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## A study of Mexican-American participation in community organizations within the Gardner

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A STUDY OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE GARDNER

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Social Work

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

by

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To my daughter Ivanya

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years, social science studies of Mexican-Americans have concluded that Mexican-Americans do not join organizations. Study after study has come to the determination that there are no significant formal organizations among Mexican-Americans that can deal with social conditions and that in those rare instances when formal organizations have developed they tend to disintegrate from within. These same studies point to the Mexican-American's supposed individualistic nature and strong family ties as the culprits in restraining the Mexican-American from organizing large formal structures. All these studies, then, do not paint a very promising picture for anyone hoping to organize within the Mexican-American community. It would seem a futile effort. Yet, in my years as a social worker practicing within the Gardner district of San Jose, an area with a large Mexican-American population, I have come into contact with a variety of organizations within which Mexican-Americans participate.

This paper examines some of the organizations within the Gardner district in which Mexican-Americans participate. This descriptive study focuses on: 1. the formality or informality of the structure of these organizations; 2. the



significance of these organizations from the point of view of their respective members, and 3. the import of the findings in terms of community organization practice within the Gardner District.

### Voluntary Associations: Some Functions and Characteristics

Voluntary associations have long captured the attention of social scientists. Anthropologists, interested in folk and tribal societies have done extensive studies on medicine, warrior, age-grade and other associations of "primitive" people. Sociologists, on the other hand, have in general focused upon the voluntary associations of urbanites.

Observers have long commented on the tendency of Americans towards forming their own organizations to improve their communities and to improve the welfare of particular groups of people. In recent years, we have seen a great increase in citizen participation related to governmental programs in such areas as urban renewal, delinquency prevention, the "War on Poverty", Model Cities and so on.

Ohlin, writing specifically about local indigenous groups, sees voluntary citizen organizations as fulfilling the following functions for society as a whole:

1. Successful indigeneous movements redistribute and broaden the basis of social power and the exercise of authority. By limiting the arbitrary use of power or the development of exploitative practice, they reduce pressures towards deviance.

2. They heighten the personal investment of members in the established social order. In promoting personal satisfaction and a larger personal commitment and contribution, they enhance social stability, control and morale.
3. They provide an arena for the training and recruitment for higher levels of organizational participation.
4. They promote a more flexible fit of the rule systems of major social institutions to the distinctive life styles of the local community. By facilitating such accommodations, indigenous organizations protect the heterogeneity and cultural richness of the society and provide a broader base for cultural growth in many fields. By fostering the proliferation of subcultures or local styles of life, they furnish a buffer to the conformity demands of a mass society. By enlarging tolerance for certain forms of deviance, constructive channels are preserved for dissent.<sup>1</sup>

Ohlin's listing highlights the very broad and somewhat inconsistent functions of voluntary associations. While on the one hand we see that one of the functions is to further the integration of individuals and groups with the larger society, on the other hand we see that voluntary associations can function to promote change and to secure the redistribution of resources. Obviously, voluntary organizations differ on many dimensions.

Organizational analysts have developed typologies of organizations that help to identify and give some order to their various dimensions. Blau and Scott identify classes of organizations based on the criterion of Cui Bono (who benefits). Their typology is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Perlman and Arnold Gurin, Community Organization and Social Planning (New York: Wiley, 1972), p. 91.

1. Mutual benefit (for the benefit of its own membership)
2. Business concerns (which benefit the owners)
3. Service organizations (for clients)
4. Commonweal organizations (presumably for the benefit of the public at large)<sup>2</sup>

Gordon and Babchuk focus not on "who benefits," but rather on the nature of the benefit obtained. They distinguish organizations as either the "instrumental" or the "expressive" type. Instrumental organizations are those which are designed to maintain or to create some normative condition or change outside the organization itself. The NAACP, the League of Women Voters and a Neighborhood Improvement Council represent this type. In the "expressive" type organization, the aim is to provide enjoyable activities for the participants. Gordon and Babchuk point out that some organizations have both functions and describe the American Legion as an example: "At the National level the Legion has registered lobbyists and a legislative program officially endorsed by its members, but at the local level it functions primarily as a club for convivial activities."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>C. Wayne Gordon and Nicholas Babchuk, "A Typology of Associations," in William A. Glaser and David L. Sills, Eds., The Government of Associations, Totowa, New Jersey: The Bedminster Press, 1966, p. 25.

A familiar concept in organizational analysis is the distinction between "manifest" and "latent" functions.

"Manifest" functions refer to the purposes to which the organization is explicitly committed. "Latent" functions are the implicit rewards that the members may derive from the organization. Sometimes these functions may contradict each other and there may be a tendency for the latent functions to displace the organizations instrumental goals.

Another important characteristic regarding voluntary organizations is their degree of independence. Where the members comprise the only source of support and sanction, there will be a maximum of autonomy. On the other hand, where a group is maintained by another organization its independence will be limited. Hence, a local group sponsored by a Community Action Agency, a settlement house, or a municipal agency more often than not will reflect the institutional interests of its sponsor.

Voluntary organizations, particularly those with a low-income membership, must often look to support by sponsors for such resources as a place to hold meetings or finances to cover operating expenses and perhaps even some paid staff. While in the past voluntary organizations maintained their activities without professional assistance, the trend today is for paid individuals to organize new associations or to assist volunteers in the operation of established organizations. This is related to the fact that as informal groups

grow in membership and become more established, there is a tendency to develop a division of labor and structure to match it. In relation to this Chapin writes:

Voluntary organizations having once started on their life career, grow and gain momentum toward formalization of structure. As growth in size of membership proceeds, structure subdivides into subgroups of smaller size and with different functions . . . An increasing emphasis upon conformity and status develop, and the voluntary organization begins to have traditions. In short, the process of growth and formalization has run its course and the original "voluntary" organization has become a full-fledged institution.<sup>4</sup>

Organizations vary according to the degree of formal structure, ranging from small face to face groups with considerable informality to highly organized bodies with a hierarchy of committees and a dependence on professional staff.

Studies have indicated that participation in voluntary organizations is not equally distributed among socio-economic groups in this country. Participation is greater among "urban residents, among those in the prime of life, among the married-with-children, among those moving up in the class system, among those with residential stability, and especially among people of more education and high socio-economic status."<sup>5</sup> We can generally expect that middle-class

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<sup>4</sup>F. Stuart Chapin, "Social Institutions and Voluntary Associations," in Joseph B. Gittler, Ed., Review of Sociology: Analysis of a Decade, New York: Wiley, 1957, p. 263-64.

<sup>5</sup>William Erbe, "Social Involvement and Political Activity," American Sociological Review, 29, No. 2, April 1964, p. 198-215.

organizations will have the advantage of money, influence and technical expertise and that the membership will know how to collect information, communicate their ideas, and reach decisions through a committee structure. Since lower-class people generally do not have these advantages or skills it is evident that organizing the poor is decidedly different from promoting the interests of middle-class people.

Why is the Study of Voluntary Organizations  
of Interest to Social Work and Specifically  
to Community Organization?

Social work, from its earliest inception, had two aspects: the care and rehabilitation of individuals with problems, (treatment), and the eradication of those social conditions which bring on problems, (reform). Both approaches are concerned with securing the well-being of the individual. Early reform-minded social work leaders included persons such as Jane Addams, Edward T. Devine and Julia Lathrop. The early charity organization societies had a "friendly visitor" function as well as a coordination-social change function. The social work field was then alive with social action movements. Unfortunately, around the year 1915, in an attempt to gain professional status, social workers embraced the psychoanalytic model of practice and consequently weakened social work's reform tendencies. By the 1930's the reform aspect of social work was further weakened when many social change interests and

programs were "politicized" and taken over by a socially minded federal government. In more recent years, however, social work has once again begun to strengthen its reform dimension. Contemporary urban problems such as discrimination, poverty, blight, racial conflict and so on cannot be solved on an individual basis. The profession of social work is according much more attention to social problems, social change and community planning and organizing.

Social workers, anticipating entering the field of community organization practice, should be encouraged by the knowledge that despite the difficulties, organization of low-income groups has been widespread in this country. Urban neighborhoods, with their concentrations of working-class people, immigrants and the poor, have long been concentration points for voluntary associations and for organizing efforts. At the turn of the century people were building their own organizations to deal with labor problems, to offer help to their newly arrived countrymen, and to preserve and draw security from their own cultural and religious backgrounds. Later, local citizen's organizations were developed to help residents deal with the needs of their immediate locality.

There is a long tradition in this country of attempting to deal with social problems through activities that have a "locality" base. Much of the practice of community organization has developed out of neighborhood-based activities.

