

1997

A formative evaluation of the Latino parent's association of the San Mateo Union High School District

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.a5kd-n2j4>

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**A Formative Evaluation
of the Latino Parent's Association
of the San Mateo Union High School District.**

**A Special Project Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Social Work
San Jose State University**

**Submitted by
Viviana G. Obando-Enriquez
May 1997**

**In Partial Fulfillment
Of The Requirements For The Degree
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK**

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost I want to thank God for giving me the strength and wisdom to achieve my goals.

A special acknowledgment goes to my loving grandmother, Rebeca, for instilling in me good values, perseverance and compassion. This one is for you grandma.

I would also like to thank my family for their support and love throughout this arduous process. I hope I have made you proud.

Gary, thank you for bringing laughter and peace into my life. Thank you for your words of encouragement, and thank you for your patience.

Thank you Dr. Phyllis Sturges for your guidance and for challenging my work every step of the way.

A special thanks goes to Norma Gomez and Al Tovar for allowing me to do this project on the Latino Parent's Association.

Lastly, I want to thank all my friends, both from school and those outside of school, for being supportive throughout my two years in the program.

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1. Introduction.

This study is a program evaluation of the Latino Parent's Association of the San Mateo Union High School District. The Latino Parent's Association was founded in order to bridge the communication between Latino parents and the school district. The ultimate goal was to address the issues related to Latino student's low performance in school. The Association was established in June 1995, and it is the first Latino Parent's Association in the County. To their dismay, the governing board has been faced with a challenge on how to increase the parent participation in the association. During the last general meeting on October 1996, they invited over one thousand parents to attend a meeting, but only twenty five attended. Therefore, the question for study is: Why is there such a low parent participation and turnout in the Association? What are the barriers? The evaluation was carried out by conducting home visits to interview forty parents who were not participating in the Association. Their responses were compared to that of forty members of the Association to find out if there are barriers that needed to be addressed.

Since the researcher was evaluating the reasons or barriers for the Association's low parent enrollment and attendance, the governing board of the Association was the primary audience for this formative evaluation. A secondary audience was the San Mateo Union School District so that perhaps they can assist in providing added services or support to the Association.

2. The Context of Services.

A. Description of the San Mateo Union High School District.

The San Mateo Union High School District is a community of six comprehensive high schools, one continuation high school, and an adult school. The Governing Board intends for district parents to be able to choose from the six high schools available. Open enrollment is a district philosophy because they believe that excellence involves the freedom to choose. The open enrollment policy is subject only to the Governing Board's regulations on school capacity and ethnic balance.

The San Mateo Union High School District's certificated staff is composed of four hundred teachers including speech and language therapists, librarians, counselors, psychologists, curriculum developers, a district nurse and other support personnel. The district is also served by thirty four administrators. Each school is assigned a principal and three assistant principals, except for the continuation high school. The average class size in the District is of thirty three and all the schools offer E.S.L. classes.

The first of the six high schools is Capuchino H.S. located in the city of San Bruno. Capuchino was established in 1950 and serves over one thousand students from San Mateo to Millbrae. The Latino student population is approximately thirty three percent of the entire student school population.

The second high school is Mills High School with a population of 1480 students. Latino students comprise fourteen percent which is approximately two

hundred and nine students in the school. Mills faculty and staff make every effort to maintain a warm, nurturing supportive environment for their entire multicultural student body.

The third high school is Burlingame H.S. located just north of the city of San Mateo. It was established in 1923, and in 1985 they were granted the status of a "traditional" school. Out of the 1302 students, eighteen percent are Latino. The high school is supported by four active parent groups as well as the Burlingame community, an involved alumni association, and the Rotary Club of Burlingame.

The next high school is San Mateo H.S. on Delaware Street. It was established in 1927 and serves 1,350 students of which twenty five percent are Latino students. The student body represents a full range of socio-economic circumstances and the school is a cross-section of American society.

The fifth high school is Hillsdale H.S. which welcomed its first students in 1955. This year it has enrolled 1260 students largely from San Mateo and Foster City. The Latino student population is fifteen percent of the overall population which is approximately one hundred and eighty six students.

Last but not least is Aragon H.S. located in the city of San Mateo. It has a total enrollment of 1430 students of which fourteen percent are Latinos. Aragon has twice been named a California Distinguished School. Aragon's student body is culturally and socio-economically diverse.

B. Description of the Latino Parent's Association.

The Latino Parent's Association is comprised of five governing board members. These members are both parents and school professionals within the San Mateo Union High School District. The Association is a nonprofit organization established to empower Latino students and families to become active participating members of the community through education, referral services, and social community information. Their statement of purpose reads as follows:

"The two most critical issues facing our Latino youth are education and employment. Without education, our youth will be destined to low paying jobs with little opportunity for economic upward mobility. To this end, the Latino Parents Association of the San Mateo Union High School District is committed to the philosophy that all Latino students of the San Mateo High School District are entitled to the full benefits of equal opportunities in education and employment. In order to accomplish its goals, the Latino Parent's Association of the San Mateo Union High School District is committed to collaborating with all public and private organizations to assist Latino students and their families to achieve full opportunities and obtain available services."

Following are six of the goals the Association identified which could be used as future evaluation outcomes.

1. Work towards decreasing the drop out rate of high school students within the district.
2. Work towards decreasing truancy.
3. Work towards increasing student GPA above a 2.0.
4. Increase student/parent awareness of higher education opportunities.
5. Increase student/parent awareness of scholarships.
6. Increase student/parent awareness of services available in the community.

There is no legal mandate to establish a Latino parent's association. This has been a voluntary effort initiated by the parents in order to keep abreast of their children's school activities. One of the goals of the association is to increase the

Latino student's overall grade point average. This is being implemented by having early notices to parents about how the students are doing. It is not necessarily a negative report about their children, but more of a noticing of the students academic standing and possible troubles down the line, if the student does not receive some intervention right away.

The association also wants to promote communication between school officials and the parents. This is done by monthly meetings with the school district and individual high schools. There is one monthly board meeting, and one monthly general meeting where representatives of the District office and the specific high schools are present in support of the Association. Parents are encouraged to, and often do, inquire about any issue related to their children's academic performance during the meetings.

