does Not Have to Be Haphazard," (National Training Laboratory, Bethel, Maine) Reading Book, 18th Conference. This summary is included only to highlight issues of which an effective change agent must be aware. Several books are also listed which might be of help.

It is fairly easy to identify changes in institutional patterns after they have occurred. It is more difficult to analyze changes while they are going on and still more difficulty to predict changes or to influence significantly the direction and the tempo of changes already under way...(however,) the planning of change has become part of the responsibility of management in all contemporary institutions.

It is a well-known fact that change in an organization is often followed by a reaction toward the old pattern, a reaction that sets in when pressure for change is relaxed. After a curriculum survey, one school system put into effect several recommendations for improvement suggested by the survey. The action was taken under pressure from the board and the superintendent, but when they relaxed their

vigilance, the old pattern crept back in.

This experience raises the problem of how to maintain a desirable change. Backsliding takes place for various reasons. Those affected by the changes may not have participated in the planning enough to internalized the changes that those in authority are seeking to induce; when the pressure of authroity is relaxed, there is noe pressure from those affected to maintain the change. Or, a change in one part of the social system may not have been accompanied by enough co-relative changes in overlapping parts and subsystems.

On the basis of this model of analysis, several principles of strategy for effecting institutional change may be formulated.

To change a subsystem or any part of a subsystem, relevant aspects of the environment must also be changed.

To plan changes in one part of a subsystem, such as in the central office of a school system, eventually involves consideration of changes in overlapping parts of the system--the clerical force, the private secretaries, etc. If these other changes are not effected, one can expect lowered morale, requests for transfers, and even resignation. Attempts to change any subsystem in a larger system must be

preceded or accompanied by diagnosis of other subsystems that will be affected by the change.

To change behavior on any one level or a hierarchical organization, it is necessary to achieve complementary and reinforcing changes in organization levels above and below that level.

The attempts to change the role of an individual at one level will inevitably require changes in the roles of individuals at other levels who relate to the level in which change is desired.

The place to begin change is at those points in the system where some stress and strain exist. Stress may give rise to dissatisfaction with the status quo and thus become a motivating factor for change in the system. If thoroughgoing changes in a hierarchical structure are desirable or necessary, change should ordinarily start with the policy making body.

Desegregation has been facilitated in school systems where the school board first agreed to the change. The board's statement of policy supporting desegregation and its refusal to panic at the opposition have been crucial factors in acceptance of the change throughout the school system and eventually throughout the community...Sanction by the ruling body lends legitimacy to any institutional change, though, of course, "illegitimate" resistance must still be faced and dealt with as a reality in the situation.

Both the formal and the informal organization of an institution must be considered in planning to any process of

change.

Besides a formal structure, every social system has a network of cliques and informal groupings. These informal grouping often exert such a strong restraining influence on institutional changes initiated by formal authority that, unless their power can be harnessed in support of a change, no enduring change is likely to occur...To involve these informal groups in the planning of changes requires ingenuity and sensitivity as well as flexibility on the part of an administrator.

The effectiveness of a planned change is often directly related to the degree to which members at all levels of an institutional hierarchy take part in the fact-finding and the diagnosing of needed changes and in the formulating and reality-testing of goals and programs of change.

Once the workers in an institution have agreed to share in investigating their work problems and their relationship problems, a most significant state in overcoming restraining forces has been reached. This agreement should be followed by shared fact-finding by the group, usually with technical assistance from resources outside the particular social system. Participation by those affected by the change in fact-finding and interpretation increases the likelihood that new insights will be formed and that goals of change will be accepted.



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