### The Gardner Neighborhood

The Gardner District is in the heart of one of the oldest parts of San Jose and constitutes one of the highest concentrations of poverty and related problems in the City. Some twenty years ago, the Gardner was predominantly an Italian community. As the Italians progressed economically they began to move into the adjacent and more affluent Willow Glen area. The homes in the Gardner were rented out to Mexican and Mexican-American families, many of whom came to work at the various canneries which were within walking distance of the neighborhood. These families, as well as others, began to establish roots in the Gardner and in time as much as 90% of the student population at the schools in the Gardner was listed as Spanish-surnamed. The Gardner, along with its growth in Spanish-surnamed residents, witnessed a growth in its unemployment rate, dilapidated housing rate, low school achievement rate, and so on. During the War on Poverty era the Gardner neighborhood was identified as "Area 6" of the Economic Opportunity Commission. Statistics were compiled and service needs identified. Then in the late 60's came the era of "Model Cities" with its emphasis on community participation. Again more statistics and more service needs were identified. The Gardner became a Model Cities "target area". While the liberal theories and concepts put forth by the planners and developers of the



War on Poverty and Model Cities programs seems to be oriented toward creating change by providing direct services such as day care centers, recreation facilities, and job training, the programs did not address themselves to institutional changes or to the need for communities to develop political power. Consequently, to this day we find that the Gardner is still characterized by over-crowded housing, high unemployment and other social ills.

There are a number of voluntary organizations within the Gardner in which Mexicans and Mexican-Americans participate. These organizations are attempting to resolve some of the many and varied problems of the community. This study focuses on six community organizations within the Gardner to which Mexicans and Mexican-Americans belong and examines the structure of these organizations, the significance of these organizations from the point of view of the respondent and the implications of these findings for community organization practice within the Gardner.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

A common conclusion permeating much of the social science literature about the Mexican-American minority has been the belief that this ethnic group is apathetic and complacent with respect to participation in community organizations. This apathy and complacency is generally attributed to the group's tenacity to the "traditional culture". Traditional cultures are viewed as outgrowths of "folk" or "peasant" systems which are characterized by being small, distinctive, homogeneous, self-sufficient and slow-changing. The "Mexican traditional culture" is usually described as being one in which there are strong family ties, men dominate women, individuals are "present" rather than "future" oriented and they see themselves as being subjugated to "nature", "fate," or to "God." Social scientists generally point to these characteristics as socializing the Mexican-American towards becoming resigned, passive, fatalistic, non-goal oriented and consequently unorganized. Social science studies of Mexican-Americans, by utilizing such terms as, "The Mexican-American," "The Mexican-American Family," "The Mexican-American Community," leave the impression

that all Mexican-American individuals and families and communities are virtually the same. There has been a tendency on the part of social scientists to overgeneralize in regards to the Mexican-American. Many of these studies have focused on the rural Mexican-American, or they have been conducted in remote areas and urban ghettos where isolation of the ethnic group has allowed "traditional culture" traits, as previously described, to be preserved. The findings in these studies are then generalized to the Mexican-American group as a whole, regardless of the setting.

However, Chicano writers, some of whose writings will be discussed in this paper are refuting the old, yet still prevalent, myths and stereotypes about Mexican-Americans. They are pointing out that social scientists are extensions of their socialization and experience and consequently they view ethnic communities from a middle-class, academic perspective. As Munoz points out:

The social sciences as a whole have not provided us with sufficient empirical research about the structural conditions in the Chicano barrios. Consequently, the intensity of the urban problems which Chicanos are confronting have been little understood by the society at large. The principal reason for the lack of understanding is that what has been written about Chicanos has been based on a dominant Anglo perspective which has been predicated on the dominant society.<sup>6</sup>

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Carlos Munoz, "Toward a Chicano Perspective of Political Analysis," Aztlan, Fall, 1970, p. 18.

In this chapter I will present a review of some of the better known and more widely used social science studies about Mexican-Americans and their implications, particularly in terms of Chicano organizability. I will then proceed with a review of some of the most recent Chicano authored literature which points to the long history of Mexican-American organizing efforts.

#### The Anglo Academics View of the Mexican-American

Research among the "culturally deprived" has long been a favorite source of study for the Anglo academic, be he sociologist, anthropologist, psychologist or political scientist. With questionnaires, cameras, and tape recorders in hand the academic has conducted studies throughout the United States. These studies then become what Vine Deloria described as, "books by which future . . . scholars will be trained, so that they can come out to the reservations, barrios, hollows or "ghettoes" years from now and verify the observations they have studied."<sup>7</sup> As the Anglo academic observes and records his observations, he does so from the perspective of his own unique life experience as an Anglo. It could be no other way. This does not mean that the Anglo should not do research in ethnic communities. It does mean

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<sup>7</sup>Vine Deloria, Jr., Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto (New York: Avon Book, 1970), p. 84.

that he should have a solid sense of his own identity and be cognizant of his own culture-bound biases. It is important than he have more than a casual familiarity with and sensitivity to the group he is observing. By combining a sense of self with a respect for and knowledge of the ethnic group being studied, the academic lessens the possibility of arriving at stereotypic characterizations. Otherwise, the only ones who stand to gain from these studies are the individual social scientists whose prestige, tenure, and monetary compensations are dependent upon the acceptance by the academic community of their respective "theories". Other "gainers", as was pointed out by the one of the gentlemen I interviewed for this study, are students, who, in "partial fulfillment" of whatever degree they are working on, come into a community, "study" it, write up a thesis and then are never seen in the community again. Even if new programs or policies are designed and implemented in an attempt to improve the life of a community, they cannot be expected to prove effective if, to begin with, they have been based on stereotypic characterizations of the community. What follows is a look at the legacy left by a series of well-respected and "expert" academics as they studied the Mexican-American.

Before examining the literature, it is important to give a brief history of Mexican and Mexican-American labor activity in the U.S. In 1903, over 1,000 Mexican and Japanese sugar-beet workers went on strike in California. This was

followed by a strike in Los Angeles by Mexican railway workers. In 1922 Mexican field workers began to organize in Fresno; this effort was followed in 1927 by the formation of a large union called La Confederacion de Uniones Obreras. With a membership of 3,000 the Confederacion called its first strike in 1928 in the Imperial Valley. A second strike took place in 1930 with 5,000 workers. Then in 1933, a massive agricultural worker's strike took place with over 7,000 Mexican workers walking out of the onion, celery and berry fields in Los Angeles County. Strikes were also to take place in the San Joaquin Valley and in Orange County.<sup>8</sup>

During the thirties, workers of Mexican descent were striking in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Idaho, Colorado, Washington, Michigan, as well as in California. In the mid-thirties several thousand Mexican coal miners went on strike in New Mexico. In 1933 there was a battle going on between two rival unions. Both the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and the National Miner's Union (NMU) sought to represent the miners. The National Miner's Union had evolved as a reaction against what they perceived as the conservatism of the United Mine Workers of America which was under the total control of John L. Lewis. As discussed by Rubenstein:

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<sup>8</sup> Carey McWilliams, North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States, the People of America Series (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1949) pp. 195-209.

The fundamental purpose of this new miner's union (the NMU) was to establish a rank and file organization and to compete directly with the UMWA for the loyalties of miners in unorganized coal fields. It called for workers irrespective of race or sex to join, and to "participate in the struggle for abolishing the capitalistic system and replace it with socialism."

It was in areas such as Gallup that the NMU achieved its greatest following. The union's strong emphasis on organizing those subject to racial discrimination and its stress on militant action appealed to Gallup miners.<sup>9</sup>

Information substantiating Rubenstein's statements was gathered in a discussion of this topic with my father, Salvador R. Martinez, who was an active participant in the New Mexico coal strike of 1933. In our discussion he recalled that during the strike, there being martial law in New Mexico which meant that gatherings of more than five individuals was prohibited, NMU leaders decided to take the striking miners across the line into the state of Arizona. On one occasion approximately 800 to 1,000 strikers, packed into a caravan of trucks and cars, traveled the twenty-six miles from Gallup, New Mexico across into Arizona. There in the hills of Arizona, with union banners waving and union slogans painted on the rocky hillsides, the striking coal miners planned strategies and tactics. The gathering lasted for almost a month. The men slept in caves or out in the

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<sup>9</sup>Harry R. Rubenstein, "The Great Gallup Coal Strike of 1933," Southwest Economy and Society, Winter, 1977, p. 36.

open under trees. Support came in many ways, including the gift of free corn from a neighboring Navajo Indian group and free sandwiches from Italian businessman who supported their cause.<sup>10</sup> Although the NMU lost out to the UNMA, the organizing effort proved to be significant. This strike, like others in the growing labor movement in which the majority of the participants were Mexican or Mexican-American, was met with massive military counter-action and massive deportations. Still the unrest continued.

Then, in 1946, after decades of widespread and constant social action in efforts to secure a better life, sociologist Ruth Tuck made the following statement:

For many years the (Mexican) immigrant and his sons made no effort to free themselves. They burned with resentment over a thousand slights, but they did so in private . . . perhaps this passivity is the mark of any minority which is just emerging . . .<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Tuck ignored the decades of struggle in which Mexican immigrants and their sons fought to better their lives. Tuck's study set the stage for what was to follow in subsequent studies of Mexican-Americans.