The association also offers informative and educational forum meetings which are targeted to specific issues such as immigration, gang prevention and health and social concerns. The association also offers social activities such as their first induction dance party, and a black and white ball to celebrate the first year anniversary. They also held a carnival in Central Park which was a success in terms of participation and fund raising.

One of the ways that the association evaluates their effectiveness is to monitor the Latino student's grade point average to see if they have had any type of academic impact on the students. They will be assessing the student's grade point average at the

end of the 1996-1997 school year. They also keep track of the attendance at all the meetings and special events hosted by the association. Currently there is approximately a five percent active membership in the association.

Since this is a Latino parent's association the target population are the Latino parents in the San Mateo Union District. The District's Latino parent population is approximately twenty percent. Most of the parents are working class and fall in the low socio economic category. They are employed in service, gardening and janitorial positions. The majority of the parents are Mexican immigrant parents and have been living in San Mateo on an average of seven years.

C. National Efforts in Progress.

The plight of the Latino family is not a problem just in San Mateo County but is a national issue. Various states have implemented some type of parent involvement program in order to address the needs of the Latino student. The programs described below are only a sample of the successful approaches being used across the country.

One such program is Academia del Pueblo which means "the town academy" in Spanish. It was developed by the National Council of La Raza and it provides after school and summer classes for Latino children. It also offers monthly parent groups, and literacy classes three times a week. The program operates at the Guadalupe Center, which is a multiservice organization in Kansas City, Missouri.

The McAllen Parental Involvement Program in McAllen, Texas includes evening study centers, parent meetings on a variety of topics, and the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting curriculum with its Spanish version PECES. The parental involvement staff consists of parent training specialists at all elementary and secondary schools, and social workers or other staff at secondary schools (Chavkin, 1995).

Some programs are part of a national or state network, or are supported by private funds. ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence trains Latino parents to become effective advocates for their children at home and at school. The Hispanic Policy Development Project has worked with hundreds of parents using enrichment model rather than a deficit approach. Project AVANCE, a privately funded program in

San Antonio, Texas, uses door-to-door recruitment strategies as part of its outreach to develop parenting skills among low-income Mexican American mothers. Mother-daughter programs, developed at Texas universities, work to expand the role of Hispanic women by exposing them to nontraditional roles, campus field trips, and career activities. Empowerment programs such as *Comite de Padres*, *Latinos in Carpinteria*, emphasize treating parents as valued participants and often lead to active participation by parents (Chavkin, 1995).

The Children's Aid Society, a private, nonprofit organization, has teamed up with a New York City middle school to provide extended-day and Saturday services all year at the school. Programs include academic support, reading and math tutoring for new immigrants in their native language, a health clinic including mental health consultations, a resource center for parents, and decision-making teams of administrators, teachers, and parents (Perez, 1996).

Lastly, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund has developed a Parent Leadership Program. Targeted primarily on schools in Southern California, this program helps Mexican American parents understand their children's school and the U.S. education system, learn how to help their children at home, become involved in school decision-making councils, and participate in parent-initiated school projects (Perez, 1996).

3. Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review.

A. Historical Perspective.

The parent-involvement concept and related activities were present in this country as early as 1890, when professional educators and urban lay people focused on defining the precise relationship between home and school. Parent involvement activities at that time were led by middle and upper class women and reflected the age of "humanitarianism" and "social spirit". This period also saw the establishment of numerous local parent-trade associations, providing the basis for greater understanding between home and school. However, this was not the case for the Latino students and the Latino parents' involvement in school. For some time, institutional discrimination and segregation have contributed to the failure of educating Latinos in this country.

Various legislative measures have taken place with relation to the segregation of Latinos as early as the 1800's. At the federal level the passage of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 was a blatant example of the government's approval of the rationale that the colored races should not mix with Whites. Though *Plessy v. Ferguson* was passed with the specific intention of segregating Blacks, the case was used to justify all forms of social segregation. *Plessy v. Ferguson* represented a symbolic action on part of the federal legislators to enact an indisputable law that gave the states the right to practice segregation. (Donato, 1993)

Hendrick (1977) reported that in 1931, eighty-five per cent of California schools surveyed by the state government reported segregating Mexican students either

in separate classrooms or in separate schools. The rationale used to segregate Mexican students ranged from racial to social deficit justifications. Overall, these beliefs were ideological smokescreens used to prevent Chicano students from attending White schools.(Donato, 1993)

In California during the 1920's and 1930's, government officials attempted to classify Mexican students as Indians in order to segregate them on the basis that they were colored. Language was a second rationale used to segregate Mexican students. Allegedly, Mexican students were not permitted to attend classes with their White peers because they needed special instructions in English. The results of IQ tests were also used, in part, to segregate Mexican students and provided the alleged scientific rationale. Mexican students were identified to be slow learners needing special instruction in separate schools.(Donato, 1993)

In California, the Mexican parents of Lemon Grove were able to successfully overturn school segregation on March 13, 1931. *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District* represented one of the first successful desegregation cases of Mexican students in the United States. In 1945 the era of *de jure* segregation finally came to an end for the Mexican community of the Southwest. The important *Mendez v. Westminster* case in 1947 ended *de jure* segregation in California for Mexican students throughout the Southwest.(Donato, 1993)

In 1954 the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* stated that public schools could not place students in separate facilities based on race, religion, or

national origin. It was the basis for a number of initiatives and strategies to improve the educational treatment of people of color. While it had dramatic impact on the quality of education for African American youth in the United States, *Brown* also became a major force for improving the educational experience of Latinos. The Court's decision in *Brown* created not just desegregation strategies such as busing and the changing of school funding allocations but also instructional approaches such as Title I programs, magnet schools, and bilingual and multicultural education. (Contreras, 1994).

Lewis (1993) notes that in the 1960's the country saw the rebirth of national commitment to a federal role in a number of social issues, and the growing awareness of the need for collective action. In education, parents, particularly members of ethnic minorities, began to challenge large public school systems to respond positively and actively to local tradition and values. In the 1960's The federal government legitimized parental involvement with the Head Start Program. During this time, the Black Panther Party was instrumental in bringing the school lunch programs into existence.