In 1954, Saunders, a sociologist wrote:

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<sup>10</sup>Statement by Salvador R. Martinez, former coal miner, Personal interview, San Jose, California, April 20, 1979.

<sup>11</sup>Ruth Tuck, Not with the First (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), p. 198.



A closely related trait of the Spanish-speaking is their somewhat greater readiness toward acceptance and resignation than is characteristic of the Anglo. Whereas it is the belief of the latter that man has an obligation to struggle against, and if possible, to master the problems and difficulties that beset him, the Spanish-speaking person is more likely to accept and resign himself to whatever destiny brings him.

Saunders further states that:

The Spanish-speaking person, by contrast (to Anglos) is likely to meet difficulties by adjusting to them rather than by attempting to overcome them. Fate is somewhat inexorable, and there is nothing much to be gained by struggling against it. If the lot of man is hard- and it frequently is- such is the will of God, incomprehensible but just, and it is the obligation of man to accept it... In the collective recollection of village life there is only the remembrance of men and women who were born, resigned themselves to suffering and hardship and occasional joys, and died when their time came.<sup>12</sup>

Again, we see a distortion of history. Like Tuck, Saunders ignored the history of Mexican-American involvement in organizations and continued the stereotypic characterizations of the passive, fatalistic Mexican-American.

Saunders' study was followed in 1957 by a presentation written by Edmunson. Edmunson wrote:

Fatalistic acceptance of things which "just happen" are a source of wonder and despair to Anglo housewives with Mexican servants, but they are a precise expression of the Mexican attitude.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lyle Saunders, Cultural Differences and Medical Care: The Case of the Spanish-Speaking of the Southwest (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1954), p. 128-129.

<sup>13</sup> Munro S. Edmonson, Los Manitos: A Study of Institutional Values (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1957) p. 60.

Kluckhohn and Strodbeck's 1961 study is a replica of the Edmonson study and thus, in the tradition of Tuck and Saunders, is a stereotypic characterization of the Mexican-American. The Kluckhohn-Strodbeck study on Hispanos in New Mexico is based upon a sample of twenty-three in a community of 150 people. While this small sample may be valid for that particular time in that particular town, the findings cannot be generalized to describe Mexican-American and New Mexican value orientations as a whole. However, this is precisely what happens.

As we move into the decade of the 60's, we find that there is no significant change in the studies being made about Mexican-Americans.

Madsen, like his predecessors, based his 1964 study on his conceptualization of the "traditional culture". This allowed him to say:

Fatalistic philosophy provides an attitude of resignation which often convinces the Anglo that the Latin lacks drive and determination. What the Anglo tries to control, the Mexican-American tries to accept. Misfortune is something the Anglo tries to overcome and the Latin views as fate.<sup>14</sup>

Persisting on clinging to the "traditional culture" theme, Celia Heller in her 1968 book makes the following statements: Mexican-Americans exhibit a "marked lack of internal

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<sup>14</sup> William Madsen, Mexican-Americans of Southwest Texas, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) p. 16.

differentiation" and are an "unusually homogeneous ethnic group." Heller continues, "This lack of emphasis on "making good" in conventional terms is consistent with the themes of fatalism and resignation which run through Mexican-American Culture." Heller further states that: "The combination of stress on work and rational use of time...forms little or no part of the Mexican-American process." Heller then reaches the conclusion that all this "traditional behavior" leads to criminal behavior. Her own words are: "It may be suggested that the excess of juvenile delinquents among the Mexican-Americans...is not composed of deviants from the cultural pattern of the Mexican-American population but rather boys who over-conform to this pattern."<sup>15</sup> Heller's study thus becomes an example of "blaming the victim."

In their 1967 study of urban Mexican-Americans, Samora and Lamanna continue along the same lines. They state:

The very nature of some of the value orientations of the Mexican-American presents a barrier to their rapid assimilation. There is a note of fatalism and resignation in the attitudes and behavior of the residents and an orientation to the present (not unlike that described by Kluckhohn in connection with the Southwest) that would have to change somewhat before they could be expected to achieve significant changes in their social situation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Celia S. Heller, The Mexican-American Youth: Forgotten Youth at the Crossroads (New York: Random House, 1968) pp. 17-76.

<sup>16</sup>Julian Samora and Richard A. Lamanna, Mexican-Americans in a Midwest Metropolis: A Study of East Chicago, Mexican-American Study Project, Division of Research, School of Business, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1967), p. 135.

Samora and Lamanna, like the others herein cited, place the final cause of social conditions upon the Mexican-Americans themselves. Based upon the concept of the "traditional culture", social scientists have constructed the false assertion that Mexican-Americans presently are and always have been divided and unorganized. Studies have concluded that there are no significant formal organizations among Mexican-Americans that can deal with social issues. The culprit in keeping the Mexican-American from organizing is seen as the extended family, (part of the so-called "traditional culture"), which does not allow the individual to form bonds or ties beyond it. Rubel, in his 1966 study, contributes to the old stereotypes by stating:

Mexican-Americans in Mexiquito, and elsewhere, tend not to organize corporate instrumental groups, although a few are found scattered in the history of the neighborhood. Moreover, when Chicanos do join such voluntary associations this participation is short-lived and discomfoting. Unlike their Anglo-American counterparts, Chicanos participate in secondary associations as if they were of a primary nature (familial).<sup>17</sup>

In a 1966 study which appears in a volume entitled La Raza: Forgotten Americans, Sheldon, like Rubel and the others before him, points to the Mexican-American "tradition" and "cultural values" as the cause of the groups social condition. Sheldon declares:

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<sup>17</sup> Arther J. Rubel, Across the Tracks: Mexican-Americans in a Texas City, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 140.

Individualism is a major characteristic of Mexican culture . . . where individual worth is held to be most sacred . . . and admitted conformity to the group, any group outside the family a cardinal sin . . . It is not surprising that Mexican Americans have been unable to put to effective use the tool of the mass voice to promote the common good of their group. They are in fact not a group; they do not speak with a common voice; they do not have mutual agreement. They are fragmented first by their heterogeneity and second by the tradition of individualism.<sup>18</sup>

In the same volume, an article by Martinez continues along similar lines. Martinez states:

The political potential of the Spanish-speaking is only in its initial stages . . . for the Spanish-speaking this is particularly difficult because of the individualistic nature of Hispanic peoples which vitiates against group action . . . This, of course, is a manifestation of the underlying sense of inferiority imposed by a color and culture conscious society in the United States . . . The remarkable aspect of this situation is that the will to overcome has taken so long to assert itself.<sup>19</sup>

Martinez has bought into the social scientists' concept of the Mexican-American "cultural tradition." We should not be surprised, for as Deloria has written in reference to the effect of anthropological investigation upon the Indian:

Over the years anthropologists have succeeded in burying Indian communities so completely beneath the mass of irrelevant information that the total impact of the scholarly community on Indian people has become one of simple authority. Many Indians have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists because it appears

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<sup>18</sup>Paul M. Sheldon, "Community Participation and the Emerging Middle Class," La Raza: Forgotten Americans (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 125.

<sup>19</sup>John Martinez, "Leadership and Politics," La Raza: Forgotten Americans (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 48.

that the anthropologist knows everything about Indian communities. Thus many ideas that pass for Indian thinking are in reality theories originally advanced by anthropologists and echoed by Indian people in an attempt to communicate the real situation.<sup>20</sup>

Simply substitute "Chicano" for Indian and the results are the same. Chicanos buy into the myths created by the "experts".

Well over a hundred years ago, the New Mexico Senator, Thaddeus Stevens, said that the native New Mexicans were, "a hybrid race of Spanish and Indian origin, ignorant, degraded, demoralized and priest-ridden."<sup>21</sup> There does not appear to be much difference between Steven's statement and the more recent statements of social scientists. As Romano explains:

In short, there has not been any significant change in views toward Mexican-Americans for the past 100 years. Certainly this is not progress at all. What we have instead are contemporary social scientists busily perpetuating the very same opinions of Mexican culture that were current during the Mexican-American War. These opinions were, and are, pernicious, vicious, misleading, degrading, and brainwashing in that they obliterate history and then rewrite it in such a way as to eliminate the historical significance of Mexican-Americans, as well as to simultaneously question the legitimacy of their presence in contemporary society.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Deloria, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>21</sup>Octavio I. Romano, "The Anthropology and Sociology of the Mexican-Americans: The Distortion of Mexican American History," El Grito, Vol. II, No. 1, Fall, 1968, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

The problem has been that a whole line of social scientists, approaching their studies from their own cultural biases, have concluded that because of certain supposed cultural traits, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans do not participate in formal voluntary organizations. The fact is that Mexican-Americans, like all ethnic groups, are a pluralistic people. As such they cannot be described according to some simple formula as "traditional culture." Too often social scientists have failed to recognize the limitations of their studies and have overgeneralized their findings. However, let us recall the decades of strife initiated by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans as was briefly described earlier in this chapter--strife which was met with massive military counter-action. Social scientists generally have not addressed themselves to the question of why massive military action was necessary in order to deal with a "resigned, passive, fatalistic, non-goal oriented" people.

In 1949, Carey McWilliams, deviating from the previous literature regarding Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, in reference to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans wrote: "Long charged with a lack of "leadership" and talent for organization, they proved too effectively that neither talent was lacking."<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, McWilliams' colleagues chose to largely ignore his conclusions.

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<sup>23</sup>McWilliams, op. cit., p. 193.

In the following section I will review some of the literature by Chicano authors which, in support of McWilliams' earlier study, document the long history of Mexican and Mexican-American community organization.

A Chicano Perspective on Mexican-American  
Organizational Efforts

As Alvarez has documented, even just a brief, but honest, look at history reveals the number of Mexican-American formal organizations which have existed in the past and some of which continue into the present. The following chart is from Alvarez's article:<sup>24</sup>

<u>Date</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Formal Organization</u>
1880's	New Mexico	Penitente Order
1890's	New Mexico	Mano Negra
1914	California	International Institute of Los Angeles
1915	California	Agricultural Workers Organization
1922	Colorado	Sociedad Mutualista Ignacio Zaragosa
1927	California	La Confederacion de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas
1928	California	Sociedad Guadalupeana
1929	Texas	League of United Latin American Citizens
1933	Indiana	Sociedad Mutualista Mexico
1933	Texas	Asociacion de Jornaleros
1933	California	Club Latino American de Long Beach and Signal Hall
1933	California	Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union
1935	New Mexico	Liga Obrera de Habla Espanola
1936	Ohio	Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana
1937	California	Sinarquista Movement
1939	Colorado	Spanish Speaking Congress
1940	California	Unity Leagues
1943	Texas	Pan American Student Forum of Texas

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<sup>24</sup>Salvador Alvarez, "Mexican-American Community Organizations, "Voices: Readings from El Grito, June, 1971, p. 72.



1946	Texas	San Antonio Council for the Spanish-Speaking
1947	California	Community Service Organization
1948	Texas	American G.I. Forum
1951	Illinois	Club Latino Americano
1956	Washington	National Latin American Federation (Seattle)
1959	Illinois	Asociacion Pro-Derechos Obreros
1959	California	Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee
1960	California	Mexican American Political Association
1961	California	National Farm Workers Association
1963	Colorado	Crusade for Justice
1963	New Mexico	Alianza Federal de las Mercedes
1966	California	National Farm Workers Organizing Committee
1967	Texas	Mexican American Youth Organization
1968	California	Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan

This chart, which is only a partial listing reflecting some of the significant organizing efforts by Mexican-Americans over a number of years, would seem to indicate that the social science views of the organizing abilities of this ethnic group has been widely distorted.

Guzman states that Mexican-American organizations appear in three distinct stages of development. He categorizes them as follows:

1. a period during which organizational efforts were used to maintain the cultural parameters of the people (pluralism)
2. a period of accomodation when the minority tried to accede to the presumed or presupposed wishes of the majority (assimilation)
3. a final period during which Mexican-Americans reject (but do not yet attempt to destroy) the institutions of the larger society (independence)<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ralph C. Guzman, The Political Socialization of the Mexican-American People (New York: Arno Press, 1976), p. 112.

Early Mexican-American societies, such as the "mutualistas" were primarily concerned with the preservation of Mexican customs in the United States. They were, according to Guzman, at the "pluralism" stage of organizational development. The members of the "mutualistas" were for the most part from the lower middle class, but they were people who mirrored Mexican upper class society. The groups that followed, such as LULAC, were also middle class, but they were at the "assimilation" stage as described by Guzman. They were U.S. oriented and accomodationist in design. More recent Chicano organizations, such as MECHA, are examples of Guzman's "independence" stage in which there is rejection of the values, customs, and institutions of the larger society.

Early Mexican-American organizations, dating back to the turn of the century, were formed as mutual benefit and protective associations. By pooling their resources, community groups were able to provide each other with low cost funeral and insurance benefits. The provision of low income loans and other forms of economic assistance were also benefits provided. Besides these economic advantages, these early "mutualistas" also functioned as a focal point for entertainment and social activities which served to promote and preserve the language, the customs, and the culture of the Mexican immigrant. But most importantly, at least in terms of community organization, these societies provided a forum for discussion

which sparked a degree of political awareness and subsequent social action.

#### Alianza Hispano Americana

There were several "mutualistas" which became very much involved in social action. The Alianza Hispano Americana, organized in the late 1800's in Tucson, Arizona, managed to oust Texans who were then in control of Tucson politics and replaced them with native Tucsonians of Mexican descent.

#### Lazaro Cardenas Society

Another example of a "mutualista" is the Lazaro Cardenas Society which was organized in the early 1920's by the Mexican-American community of Los Angeles. This group addressed itself to such issues as the lack of school buses and other municipal services within their community.

#### Liga Protectora Mexicana

The Liga Protectora Mexicana was founded in Kansas City in order to protect the rights of Mexican legal immigrants who were threatened with repatriation. This grass roots organization also provided job referrals, food and clothing for the needy.

#### Orden Hijos de America

Departing from the social service aspect of the "mutualistas" and concentrating more on the political arena,

the Orden Hijos de America (Sons of America Order), was established in San Antonio, Texas in 1921, The organization limited membership to U.S. citizens of Mexican or Spanish descent. This restriction was invoked because of the Order's focus on voter registration and jury participation by Mexican-Americans. As quoted in Tirado's article, the Orden's Declaration of Principles asserted that members should, "use their influence in all fields of social, economic, and political action in order to realize the greatest enjoyment possible of all the rights and privileges and prerogatives extended by the American Constitution."<sup>26</sup>

### LULAC

With the founding of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), in Texas in 1929, we begin to see a pulling away from those things "Mexican" and a move toward total assimilation into Anglo-American society. The LULAC constitution, as quoted in Tirado's article stipulated that: "In order to claim our rights and fulfill our duties it is necessary for us to assimilate all we can that is best in the new civilization amidst which we shall have to live."<sup>27</sup> The constitution further stipulated that English would be the

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<sup>26</sup>Miguel David Tirado, Chicano Politics: Readings, ed. F. Chris Garcia (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1973), p. 71.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

official language of the organization and each member had to pledge to learn English and to teach it to his children. LULAC members rationalized the organization elitist stance by explaining that by remaining small they could be a closer knit, therefore, stronger group and that by being middle-class oriented they could reduce the stereotypes that many Anglo-Americans held of Mexican-Americans. In more recent years, LULACS, although still fairly conservative, have become more active in community action type of programs.

#### Unity Leagues

In 1940, the first in a series of Unity Leagues was founded in the Pomona Valley of California. Fred Ross, an organizer from the Industrial Areas Foundation was instrumental in the formation of the Unity Leagues. In contrast to the LULACS' middle-class orientation, the membership of the Unity Leagues was drawn from economically lower class Mexican-Americans. Issues such as lack of representation on city councils and school discrimination were instrumental in rallying together communities.

#### CSO

The Community Service Organization was founded in 1947 in Los Angeles by some Mexican-American war veterans and a group of factory workers. Using the technique of "house meetings" the CSO was able to bring voter registration in

East Los Angeles up to 40,000 and as a result in 1949 the first Mexican-American to the Los Angeles city council in sixty-eight years was elected.

#### American G.I. Forum

The American G.I. Forum was founded in 1948 in Texas when a group of Mexican-American war veterans, angered over the refusal of a funeral home to handle the burial of a Mexican-American war veteran, decided to organize themselves into a veterans organization dedicated to combat such incidents of discrimination and to improve the status of Mexican-Americans in Texas. To this day the G.I. Forum continues to be active in providing services to the community. It is a co-sponsor of Operation SER which offers training to the unskilled and helps to prepare them for gainful employment. Although officially non-partisan, G.I. Forum members are encouraged toward political involvement.

#### MAPA

The Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA) was one of the first organizations to formally declare that its particular purpose was politics. MAPA was organized in 1958 on a statewide basis in California. Tirado explains:

MAPA grew out of the realization by many concerned Mexican-American leaders that their community no longer could depend upon the Democratic party structure to champion the political cause of the Mexican-American in California. Shocked by the defeat of Edward Roybal for

Lieutenant Governor in 1954 and Henry Lopez for Secretary of State in 1958 during a year of otherwise Democratic landslide, these leaders came to recognize the need for an organization solely dedicated to advancing the political interests of the Mexican-American in California.

According to MAPA's constitution the organization is bipartisan and lends support to candidates not based on their party affiliation, but rather on the candidates record regarding the Mexican-American. In the past the organization's membership has been primarily middle-class. More recent efforts have been made to recruit participants from the economically lower class, thus promoting political organization and social action at the grass roots level.