It was not until *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School* in 1970 that the technical loophole in segregating Latinos was sealed off. *Cisneros* is of fundamental significance because, for the first time, a court declared Mexican Americans to be an identifiable ethnic minority group for the purposes of public school desegregation. Further it was the first circuit court case to hold that the principles enunciated in *Brown* apply to Latinos as well as African Americans. (Contreras, 1994).

The 1980s and 1990s have been characterized by renewed interest in parental involvement . Reassessment of parents, teachers, and community roles to create close partnerships in educating children is a major concern. (Lewis, 1993).

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Hispanics in the U.S. have significant implications for their educational opportunities, school experiences, and academic outcomes. Hispanic families are interested in the education of their children, but the conditions in which they often find themselves, for instance poverty, do not allow them to fulfill their obligations.

B. Demographics on Latino Youth.

The ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research produced a fact sheet in 1993 on the state of Latino education where some astonishing figures were reported. They noted that the Latino population is growing much faster than the rest of the population. In 1980, there were 14.6 million Latinos in the United States. or 6.4% of the total population. By 1990, the Latino population had grown 53%, to 22.4 million people which comes out to 9% of the national population. In the same period the non-Latino population grew by only 6.8%.

They also noted that in 1991, 26% of Hispanic families lived in poverty, while the figure for non-Latino Whites was 9.5%. Children are particularly vulnerable to poverty. Over 38% of Latino children and 18% of non-Latino children lived in poverty in 1990. Parent's education level plays an important role in whether or not

children will live in poverty. Fifty-five percent of children whose parents had less than a high school education lived in poverty, compared to 35% of children whose parents were high school graduates, and 10% of children whose parents had continued their education beyond high school.

Education remains the largest line item in state and local budgets, accounting for 35% of all spending as reported by ASPIRA. (1993). Elementary and secondary schools receive 24.2% of the total spending, with higher education receiving the rest. Almost one in three students in America's public schools belong to a minority group, but only 8% of teachers are Black, 3% are Hispanics and 1.4% are Asian.

Researchers continue to find large differences in dropout rates between socio economic groups. Fifteen percent of low-income eight graders left school by tenth grade, compared with only 4.2% of middle-income students and 1.6% of high-income students (Ramirez, 1993).

Manuel Rivera presented a paper at the 1993 Annual Wisconsin Conference on Hispanic Education where he notes that in 1990 Hispanics had a high school completion rate of 54% , more than 20 points below Black and 30 points below White completion rates. Hispanic completion declined in 1991 to 52.1%. He also noted that Hispanics aged 18 through 24 had an educational participation rate of 18%.

Lastly, the New York Times ran an article on January 30, 1997 where figures for 1994, showed that Latinos who did not finish high school was 34.7% as compared to 12.7% for Whites and 15.5% for Blacks. The failure of schools to retain Latino

students and provide them with a marketable education was one of the factors which contributes to the high dropout rate. The 1990 Census figures found that even among American-born Latino people, only 78% finished high school compared to 91% of Whites and 84% of Blacks.

Research indicates that Hispanics have made small gains in educational attainment since 1970. Still, they continue to have the lowest high school completion rates of any major population group. The gap between Hispanics and Whites has not narrowed and Afro-American currently attain a higher education levels. Hispanic children face many challenges to their educational advancement. Many grow up in poverty, they are part of a minority group, and many have limited English proficiency, which impedes their ability to communicate with teachers and English-speaking counterparts. A great number come from an environment that has not prepared them for school(Lewis, 1993).

C. Research on Parent Involvement.

Student achievement can be improved by parent involvement in the home and in the school. Creating a supportive learning environment at home-one in which parents encourage positive attitudes toward schooling, and have high expectations for their children's achievement-raises student achievement. (Bermudez,1994).

Bermudez (1994) discusses Becker's key family traits as having a positive

impact. These are, high expectations, frequent interactions between parent and child, tutoring, role modeling, and parental reinforcement of school learning.

In addition to their actions in the home, parent's interactions with the school are also important. Bermudez (1994) discusses a study where twenty-two school districts in metropolitan Milwaukee were investigated and consistently found that parent involvement, regardless of family income, grade level, or location, was associated with student academic performance. He indicated that survival priorities keep many low-income and single parents from accessing the schools. Vickie Castro a member of the school board in Los Angeles was quoted by Goldberg (1997) as saying that, "There's a strong work ethic within Latino families, and we keep telling them education is the tool to get out of poverty, but their immediate needs overtake it." When it comes to surviving, many Latino families need the immediate gratification that the "dollar" will bring them, rather than waiting four or six years for their children to graduate and contribute financially.

According to Vandegrift and Greene (1992), an involved parent can be one who is either supportive of or active in school initiatives. They suggest that these two possibilities be placed in a continuum and that parent engagement at any level be welcomed. They say that the initial contact is crucial because once made, the likelihood of future participation increases. They suggest varied, non-threatening, and low-commitment activities for parents to ensure broad parental support.

Bermudez (1994) notes that culturally and linguistically diverse families remain alienated from the school system due to a variety of barriers, including work interference, lack of confidence, lack of English language skills, lack of understanding of the home-school partnership, lack of understanding of the school system, negative past experiences with schools, and insensitivity and hostility on the part of the school personnel.

Lewis (1993) also has a list of barriers which prevent parents from fully participating in the education on their children. These are: language and communication barriers, beliefs about education, lack of understanding of the school system, feelings of inferiority and alienation, lack of transportation, lack of child care, and lack of time. She also notes some barriers imposed by the school system. These are: lack of meaningful information for parents, shortage of bilingual school personnel, and teacher's insensitive attitudes can make parents feel alienated.

Programs that increase and retain the involvement of Hispanic parents follow a simple, basic rule: they make it easy for parents to participate. In Detroit's Effective Parenting Skills Program, for example, programs and materials are bilingual, baby-sitting is provided, there are no fees, and times and locations of meetings are arranged for the convenience of the parents. Other programs provide interpreters and transportation. (Digest 80, Web, 1996)

Latino parents need to become involved with the school community. As the Hispanic Policy Development Project learned, "all the schools that felt that poor

Hispanic parents should begin their involvement by joining the existing parent's organizations failed". Before they join existing parent organizations, Latino parents want to acquire the skills and the confidence to contribute as equals.(Digest 80, 1996)

Research has shown that the hardest part of building a partnership with low-income Hispanic parents is getting parents to the first meeting. The Hispanic Policy Development Project found that impersonal efforts such as letters, flyers, announcements at church services or on local radio or TV were largely ineffective, even when these efforts were in Spanish. The only successful approach was personal, face to face conversations with parents in their primary language in their homes. To retain the involvement of Hispanic parents, every meeting had to respond to some needs or concerns of the parents. Programs that consult with parents regarding agendas and meeting formats and begin with the parent's agenda eventually cover issues that the school considers vital, those that stick exclusively to the school's agenda lose the parents.(Digest 80, 1996)

Espino, (1995) recommends the following strategies in order to successfully involve Hispanic parents in the schools: personal touch, non-judgmental communication, perseverance in maintaining involvement, bilingual support, strong leadership, administrative support, staff development focused on Hispanic culture, and community outreach. All of these variables are important when working with Latino parents. It can mean the failure or success of parent involvement in Latino education.

Trueba, (as cited by Valencia 1993) offers the following sober minded but encouraging words:

"The end of the 20th century is rapidly approaching. The children who will crowd our schools are already among us. Minority children are rapidly becoming, or already have become, the majority in a number of cities and areas of this country. Moral, humanitarian, and economic arguments can be made to motivate us to support minority education in our schools. The future of this country will be in good hands if we extend our support to minority children today."

4. Design of the Evaluation.

A. Focus of the Evaluation and Instruments.

The research question of this evaluation is: Why is there such a low parent participation and turnout in the Association? What are the barriers to service?

This is a formative evaluation because the focus of this study was to provide information to guide the Association in their efforts to service the Latino families in the district. Royse (1992) indicates that formative evaluations are employed to adjust and enhance interventions. They are not used to prove program effectiveness but serve more to guide and direct programs, particularly new programs.

The Parent Information questionnaire was designed by the author to identify the barriers that keep Latino parents from participating in the Association. Some possible barriers that have been identified in the previous chapter have been: the parent's education level, employment status, income, means of transportation, lack of English language skills, beliefs about education and shortage of bilingual school personnel. The contents of this questionnaire was not taken from previously published surveys but rather was designed from the barriers identified in the literature.

The Parent Information questionnaire included questions such as: level of education of parents; if they were single parents; employment status; family's annual income; accessible transportation; if they understood English; how many children at home; ages of the children; if they had child care; if they attended parent teacher

conferences, and reasons why they did not attend conferences or the association meetings. There was also one open ended question given at the end of the survey, in case the respondents had suggestions for the association.

A second instrument titled School Efforts in Parent Outreach was modified by the researcher from a previous study conducted by Lewis (1993). This instrument deals with the parent's perception of the school's efforts and support in involving parents in their children's education. It asks the parents whether the school involves and informs parents regarding: their children's academic progress; community services available to the children; enhance parenting skills; seeks parent volunteers at school; and includes parents in effective leadership and school governance roles. This instrument was designed to measure whether the school was lacking in their efforts to outreach to the parents. The subjects responded to these five questions with one of the following choices: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree.

There are limitations with reliability and validity of the questionnaires, since both were designed or modified by the author and have not been tested elsewhere. Although the instrument on School Efforts in Parent Outreach was modified from a previous study, the author changed the content of the instrument where only the general idea of the instrument remained the same. Therefore, this instrument also lacks validity and reliability of a published, commonly used instrument.

B. Sampling

The subjects obtained for this study were taken from two separate samples. The first group was a stratified purposive sample of those who had not attended meetings, chosen from a list of self-identified Latino parents in the district. Every tenth name on the list was chosen until a pool of 130 names was collected from which to conduct the home visits. It took the entire 130 names on the list to end up with a sample of 40 subjects after all the home visit attempts had been completed.

The second group of respondents, those who did attend the Association meetings, were not taken from a random sample as there was not an extensive number of members to choose from. There was a total of 45 members of which 40 members were chosen for the sample. The first 40 members who were available to complete the questionnaire, made up the second sample group.

C. Procedures

The interviews began following the approval of San Jose State University Human Subjects Review in March 1997. With the non participants, the researcher made home visits and began with the consent form and either read it to them or had them read it for themselves, in either English or Spanish. After they signed the consent form and kept a copy for themselves, they proceeded to fill out the questionnaire. They had the choice of reading it and filling it out themselves, or having the researcher read it to them. Copies of the instruments were available in

either English or Spanish according to whatever the subjects felt more comfortable with. All the instruments were numbered from one to forty.

With the second group, the Association members, the researcher conducted telephone interviews. The researcher first identified herself as a student intern and then obtained their permission to be interviewed for the study. Then they were advised of their rights and who to call if they had any additional questions or concerns. They were assured of their anonymity and they proceeded to answer the questions in the instrument. The instruments were numbered from 41 to 80 as each interview was completed.

D. Risks to Subjects

There were no anticipated risks to the subjects for participating in the research project, besides anonymity and confidentiality issues. These issues were addressed by not collecting any identifiable information from the subjects. All the questionnaires were numbered from one to eighty and there was no way of identifying the respondents with the questionnaires.

This chapter focused on the methodology of the evaluation being conducted on the San Mateo Union High School District Latino parents, and the possible barriers that may be keeping them from participating in the association. The subsequent chapter discusses the results from the questionnaires.

5. Results.

A. Instrument on School Efforts in Parent Outreach.

The following results were generated from the School Efforts in Parent Outreach questionnaire completed by the 80 participants in the study. Table one summarizes the results from group I: parents who are not participating in the association. Table two summarizes the results from group II: parents who are participating members in the association.

Sixty five percent of non participating parents were in agreement, while 30% were in disagreement that the school takes an active role in helping parents enhance their parenting skills. These results were 10% lower than that of the members of the association. Seventy five percent of the members were in agreement, while 20% were in disagreement, and both groups scored a 5% for the neutral response, that the school helps parents enhance their parenting skills.