#### La Alianza Federal de Mercedes

An example of what Guzman describes as an organization at the "independence" stage of development is the Alianza Federal de Mercedes (the Federal Alliance of Land Grants). Incorporated in 1963 in the state of New Mexico, this organization is dedicated to the return of land grants to Hispanos.

#### MECHA

Founded in 1968, El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlan (The Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan) or MECHA was an organized student effort aimed at confronting the established order. Students committed themselves to return to the barrios and identifying with the oppressed. The organization believes in and works toward establishing self-determination for all Chicanos.

The preceding historical analysis contradicts the assumption that the Mexican-American minority has been politically apathetic and slow to develop community action organizations. Rather, this brief over-view of Mexican-American organizational effort, leads to the conclusion that major elements of the Mexican-American community have consistently expressed an interest in social action and have organized themselves over the years into community action groups for the purpose of improving the social conditions of the Mexican-American.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Type of Study

This descriptive study is based upon opinions and attitudes of selected respondents. It is an empirical study of whether formal voluntary organizations exist within the Gardner district of San Jose in which Mexicans and Mexican-Americans participate. These organizations will then be examined from the point of view of the members.

#### The Interview Schedule

In designing the interview schedule, questions which would provide information about the respondent, the respondent's view of the Gardner, and the respondent's reasons for joining the organization were solicited. Items were adapted from the survey conducted in 1965 and 1970 by the Mexican-American Study project at the University of California, Los Angeles, and from a survey out of Loyola University which was conducted in 1973. The Mexican-American Study project was designed to be a comprehensive study of Mexican-Americans in the U. S. The Loyola survey was designed to be an empirical inquiry into the political attitudes of individuals belonging to Advisory Councils during the War on Poverty era. Since it was anticipated that close to half of the respondents would prefer to be interviewed in Spanish, a Spanish version of the

interview schedule was created. The pilot study consisted of four interviews: two in Spanish and two in English. Questions found to be ineffective were omitted or restated.

### The Sample

Twelve respondents from six different organizations within the Gardner were interviewed. Having done my field placement in the Gardner District, I was already familiar with several organizations and knew the names of some of the members. I asked those members whom I already knew to refer me to other members. Selection of respondents was limited to those actually living within the Gardner District.

### Interviewing

It was anticipated that interviewing would be the most difficult phase of the study in view of the fact that, in the opinion of some, the Gardner community has already been oversubjected to survey studies without any tangible, positive benefits accruing to the area. It was found, however, that the respondents were most cooperative and enthusiastic in talking about their organization and the about the Gardner.

The approach was to telephone each respondent and explain that I was a student at the School of Social Work and that I was working in the community out of Sacred Heart Parish. I stated that I was doing a study about some of the

organizations in the Gardner and that I understood that they were active in a given organization and that I would like to ask them some questions about their participation in that organization and about the Gardner in general. Eight of the interviews were conducted in the respondent's home, while four were conducted at the respondent's place of employment. The average interview required ninety minutes to complete.

### Analysis of the Data

In analyzing the data the answers of respondents of all of the questions on the interview schedule will be analyzed separately.

### Description of Organizations

Respondents represented six different organizations within the Gardner. The organizations were: the Club Latino, the Sacred Heart Credit Union, the Mexican-American Community Organization, the Gardner Parent Child Development Center, the Biblioteca Latina and the Eastside Downtown Organizing Project.

#### Club Latino

The Club Latino originated approximately ten years ago at Sacred Heart Church. The organization's primary purpose is to unite the Spanish-speaking members of the parish. The club sponsors dinners, dances and other activities which serve not only to provide a gathering place for the people

of the community, but the activities also bring in funds which in turn are utilized for such things as repair of the church or to provide emergency assistance to needy families. The organization serves to preserve and promote not only the Spanish language, but many of the Mexican customs associated with the various religious holidays, as for example, the posadas at Christmas.

The Club Latino can be said to be a "formal" voluntary association since it has elected officers, it conducts regular meetings at which there is a prepared agenda and there are committees which serve specific functions.

#### Sacred Heart Credit Union

The Sacred Heart Credit Union was an offshoot of the Club Latino. The Credit Union was begun because it was found that people from the Gardner community were simply not qualifying for loans from the standard financial institutions. An alternative institution was needed; one that would respond to the unique needs of the community. In its ten years of existence the Credit Union, which is a member of the Federal Credit Union Association, has grown from having \$5.00 in assets to its present level of \$150,000 in assets. The Credit Union is providing a much needed service to the community. Individuals such as senior citizens and the undocumented are able to secure low-interest loans from the Credit Union.

The Credit Union, with its elected officials, regular Board meetings and adherence to certain required operating procedures can also be seen as being a "formal" voluntary association.

#### Mexican-American Community Organization (MACO)

The Mexican-American Community Organization was formed twelve years ago by a small group of Gardner residents who recognized that many problems existed in the Gardner and that only through a neighborhood organization could positive change be brought about. In the past, MACO has sponsored baseball and soccer teams for youth, ran a "teatro cultural" which helped to preserve Mexican traditions and customs and also sponsored a Leadership Training Program for Adults. Although the organization continues to offer sports activities for youth as well as cultural awareness through the "teatro" MACO has branched out into organizing a tenants and homeowners Association and is planning on developing an "alternative school" in the neighborhood.

MACO is definitely a "formal" voluntary association insomuch as it is an incorporated body having by-laws, elected officials, and regular meetings at which Robert's Rules of Order are adhered to.

#### Gardner Parent Child Development Center

The Gardner Parent Child Development Center was originally under a different sponsoring agency. In 1972, however,

a group of parents, dissatisfied with the manner in which the center was operated, (it was not meeting state standards and the County was constantly threatening to close down the center), decided to become an incorporated body and take over the operation of the center. Since that time the center has been providing much needed childcare services to the community in a safe and stimulating environment.

The Board of Directors functions as a governing board which sets fiscal policy as well as generally oversees the day to day operation of the center. This is a "formal" voluntary association complete with incorporation, by-laws, elected officials, and regular board meetings.

#### Biblioteca Latina

In 1973 a group of mothers from the Gardner neighborhood, finding that the public library system was not serving the bi-lingual, bi-cultural needs of their children, decided to organize their own neighborhood library. The library began by operating out of Hardeman Hall at the Sacred Heart Church on Sunday after Mass. The mothers would have bake sales and other fund-raisers in order to secure money for their fledgling project. Through much hard work and a lot of persistence, the Biblioteca Latina is now operating as part of the city library system.

Although officially now part of the city library system, the Biblioteca Latina continues to have its own Board.

The Board has proven so successful in getting things done, (i.e., writing proposals for foundation monies and exploring new uses for the library), that the city plans to implement other boards at other city libraries.

Since the Biblioteca Latina does have officers, conducts regular meetings and follows Roberts Rules of Order, it can be described as a "formal" voluntary association.

Eastside-Downtown Organizing Project (EDOP)

The Eastside Downtown Organizing Project is an organization of organizations. EDOP is made up of several churches who have pooled some monies in order to hire an Alinsky-trained community organizer. Patterned after Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) of San Antonio and United Neighborhoods Organization (UNO) of Los Angeles, EDOP proposes to identify some problems within each parish area, create issues, (which are "immediate, concrete and realizable"), and then set up a target to focus on in order to resolve the issue. The strength of the organization is in the united effort of the combined parishes. The ultimate goal is for the "have nots" of the parishes to achieve power. It is a slow process. At present, the four representatives to central EDOP from Sacred Heart Church are conducting "house meetings" to start to identify the self-interests of the residents and to acquaint them with the potential of EDOP.

EDOP can be identified as a "formal" voluntary association since it has a Board of Directors, conducts regular meetings, has agendas and follows Roberts Rules of Order.

### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The findings are limited to the Gardner district at this particular moment in time.
2. The respondents are people already involved in their respective organizations and the responses reflect their own biases.
3. The respondents are all "officers" within their respective organizations. Their opinions may well differ from those of the "rank and file."
4. The open-ended nature of the questionnaire made it difficult to record all responses. The interviewers biases dictated what information was recorded.

### Summary

This brief synopsis of six formal voluntary organizations within the Gardner points to the many and varied functions that community organizations fulfill. Utilizing Guzman's typology of Mexican-American organizations we can generally categorize these six organizations as follows:

1. The Club Latino can be seen as reflecting efforts towards maintenance of the cultural parameters of the members. The emphasis on Mexican religious and social customs point to efforts toward cultural pluralism.
2. The Credit Union and the Gardner Parent Child Development Center, the former with its emphasis on monetary matters and the latter with a concern for the education and socialization of the young child, serve as vehicles through which the community can assimilate into the dominant culture.
3. In general terms, MACO, the Biblioteca Latina and EDOP, can be seen as organized efforts toward the independent stage of Guzman's organizational



development. MACO is in the process of organizing an "alternative" school and EDOP rejects the power structure as it now exists and is organizing towards establishing a redistribution of power. The Biblioteca Latina, although now officially a part of the city library system, manages to maintain itself fairly independent of that body and is planning to expand the library to new and innovative areas.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The respondents were asked to respond to thirty questions which solicited demographic data about themselves and then asked for their opinion regarding the Gardner community, their particular organization and their role within that organization. Throughout the questionnaire, "DK" refers to "don't know" and "NR" means "no response." The responses to these questions are herewith analyzed.