Both groups responded almost the same way when asked if the school helped the parents access community services for their children. Fifty five percent of the non members were in agreement and 35% were in disagreement, while 57.5% of the members were in agreement and 27.5% were in disagreement. Both groups scored a 15% neutral response.

The highest agreement by both groups was found when asked if the parents receive frequent school reports regarding their children's academic performance and behavior. Eighty five percent of the non members were in agreement and 7.5% were

in disagreement, while 90% of the members were in agreement and 5% were in disagreement.

Table 1 Non Participating Parents

Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Enhance parenting skills	50.0	15.0	5.0	5.0	25.0
Help access community serv.	47.5	7.5	15.0	7.5	22.5
Give frequent student reports	82.5	2.5	7.5	0.0	7.5
Encourage parent to volunteer	37.5	2.5	20.0	0.0	40.0
Help parent to leadership role	32.5	2.5	12.5	10.0	42.5

Table 2 Participating Members

Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Enhance parenting skills	65.0	10.0	5.0	2.5	17.5
Help access community serv.	52.5	5.0	15.0	5.0	22.5
Give frequent student reports	82.5	7.5	5.0	0.0	5.0
Encourage parent to volunteer	67.5	5.0	5.0	5.0	17.5
Help parent to leadership role	20.0	0.0	25.0	5.0	50.0

The greatest difference between the two groups was found when they were asked if the school encouraged parents to volunteer at school. Forty percent of the non members were in disagreement and 40% were in agreement, while 72.5% of members were in agreement and 22.5% were in disagreement. The neutral response yielded 20% from non members and 5% from members.

The highest percentage of disagreement by both groups, was found when asked if the school helps parents to participate in leadership and school governance roles. Fifty two and a half percent of the non members disagreed with this statement, 35% agreed with the statement and 12.5% were neutral. Fifty five percent of the members disagreed with the statement while 20% agreed, and 25% remained neutral.

The above results suggest that participating members felt that the school did help with parenting issues and did encourage parents to volunteer, while the non participating parents did not agree with this. Both groups felt that the schools did keep the parents apprised of their children's academic and behavioral performance. However, both groups also felt that the school did not assist parents in getting involved in school governance roles.

B. Barriers to Participation.

This section reports results generated by the Parent Information questionnaire which was completed by the 80 participants in the study. This instrument served to identify possible barriers to participating in the association.

The first question dealt with the respondent's age which did seem to show that the non members were in a younger age category, 55% were 31 to 40 years of age, while the members response was 45% in this category. They both had relatively the same percentage for the age category of 41 to 50 years, around 40%. Twelve and a half percent of members fell in the 51 or older category, while only 5% of the non members fell into this category.

The level of education for both groups ranged from 2 to 18 years of education completed. There was a wide range of school years completed by both groups with the majority of all respondents, 41.3%, having completed up to the sixth grade. Both groups had a 27.5% completion from 7th to 12th grade, of which 8% of the non members were high school graduates and 18% of the members were high school graduates. The biggest difference between the groups was in the completion of the 13th grade or higher, with the non members showing a 14% completion, while the members exhibited a 27.5% completion. The mean years of education completed by the members was 10th grade, while the mean level for the non members was 8th grade. The members completed more years of education, completed high school and went on to further their education. Perhaps that's why this group puts more emphasis on their children's education.

There was no difference in the percentage of single parents in either group, approximately 25% of parents in both groups were single parents. This was an unexpected finding since the researcher believed that being a single parent would be a barrier in attending the meetings. It was also unexpected to find that none of the literature reviewed by the researcher noted that being a single parent was a barrier to services. However, this seems to be national problem for other groups, especially when other researchers have indicated that there is an increasing trend in single parent households in this country.

Eighty percent of the members were employed, while 65% of the non members were employed. Of the employed parents in the members group, 97% worked during the day and only 3% worked at night. However, of the non members 69% worked during the day, 15% worked the swing shift, 4% worked at night and 12% had jobs that varied in the hours that they worked.

In terms of transportation, 83% of the members drove a car, 13% used public transportation, and 4% got a ride from a family member or friend. For the non members, only 58% drove a car, 23% used public transportation, 15% got a ride from a family member or a friend, and 5% walked to appointments.

The percentage of children living at home for the members fell into two categories. Eighty five percent had from one to three children living at home, and 15% had from four to six children living at home. For the non members, 60% had from one to three children living at home, 35% had from four to six children, and 5% had seven to nine children living at home. Of those children living at home 28% were under the age of 10 for the respondents who were members, while 63% were under the age of ten for those parents who were not members. However, they both reported high percentages of not having childcare. Ninety percent of the non members, and 95% of the members did not have childcare.

There was no real difference in the family's annual income between these two groups except in the extreme categories of ten thousand dollars or less, and fifty thousand dollars or more. Twenty percent of the non members' income was reported

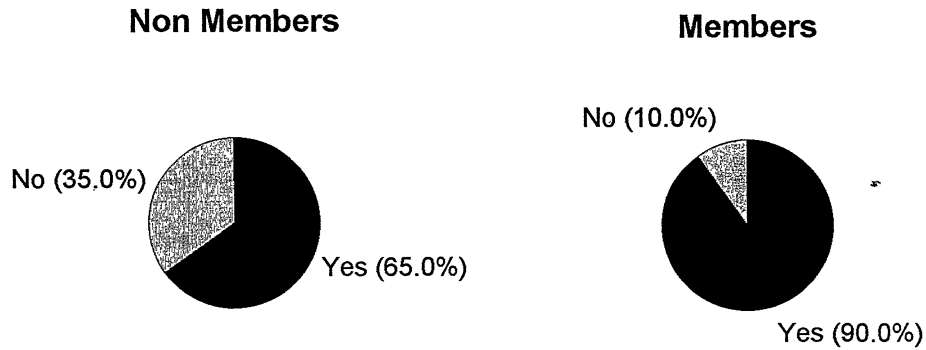
to be ten thousand dollars or less, while only 10% of the members reported falling in this category. Ten percent of the members reported having an annual income of fifty thousand dollars or more, while zero percent of the non members reported making this figure. The mean income category for members was '\$20.001 to \$30.000', while for the non members it was '\$10,001 to \$20.000'. The members do enjoy a slightly higher income bracket, and also have less children than the non participating parents.

When asked if the participants understood English, the group of members reported that 8% did not, 43% said 'somewhat', 15% said 'most of the time', and 35% said they understood English. Of the non members, 25% said they did not understand English, 45% said 'somewhat', 8% said 'most of the time' and 23% said they did not understand English. The parents who were members of the association understood English more than the non participating parents. There were more individuals who were monolingual Spanish speaking in the non participating group of parents.

The following figure (see Figure 1) shows the percentage of parents who attend parent teacher conferences, in both the member and the non member groups. It is apparent from the illustration that the parents who are members of the association are more likely to attend their children's teacher conferences. Perhaps the fact that they also understand more English is what enables them to attend these meetings.

Figure 1

Percentage of Parents Who Attend Teacher Conferences



The reasons that the non members gave as to why they were not attending the parent teacher conferences were: time (29%); language barrier (21%); and other (50%). Those who chose 'other', indicated that they had not received any information regarding parent teacher conferences. The members who had not attended parent teacher conferences said it was because of the language barrier. They did not understand English well enough to meet with the teachers.

Clearly, from the results in Table 3, it is apparent that those parents who are members of the association are more likely to attend parent teacher conferences at school. The observed relationship between these two variables is a statistically significant one (Chi-square = 7.17, df = 1, sig. = .007).

Table 3

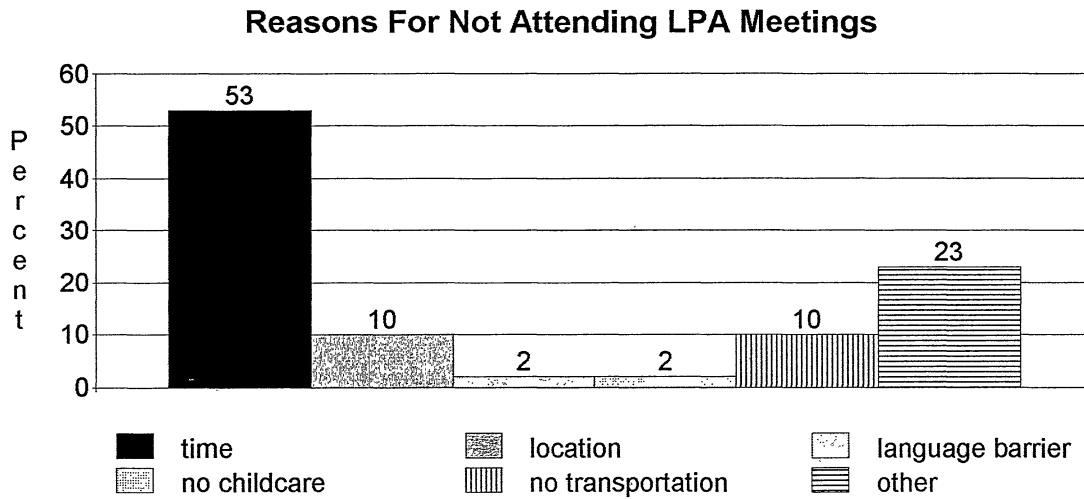
Relationship of Association Membership and Attendance at Teacher Conferences

Attend conferences	Member		
	yes	no	
yes	90%	65%	
no	10%	35%	
	100%	100%	
Total number of subjects	(40)	(40)	N = 80

Chi-Square = 7.17 df = 1 Significance = .007

The last closed ended question was directed towards the non participating members, to find out the reasons for their lack of participation. Time appeared to be the biggest reason why parents were not attending the Latino Parents Association meetings (see Figure 2). The nine respondents who indicated 'other' gave reasons such as: being ill; received no information; not interested; forgot; was tired and one who just simply had not gone. Although this question targeted the non members, two respondents who were members but had not been attending the meetings, also responded to this question. One member indicated that it was due to the time and the other member did not specify a reason. Lastly, when the non participating members were asked if they were aware of the Latino Parent's Association 75% responded yes.

Figure 2



C. Results of Qualitative Information.

This section of the chapter will focus on the responses from the last open ended question asking the parents for suggestions. It will also include observations made by the researcher during two association meetings.

When the non participating parents were asked what would help them become more active in the association, 18 had no comment and 22 responded with various suggestions. The majority of suggestions had to do with the time of the meetings such as: four respondents wanted the meetings during the day; and five said they wanted more flexibility in the scheduling of meeting, including weekend meetings. Five respondents asked for more information regarding the association's functions and goals. Four asked for increased communication and encouragement to parents, while three said they preferred more personal outreach. The last of the four respondents

indicated that parent education, transportation, childcare, and incentives would increase their attendance at meetings, respectively.

Of the respondents who were members of the association, 16 had no comment when asked for suggestions to increase parent involvement at meetings. The majority of suggestions, eight, dealt with sending more information and reminders to the parents. Four said to increase parent education, four said to motivate parents more, and four said to encourage and support parents. Another four respondents said to provide more topics of interest and to include more activities. Two suggested forming bible study groups, and two suggested providing incentives to parents during the meetings. One said to develop a mentor or buddy program between parents, and one said to offer more resources to parents such as English classes or job training. One person said to change the meetings to a more central location, and one said to do more personal outreach. It was interesting to note that none of suggestions had to do with changing the time of the meetings, as the first group suggested.

Through direct observations during two meetings attended by the researcher, it was observed that approximately 95 percent of the parents arriving to the meetings drove there or were given a ride to the meeting. There were approximately 75 percent female parents and 25 percent male parents present at both meetings. There were roughly 30 percent of couples present and most parents brought one or two children to the meetings. Both locations were dark and it was difficult to find the entrance. Once inside the grounds, there was ample parking. One of the meetings did offer cookies

and coffee and people seemed to appreciate this. The meetings were well structured and gave parents ample opportunity to make comments or ask questions. Finally, a representative of the school district and a representative of the high school where the meeting was being held, were present for any questions that the parents might have for them.

6. Discussion.

The results presented in the previous chapter indicate that there are some barriers which stand in the way of more parents participating in the association. Although the school appears to be keeping parents informed about their children's academic progress, the biggest difference in responses was found in the area of the school encouraging parents to volunteer. It would be interesting to inquire further as to why the non members did not feel the school encouraged them as well. Perhaps the language barrier and lack of bilingual teachers kept parents from coming forward to volunteer at school.