#### Analysis of Responses to Items on Questionnaire

##### Analysis of Question 1

Question 1 asks, "Where were you born?" Of the twelve respondents interviewed half were born in Mexico and half were born in the United States. We can conclude that Mexicans as well as Mexican-Americans participate in community organizations within the Gardner.

##### Analysis of Question 2

Question 2 asks, "When were you born?" The age of the respondents ranged from nineteen to fifty-six; the average age was thirty-eight years. The distribution was as follows: 19, 26, 27, 27, 29, 33, 36, 41, 45, 46, 46, and 56. Age seems to be no barrier to participation in community organizations in the Gardner.

### Analysis of Question 3

Question 3 asks, "How do you prefer to be identified?" Of the twelve respondents, four selected "Chicano", two selected "Mexican-American" and six selected "Mexican". Ethnic self-identification seems to make no difference in organizational participation in the Gardner. An interesting phenomenon is that one U.S. born respondent, having spent half his life in Mexico, identified himself as "Mexican". Further, two of the Mexican-born respondents identified themselves as "Chicano".

### Analysis of Question 4

Question 4 asks, "About how long have you lived in the Gardner?" The years of residency ranged from two to twenty-five years. The average years of residency was fifteen years. The distribution in years of residency in the Gardner was as follows: 2, 3, 9, 12, 12, 12, 18, 18, 19 (respondent's age), 20, 25, and 25. In an area that is known for the high mobility of its residents, the sample seems to indicate that these respondents have been long time residents of the Gardner.

### Analysis of Question 5

Question 5 asks, "...are you a member of any other organizations that meet more or less regularly such as

societies, clubs, fraternal organizations, educational groups, unions?" Only two of the respondents do not belong to any other organizations. Ten respondents do belong to other organizations. The number of other organizations belonged to ranges from one to four; the average is two. The respondents generally tend to be "joiners".

#### Analysis of Question 6

The sixth question asks, "Do you feel that things in general in the Gardner have changed in the past few years: that is, have they become better or worse, or have they remained the same?" In response to question six, eleven respondents felt that things in general had improved in the Gardner, while only one thought things had remained the same. The opinions of the respondents can be categorized into two groups: tangible and intangible changes. The tangible changes were such things as the provision of services through the Gardner Health Clinic and the Gardner Neighborhood Center and the general uplift of the appearance of the area through neighborhood improvement projects. The intangible changes cited as bringing about improvements in the Gardner were such things as the residents becoming more aware of neighborhood problems and also their becoming more willing to participate in attempting to resolve these problems.

Analysis of Question 7

Question number seven states: "As I go around the Gardner Community, some people tell me that there are many problems in this community. In your opinion, do you think there are important problems facing the Gardner Community? . . . If yes: A. In your opinion what are the most important problems facing the Gardner? B. In your opinion, how could these problems be resolved? . . . C. Which group should have the main responsibility for resolving these problems?" Individual responses to question number seven were numerous and varied. However, the responses generally fall into two categories: 1. the need for services, and 2. the excess of juvenile anti-social behavior. The service needs identified by the respondents were primarily in the areas of housing, employment and the unique problems of undocumented residents. Fifty percent of the respondents pointed to some variation of youth problems, such as vandalism, drug abuse, school drop-outs and car racing on residential streets. The solution to these problems were primarily seen as being the responsibility of community grass roots groups and the local government. The group least cited as responsible for resolving community problems was private business.

Analysis of question 8

Question number eight asks: "Over the past few years do you remember hearing or reading anything about protests, marches, or demonstrations by Mexican-Americans in the San Jose area?...If yes: A. In your opinion, why did these protests, marches or demonstrations occur? B. Did you attend any of these protests, marches or demonstrations? C. In your opinion, do you think these protests, marches or demonstrations are: 1. good for the community; 2. make no difference for the community; 3. bad for the community; 4. DK or 5. NR?" Every respondent remembered having heard about the protests. Opinions on why these protests occurred fell into two general categories: 1. Protesting because of something that was happening, and 2. protesting because of something that was not happening. According to the respondents, some of the things "happening" which were being protested against were identified as : racism, police brutality and maltreatment of the undocumented. Protests also were seen by the respondents as occurring because of things not happening, such as: people's complaints were not being heard, people were not being given their human rights and people were not getting responses from the system.

Ten of the respondents stated they had participated in a protest, march or demonstration; only two had not. These activities were seen by eleven of the respondents as

being good for the community, while only one respondent stated that they were bad for the community explaining that these activities no longer can draw the community support that they once did.

#### Analysis of Question 9

Question 9 asks, "About how long have you been a member of (organization)?" The responses ranged from one year to fourteen years. The average length of membership was five years and ten months. The distribution of the length of membership in terms of years in the organization is as follows: 1, 1, 1½, 2, 2, 2½, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, and 14. We can conclude that the respondents tend to be stable members of their organizations.

#### Analysis of Question 10

Question number ten states: "Thinking back, do you remember how you became a member of your organization, did somebody ask you to join, were you elected, did you volunteer or what?" Five of the respondents stated they had been asked to join their organization and seven recalled having volunteered. Of the seven that stated they "volunteered", four of them had actually been the "founders" or "originators" of the organization. Respondents who recalled being asked to join their organization, indicated that various priests were instrumental in recruiting them to the group.

### Analysis of Question 11

Question number eleven asks: "Thinking back, do you remember why you wanted to be a member of this organization, that is, for what reason did you join?" The responses to this question were many and varied. The most common response (five out of the twelve) was related to "helping"; that is, respondents joined in order to "help my people," or "help my community". Other responses generally had to do with creating some sort of change such as: "to improve the situation" or "to organize the Gardner."

### Analysis of Question 12

Question 12 asks, "About how often would you say that you attend the meetings of (organization)?" All twelve of the respondents answered that they attend 75-100% of the time. This excellent record of attendance might be attributed to the fact that all of the respondents are officials of some sort within their organization and therefore recognize the importance of their attendance at meetings in order to carry on the business of the organization.

### Analysis of Question 13

Question 13 asks, "How are you notified about meetings?" Four of the respondents stated that their organization has a fixed date for their meetings, but that they are also reminded by telephone shortly before the meeting date.



Another four respondents said they are notified in writing and also by telephone. Two respondents stated that their organization has a fixed date for their meetings, but that a written reminder is also sent. The remaining two respondents stated that they are notified by telephone regarding their meetings. The fact that ten of the twelve organizations have two methods of reminding members of meetings might well account for the excellent attendance at meetings by the respondents.

#### Analysis of Question 14

Question 14 asks, "Have you been involved in any special committees of (organization)? Seven respondents stated they belonged to committees within their organizations. One respondent stated that in their organization each member served on various committees on a rotation basis. This rotating was done to give everyone exposure to all aspects of the organization. Again, the fact that all of the respondents are "officials" within their organization might explain their active participation on committees.

#### Analysis of Question 15

Question 15 asks, "Have you ever held any offices in (organization)?" Eleven of the twelve respondents stated that they have held or presently hold office in their organization. This high rate of office-holding is attributed to the fact

that I was familiar with the respondents or was given their names precisely because they are known as "leaders" in the Gardner community.

#### Analysis of Question 16

Question 16 asks, "In your opinion what are the most important functions or purposes of (organization)? Six of the respondents focused on the "service" function of their organization, i.e., to provide childcare, to provide activities for youth, etc. The other six respondents focused on the general area of "uniting" and "empowering" the community. This is significant in terms of community organization practice.

#### Analysis of Question 17

Question 17 asks, "In your opinion how well do you think (organization) is fulfilling its purposes?" Eight of the respondents felt that their organization was doing "very well", while three responded "moderately well." Only one respondent stated that his organization was performing "not very well" on the organization's original goals, but qualified his answer by stating that they were doing "very well" on new goals. The high rate of positive response might be due to the bias of the respondents. As "officials" they are responsible for the functioning of the organization.

### Analysis of Question 18

Question 18 asks, "What kinds of things has (organization) done in the past?" Six of the respondents again focused on services which their organization had provided to the community, such as childcare, bilingual-bicultural library materials, etc. Five of the respondents focused on activities to bring the community together, such as "hire a community organizer", or "activities to get parents to participate." One respondent stated his organization was still too new and has not had a "past project". The past efforts toward bringing the community together indicates recognition of the importance of such activity.