The area of most concern was in the school's efforts to help parents to take on leadership roles. Both groups felt that the school did not do enough in this area. Very often the Spanish speaking parents are not as well informed about their rights and responsibilities in their children's education. This of course may lead to their lack of ability to advocate for their children in school.

Moving on to the barriers which were identified by the non-participating parents, the biggest area of concern seemed to be clustered around the time of the meetings. Although non participating parent's had more time because a higher percentage of them did not work, they were younger, and they did have more children to take care of, especially children under the age of ten. They preferred having meetings before the children came home from school, because it was easier for them to travel alone or with fewer children. Both groups did not have available childcare,

therefore it means that they would have to take them along. They had less access to a vehicle, therefore making it more difficult to get around if public transportation was not easily accessible to them.

Parent's level of education and income are two characteristics which could be identified as possible indicators to lack of participation. The higher the level of education and income, the higher the parent participation in voluntary organizations regardless of race.

The location of the meetings also seems to be of some concern to the parents. A member of the association also suggested having a more central location for the meetings. Since the San Mateo union high school district extends from San Bruno south to the city of San Mateo, it would be difficult to find a centrally located meeting place to satisfy all the parents.

Both groups gave a lot of feed back suggesting that more information regarding the association's roles, functions, and goals be available to the parents. They asked to be given more information in general, and to do more outreach. They enjoyed the more personal touch, which was identified by Espino (1995) and other sources in the literature review, as an effective means of reaching parents. Many of the parents saw this researcher as an individual who came out to see them to do more outreach to them. It would be interesting to see if there is an increase in the meeting attendance due to the Hawthorne effect, where the researcher's interviews also worked as an intervention in trying to get more parents to participate.

Lastly, there was a big difference between the two groups of parents who attended teacher conferences and those who did not. Besides time, language was the other major reason given why parents did not attend. One issue that the parent's kept identifying as a problem, but which was not asked in the questionnaires, was the fact that there is a limited number of Spanish speaking staff in some high schools. Many parents indicated that it was difficult for them to advocate for their children, because the staff "looked down" on them for not speaking English. This insensitivity was also extended to the Latino students with limited English skills. Both parents and students were left with a feeling of frustration and disillusionment about school altogether. Research has shown that this is a major reasons why Latino children are dropping out of school. This was a barrier that was identified in the literature review as being a major reason for low educational attainment (Lewis, 1993).

The researcher was satisfied with the overall content of the instruments however, the questions could have been asked to elicit more interval type data. This would have made it possible to conduct more statistically significant tests. There was not much one could do with ordinal data, especially when income and age were grouped into several answer categories.

Perhaps adding more questions about the availability of bi-lingual staff in the schools could have been helpful, since many of the parents alluded to this issues. The author would also delete some of the questions about the children and ask for actual ages of the children, rather than to have the ages grouped in a category.

Recommendations

First, the association should be commended for their efforts in providing a bridge of communication between the Latino parents and the school system. This is a step in the right direction by involving parents in their children's education. Just because the children are now high school students, does not mean that the support systems suddenly stop.

The researcher recommends the following based on this study: 1. that the association add more meeting times, including day and even weekends, as suggested by some parents. The members who are presently attending the meetings did not find the time to be a problem, therefore the evening meeting should be kept.

2. Although there is not much flexibility about the location of the meetings, a clear map should be included with the announcement that goes out to the parents. Perhaps using the community centers as possible locations for the meetings, may be another resource that could be used.

3. Starting a car pool in different pockets of the community where other forms of transportation are not available, could help parents attend the meetings. Pairing people in a buddy or mentor program might help to involve more parents with the association.

4. Providing childcare during meetings would also enable more parents to attend. Perhaps the high school students could volunteer to provide the childcare as a

group project. Of course they would only be available during non class time. Up to four volunteers would be needed.

5. The association could periodically survey the parents to find out the issues which are of the highest importance to them. More information could be passed out to the parents, and perhaps starting a parent newsletter could be a way of keeping the parents informed.

6. However, more personal outreach seemed to work better. Although it is time consuming, as the author found out when conducting this study, it also motivates parents to attend meetings. Espino (1995) and other researchers have recommended the more personal outreach in order to engage Latino parents. The majority of the parents said they would try to go to the next meeting after having met with the author, even though the author did not address the issue.

7. The association could help the Latino parents be assertive in asking that the high schools provide some Spanish speaking staff, from the reception area to the school board members. The ratio of Spanish speaking staff should be representative of the Spanish speaking student population. There is no excuse to "lose" a child in the school system because of a language barrier. The association should also assist the parents in lobbying for more Spanish speaking social workers or caseworkers to work with Latino families one on one. Perhaps utilizing social work graduate interns during the school year could be an added resource for the Latino families and would increase participation in the association.

8. The school could do more outreach to involve parents in the decision making process at school. Perhaps the school is not doing enough outreach in trying to reach those parents with limited English skills. This is where the association can further bridge this gap, and facilitate the parents' input into the decision making process of the schools.

The association's timing could not be more perfect in their endeavors, since the literature has found that Latino students have the highest drop out rate, of all (Lewis, 1993). It is time for the Latino population in the United States to wake up, and begin efforts to help educate our youth. Without education there are no jobs and without jobs there is no future.

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School Efforts in Parent Outreach

For each question answer with a 1 through 5 as follows:

1 = Strongly agree

2 = Agree

3 = Neutral

4 = Disagree

5 = Strongly Disagree

- _____ 1. The school helps parents enhance their parenting and child-rearing skills.
- _____ 2. The school helps increase parents' ability to access community services needed by their children.
- _____ 3. Parents receive frequent reports about their children's academic performance and behavior.
- _____ 4. The school encourages parents to volunteer at school.
- _____ 5. The school helps parents to participate in effective leadership and school governance roles.

Instrument modified from:

Beyond Barriers: Involving Latino Families in the Education Process by M. Lewis (1993).