### Analysis of Question 19

Question 19 asks, "What kinds of things is (organization) doing now?" Nine of the respondents focused on the services their organization is providing, such as, childcare, loans, youth activities, and organizing dances. The remaining three respondents stated that their organization is conducting "house meetings" to acquaint the community with the potential of their organization. The majority of the community organizations in this study have identified certain service needs within the community and have taken it upon themselves to provide those services.

### Analysis of Question 20

Question 20 asks, "What about in the future?"

Eight of the respondents focused on the continuation of the provision of services to the community. Three respondents felt that their organizations would be "tackling social issues", while the remaining respondent simply stated, "The community will decide." Again, respondents see a continued need for services in the future and are planning to provide those services. One organization is planning, however, to enter the arena of "social action."

### Analysis of Question 21

Question number 21 asks, "In your opinion have the activities of your organization had any effect on the Gardner Community?" Eight of the twelve respondents saw their organization as having a positive effect in the Gardner in that they are providing needed services such as day care, library services, financial loans, and teen activities to the community. Of the respondents who stated that their organizations had not had an effect on the community, two of them stated that their organization was still too "new" to have had an effect as yet.

### Analysis of Question 22

Question number 22 asks, "In general how do things get done in (organization), that is, are there some people

who seem to have more influence than others or does everyone seem to have equal influence?" Five respondents felt that some people, such as the "founders" of the organization and those members who happen to be priests have more influence than others. Four respondents felt everyone in their organization has equal influence. Three respondents felt that the influence shifts depending on who has information and the issue at hand. Perhaps one of the reasons that people tend to remain in organizations is because the longer they stay, the more influence they acquire.

#### Analysis of Question 23

Question 23 asks, "How much influence do you feel you have on what gets decided in (organization)?" Four respondents felt they had a lot; four felt they had a moderate amount; three felt they had a little and one stated they did not know. Interestingly enough, three of the four respondents who felt they had "a great deal of influence" were founders of their respective organization and the fourth stated they had been "born into" the organization. Those who had perceived "founders" as having a great deal of influence were most likely correct.

#### Analysis of Question 24

Question 24 asks, "Do you have any ideas on how (organization) could be more effective?" Eight of the

respondents focused on the need for more participation in their organizations by the people of the Gardner. Two respondents felt that paid staff could help make the organization more effective. One respondent stated, "don't know". It is generally acknowledged by the respondents that wide based community participation would make their organization more effective.

#### Analysis of Question 25

Question 25 asks, "How would you describe your role as a member of (organization), that is what are your duties and responsibilities?" Eight of the respondents focused on their duties as "officials" within their organization, that is, decision-making, voting, setting the agenda. The remaining four focused on helping to provide services to the community. All respondents seemed clear about their role within the organization.

#### Analysis of Question 26

Question 26 asks, "Before joining (organization) did you know what you were supposed to do as a member?" Seven respondents stated "yes" and five stated "no". Almost half of the respondents did not know what membership entailed.

### Analysis of Question 27

Question number twenty-seven asks: "In the course of your experience as a member of your organization would you say that you have learned any new things, that is, are there any new things that one had to learn in order to get things done?" Eleven out of the twelve respondents stated that they had learned new things regarding organizational activities. Seven of these respondents pointed to having learned such basic skills as preparing an agenda and following Roberts Rules of Order. Other respondents mentioned having been introduced to budgeting, funding, and proposal writing.

### Analysis of Question 28

Question 28 asks, "How would you describe the extent of your involvement in community affairs before you joined (organization)?" Five respondents stated that they were not previously involved in community affairs; four respondents stated they were very much involved in community affairs; two respondents were somewhat involved and one was almost not involved. For nearly half of the respondents participation in their respective organization was a first time experience for them.

### Analysis of Question 29

Question number twenty-nine asks: "As a result of your experience in your organization would you say that you have become more involved in community affairs, less involved, or has your experience in your organization made no difference?" In response to this question, eight of the twelve respondents stated that they had become more active in community affairs since joining the organization. Of those eight respondents, seven had joined other community organizations.

### Analysis of Question 30

Question 30 states, "Thank you very much. Your opinions have been very valuable to me. Should it be necessary, may I come back and talk to you?" All twelve respondents answered "yes". All of the respondents were eager to share their opinions with me.

### Summary

From the demographic data we can conclude that Mexicans as well as Mexican-Americans participate in community organizations within the Gardner. Age seems to be no barrier to organizational participation since we have an age range of from nineteen to fifty-six years. Ethnic self-identification seems to make no difference in organizational participation.



In an area that is known for the high mobility of its residents, the sample seems to indicate that these respondents have been long-time residents of the Gardner. Perhaps this permanency in the neighborhood creates a sense of attachment and wanting to work toward improving it.

According to the responses to items on the questionnaire the respondents feel that things in general in the Gardner are improving, but that there is a need for more services and a need to find solutions to the problems of the youth in the area. Community grass roots groups were seen as significant in helping to resolve neighborhood problems. Respondents, on the whole, have participated in protests, marches or demonstrations and see these activities as being good for the community. Respondents were either asked to join or they volunteered to join the organization. Parish priests seem to have played a role in recruiting members to the organizations. In general, respondents joined their organization because they "wanted to help" the community. Respondents see their organizations as having a positive effect on the neighborhood. Most all respondents stated that they had learned new organizational skills as a result of their involvement and had also become more active in other organizations.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study indicates that there are Mexican and Mexican-Americans within the Gardner district, who, contrary to the stereotypic characterizations of social science studies, are actively participating in formal voluntary associations. These organizations, some more than ten years in existence, were created to fill a specific need within the Gardner community. It may be that the organizations continue to function because they continue to fill, if not the original need, then certainly a newly identified need. For example, the Biblioteca Latina, in its short existence, has already fulfilled one of its goals, that is, to become part of the city library system. Now the Biblioteca Latina must redefine its goals and therefore, it is presently exploring the possibility of creating a Latino cultural center.

The findings of this study generally concur with Erbe's statement that participation in voluntary organizations is greater among urbanites, those in the prime of life, couples with children, the upwardly mobile, those with residential stability and particularly those with a higher education and a higher socio-economic status. The findings of

the present study show that respondents are urban residents, the average age is 38 and the average length of residency in the Gardner is fifteen years.

As discussed in the Review of Literature, social scientists have tended to describe Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in terms of the concept of the "traditional culture". Traditional cultures are generally characterized as being small, distinctive, homogeneous, self-sufficient and slow-changing. In a sense, the Gardner could be seen as an enclave for traditional culture since it is a fairly small geographical area near downtown San Jose; the neighborhood has its own distinctive character reflecting the predominance of Latino families in the area. The neighborhood can be seen as self-sufficient since within the neighborhood there are a number of agencies, organizations and businesses which provide services to the community.

The Review of the Literature also points to the "Mexican traditional culture" in which strong family ties, the domination of men over women, a "present" rather than "future" orientation and a subjugation to "nature" are the dominant characteristics. The present study shows that only the characteristic of strong family ties can be attributed to the respondents. An analysis of the responses to question 5 of the interview schedule shows that of the three married couples interviewed all participated in at least one organization with their spouse. This would indicate that the

couples share interests and that they spend time together on activities outside the home. Taking into account the sex of each respondent, we find that seven are female. These women are participating in activities outside the home and are holding positions of leadership in their respective organizations and thus do not fit into the male-dominated stereotype of "Mexican traditional culture". An analysis of question 11 indicates that the respondents are working towards change in the Gardner, showing that they are future-oriented and do not feel subjugated to nature.

Most respondents indicated that they had joined their respective organizations because they felt that they wanted to "help the community". The respondents further indicated that community problems were best resolved through community grass roots organizations and the local government. The findings of this investigation show that the respondents identified a variety of problems in the Gardner. By converting these problems into issues, the skillful organizer can initiate the social change process. Findings in this study also show that the respondents belong to other organizations and are thus in contact with a number of other community oriented individuals. The potential for mass based organizing, that is for building an organization of organizations is there.

In conclusion, this investigation shows that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the Gardner belong to formal

voluntary associations. As previously discussed the respondents joined these organizations in order to implement change in the Gardner. The combination of existing organizational membership and the motivation for change as shown by the respondents of this investigation provide the community organizer essential elements for social action in the Gardner.

I would recommend that a rewarding study would be to interview people in the Gardner who have not joined organizations. This information could prove helpful to a community organizer in terms of identifying the individual's self-interest. If a considerable number of respondents indicated that they were afraid to go to night meetings because of the poor street lighting and therefore did not join a given organization, then the community organizer would develop this problem into an issue.

Another rewarding study, in light of the fact that several respondents indicated that a real problem within the Gardner is the "lack of communication" between organizations and the feeling that some "individuals want to divide the community", would be to analyze each community leader's self-interest. In identifying a leader's self-interest you can better understand a given behavior. If a community organizer understands what motivates an individual, he can better re-direct that motivation towards behavior that will help build an organization.

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**APPENDIX**



GARDNER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE:  
ENGLISH VERSION

Interview # \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Respondent's Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Respondent's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Respondent's Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time Start \_\_\_\_\_ Time Finish \_\_\_\_\_ Time Elapsed \_\_\_\_\_

I appreciate your cooperation and the time you are giving me. As I explained earlier, I am conducting a study of some of the organizations in the Gardner area. I am interested in your experiences in your organization. All your answers will be kept strictly confidential; the responses will be compiled statistically and no names or other personal information will appear in the final study. I really appreciate your cooperation.

First of all, I have questionnaires in both Spanish and English. Would you prefer that we talk in

Spanish \_\_\_\_\_ English \_\_\_\_\_

(IF SPANISH, SWITCH TO SPANISH QUESTIONNAIRE)

My questions cover several different kinds of things. It is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to ask me questions at any time. I would like to start by asking a few questions about yourself.

1. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. When were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
3. As I go around talking with people in this community, I find that some people prefer to call themselves:
 

1. Spanish-speaking	5. Mexican-Americans
2. Americans	6. Chicano
3. Latin-Americans	7. DK
4. Mexicans	8. NR

How do you prefer to be identified? \_\_\_\_\_

4. About how long have you lived in the Gardner area? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Besides \_\_\_\_\_ (name of Respondent's organization) are you a member of any other organizations that meet more or less regularly such as societies, clubs, fraternal organizations, educational groups, unions?
  1. yes 2. no 3. DK 4. NR
 (If yes ask A, B, C, D, & E and enter on chart below; if no go to question 6.).

- A. What are the names?
- B. What kind of group is that? (If not clear from name).
- C. About how long have you been a member of (specify all organizations mentioned by respondent).
- D. About how often do you attend the meetings of (specify all organizations mentioned, read choices)
 

1. most of the time	4. not very often
2. sometimes	5. never
- E. Have you ever been an officer in \_\_\_\_\_ (specify for all organizations mentioned).

CHART

Organization #1

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

Organization #2

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

Organization #3

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

Organization #4

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

Now I would like to ask you some questions about the Gardner Community.

6. Do you feel that things in general in the Gardner have changed in the past few years: that is, have they become better or worse, or have they remained the same?
1. things have become better (ask A)
  2. things have remained the same
  3. things have become worse (ask A)
  4. DK
  5. NR

(If changed, "Better" or "Worse") A. In your opinion, what accounts for this change? \_\_\_\_\_

7. As I go around the Gardner Community, some people tell me that there are many problems in this community. In your opinion, do you think there are important problems facing the Gardner Community? (If no, or don't know, ask "even little problems, maybe things you don't pay attention to because you take them for granted?")
1. yes (ask A, B, & C)
  2. no
  3. DK
  4. NR

If yes: A. In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing the Gardner?

Problem #1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Problem #2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Problem #3 \_\_\_\_\_

B. In your opinion, how could these problems be resolved?

Solution to Problem #1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Solution to Problem #2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Solution to Problem #3 \_\_\_\_\_

C. There is much talk about whose responsibility it is to resolve problems of the sort we have just talked about. Which group should have the main responsibility for solving these problems?  
(Read choices and ask for each problem mentioned).

Problem #1 _____	1. The individual and his family
Problem #2 _____	2. The local government
Problem #3 _____	3. The state government
	4. The national government
	5. Community grass roots groups
	6. Private business

8. Over the past few years, do you remember hearing or reading anything about protests, marches, or demonstrations by Mexican-Americans in the San Jose area?

1. yes (ask A, B, and C)
2. no (go to question 9)
3. DK
4. NR

A. In your opinion, why did these protests, marches or demonstrations occur? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Did you attend any of these protests, marches or demonstrations?  
1. yes 2. no 3. DK 4. NR

C. In your opinion, do you think these protests, marches or demonstrations are:

1. good for the community
2. make no difference for the community
3. bad for the community
4. DK
5. NR

Now I would like to ask you some questions specifically about \_\_\_\_\_ (respondent's organization).

9. About how long have you been a member of \_\_\_\_\_?

10. Thinking back, do you remember how you became a member of \_\_\_\_\_, did somebody ask you to join, were you elected, did you volunteer or what?

- |                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. asked to join (ask A) | 4. other (specify) (ask D) |
| 2. elected (ask B)       | 5. DK                      |
| 3. volunteered (ask C)   | 6. NR                      |

(If asked to join) A. Do you recall who asked you to join?  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position in Organization \_\_\_\_\_

(If elected) B. How were you elected? (Probe for procedures followed).  
\_\_\_\_\_

(If volunteered) C. How did you find out about Organization?  
\_\_\_\_\_

(If other) D. Probe for procedures followed in joining.  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Thinking back, do you remember why you wanted to be a member of this organization, that is for what reason did you join?

---

12. About how often would you say that you attend the meetings of \_\_\_\_\_ (read choices).

- |                              |          |
|------------------------------|----------|
| 1. about 25% of the time     | 5. never |
| 2. about 25-50% of the time  | 6. DK    |
| 3. about 50-75% of the time  | 7. NR    |
| 4. about 75-100% of the time |          |

13. How are you notified about meetings?

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. telephone                | 4. other (specify) _____ |
| 2. letter                   | 5. DK                    |
| 3. fixed dates for meetings | 6. NR                    |

14. Have you been involved in any special committees of \_\_\_\_\_?  
1. yes (ask A) 2. no 3. DK 4. NR

(If yes) A. Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Have you ever held any offices in \_\_\_\_\_ organization?  
1. yes (ask A) 2. no 3. DK 4. NR

(If yes) A. Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

16. In your opinion, what are the most important functions or purposes of \_\_\_\_\_?

---

17. In your opinion, how well do you think \_\_\_\_\_ organization is fulfilling its purposes?

- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. very well (ask A)       | 4. not at all well (ask B) |
| 2. moderately well (ask A) | 5. DK                      |
| 3. not very well (ask B)   | 6. NR                      |

(If positive) A. In what ways, can you be a little more specific?

(If neagative) B. Why do you say that, can you be a little more specific?

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18. What kinds of things has \_\_\_\_\_ done in the past?  
(Additional probe: To what types of problems has the organization addressed itself in the past, what have been some of its projects, can you name a few?)

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19. What kinds of things is \_\_\_\_\_ doing now?

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20. What about in the future?

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21. In your opinion have the activities of \_\_\_\_\_ had any effect on the Gardiner community?

1. yes (ask A) 2. no (ask B) 3. DK 4. NR

(If yes) A. In what way?

(If no) B. Why do you say that?

---

---

22. In general, how do things get done in \_\_\_\_\_ organization, that is, are there some people who seem to have more influence than others or does everyone seem to have equal influence?

1. some people seem to have more influence (ask A)
2. it depends (ask A)
3. everyone has equal influence
4. DK
5. NR

A. What kinds of people seem to have more influence? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

23. How much influence do you feel you have on what gets decided in the \_\_\_\_\_ organization? Would you say you have (read choices)

- |                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. a great deal of influence | 4. none at all |
| 2. a moderate amount         | 5. DK          |
| 3. a little                  | 6. NR          |

24. Do you have any ideas on how \_\_\_\_\_ organization could be more effective? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Now I would like to ask you a few more questions about your own role in \_\_\_\_\_ organization.

25. How would you describe your role as a member of \_\_\_\_\_ organization, that is, what are your duties and responsibilities?

---

---

26. Before joining \_\_\_\_\_ organization did you know what your were supposed to do as a member?

1. yes 2. no 3. DK 4. NR

27. In the course of your experience as a member of \_\_\_\_\_ organization would you say that you have learned any new things, that is, are there any new things that one had to learn in order to get things done?

1. yes (ask A) 2. no 3. DK 4. NR

A. What kinds of things would you say you have learned? \_\_\_\_\_

---

28. How would you describe the extent of your involvement in community affairs before you joined \_\_\_\_\_ organization? That is, were you (read choices)

1. deeply involved in community affairs  
2. somewhat involved  
3. almost not involved  
4. completely not involved in community affairs  
5. DK  
6. NR

29. As a result of your experience in \_\_\_\_\_ organization would you say that you have become more involved in community affairs, less involved, or has your experience in \_\_\_\_\_ organization made no difference?

1. more involved (ask A and C)  
2. less involved (ask Why do you say that?)  
3. no difference (ask Why do you say that?)  
4. unable to judge  
5. other  
6. DK  
7. NR

A. Since you became a member of \_\_\_\_\_ organization, have you joined any other community organizations?

1. yes (ask B) 2. no 3. DK 4. NR

(If yes) B. Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

C. Since you became a member of \_\_\_\_\_ organization have you become more active in organizations you already belonged to?

1. yes 2. no 3. DK 4. NR

30. Thank you very much. Your opinions have been very valuable to me. Should it be necessary, may I come back and talk to you?

1. yes 2. no