Parent information

Interview # _____

1. Age:

- a. 21 to 30
- b. 31 to 40
- c. 41 to 50
- d. 51 to 60
- e. other _____

2. Level of education completed:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 yrs.

3. Are you a single parent?

a. Yes _____ b. No _____

4. Are you employed?

a. Yes _____ b. No _____

5. If YES, what are your hours?

- a. Day
- b. Swing
- c. Night
- d. Other _____

6. What is the family's annual income?

- a. Less than \$10.000
- b. From \$10.001 to \$20.000
- c. From \$20.001 to \$30.000
- d. From \$30.001 to \$40.000
- e. From \$40.001 to \$50.000
- f. More than \$50.001

7. What form of transportation do you use the most?

- a. Can drive a vehicle
- b. Relatives or friends give me a ride.
- c. I take public transportation
- d. I walk to my appointments.
- e. other _____

8. Do you understand English?

- a. No
- b. Somewhat
- c. Most of the time.
- d. Yes

9. How many of your own children live with you?

- a. 1 to 3
- b. 4 to 6
- c. 7 to 9
- d. 10 or more.

10. Are you taking care of someone else's children?

- a. Yes _____
- b. No _____

11. How many children?

12. What age do the children range in?

- a. Children under 5. _____
- b. Children 5 to 10 yrs of age. _____
- c. Children 11 and older. _____

13. Do you have any type of child care?

- a. Yes _____
- b. No _____

14. Do you attend parent teacher conferences?

a. Yes_____ b. No_____

15. If no, why not?

- a. because of the time
- b. the location
- c. the language barrier
- d. lack of child care
- e. lack of transportation
- f. other _____

16. Are you aware of the Latino Parent's Association?

a. Yes_____ b. No_____

17. Reason for not attending meetings?

- a. Because of the time.
- b. the location
- c. language barrier
- d. lack of child care.
- e. lack of transportation.
- f. other_____

18. What would help you become more involved in the Latino Parent's Association?

Dear Parent:

I need your assistance in conducting an evaluation or research study. This evaluation is about the quality of services, and barriers to service which parents encounter when seeking services offered by The Latino Parent's Association of the San Mateo Union High School District.

I will be asking you some questions which will help me in completing this evaluation. It is very important that you understand that your participation in this research study is voluntary and that if you decide not to participate, this decision will not affect in any way your relations with the high school, the District, or the Association. Nevertheless, if you choose to participate it is necessary that you understand that the questionnaires will not include any names or any identifiable information. All information will be confidential. There will not be any way to link the responses with any of the individual respondents.

Your participation in this research study could be beneficial to Latino parents of the San Mateo Union High School District. In identifying barriers to service, the parents could receive the help and support it needs and ultimately increase the quality of service.

This research study does not pose any risks associated to your participation and you can withdraw at any time. You can ask any question related to the research study before, during or after the interview.

In case of injury, accident, or questions about the research subject's rights, you may contact the Associate Academic Vice-President for Graduate Studies, Ms. Serena Stanford at (408) 924-2480. If you have any additional questions please call me, at (408)441-5846. Thank you.

I have read or had the above information read to me and I agree to participate in the study described.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Viviana Enriquez, MSW Intern: _____ Date: _____

Estimado(a) Padre/Madre:

Necesito su asistencia para llevar a cabo un estudio de evaluación. Esta evaluación es sobre la calidad de servicios, y las barreras enfrentadas por los padres al recibir o asistir a los servicios que ofrece La Asociación de Padres Latinos de la Unión de Colegios de San Mateo.

Yo le voy hacer unas preguntas que me van ayudar con esta evaluación. Es muy importante que Ud. comprenda que su participación en el estudio es voluntaria y que si Ud. decide no participar, esta decisión no afectara de ninguna manera su relación con el colegio de su(s) hijo (a)(s), el Distrito o con la Asociación. Sin embargo, si Ud. elige participar es necesario que sepa que los cuestionarios no tendran nombre o ninguna información que permita identificar a los participantes, de manera que todas las respuestas serán confidenciales. No habra ninguna posibilidad de conectar las respuestas con la identidad de personas individuales.

Su participación en este estudio podría resultar beneficiosa para los padres latinos de el Distrito de colegios de la Unión de San Mateo. Al identificar barreras enfrentadas por los padres, podrían llegar a conseguir mayor apoyo en estas areas, y a mejorar la calidad de servicios ofrecidos for el colegio y la asociación.

Este estudio no tiene ningun riesgo asociado con su participación, y Ud. puede pararlo a cualquier momento.

En caso de algun accidente, daño, o si tiene preguntas sobre los derechos de los individuos en este estudio, puede llamar a la Vice-presidenta de Estudios de Graduados, Serena Stanford, al (408)924-2480. Si usted tiene alguna otra pregunta por favor llámeme al (408)441-5846

Yo entiendo la información que lei o que me leieron y si estoy dispuesto(a) a participar en el estudio.

Participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Viviana Enriquez, Interna de M.S.W.: _____ Fecha: _____

*LATINO PARENTS ASSOCIATION
OF THE SAN MATEO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
P.O. Box 428
San Bruno, CA 94066
(415) 696-0259*

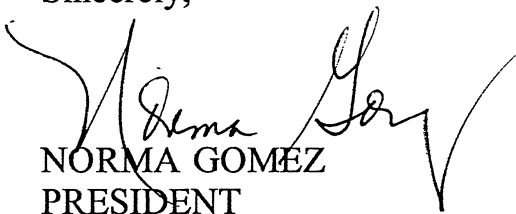
February 27, 1997

To Whom it May Concern:

This is to advise you that we are in support of Viviana Enriquez' project, "A Formative Evaluation of the Latino Parents' Association of the San Mateo Union High School District". Our association supports and approves of her research and interviews of association members in order to obtain data.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (415) 377-3420.

Sincerely,


NORMA GOMEZ
PRESIDENT



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TO: Viviana Obando-Enriquez
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Redwood City, CA 94064

FROM: Serena W. Stanford *Serena W. Stanford*
AAVP, Graduate Studies & Research

DATE: March 14, 1997

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

"A Formative Evaluation of the Latino
Parent's Association of the San Mateo
High School District"

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to any and all data that may be collected from the subjects. The Board's approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Serena Stanford, Ph.D., immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma and release of potentially damaging personal information.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2480.