

**SOCIAL NETWORKS AND PARTICIPATION IN  
THE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER  
OF KNIGHTS LANDING, CALIFORNIA**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper provides a case study of the social and informational networks in Knights Landing, a rural town in California, and describes how residents perceive the community development efforts of the Family Resource Center (FRC), a community-based organization (CBO) that works with Grafton Elementary School. The paper also provides insights into local leadership patterns and ethnic and cultural divisions in rural towns. The study draws on interviews with 10 community residents, including 8 Latinos, 2 Anglos, and 2 youth.

### **Findings: Informational and Social Networks**

#### **Sources of information**

Latino residents find out about events, programs, meetings, and services through Grafton students (they bring flyers home or share information with family), attending FRC and school meetings, people at Grafton Elementary School, word-of-mouth, visual notices (e.g., flyers), FRC staff, and own initiative. Anglo residents cited visual notices (e.g., newspapers, sandwich board), word-of-mouth, and FRC staff. Women were more likely than men to hear about things through the school, visual notices, and FRC staff. Latino residents are more likely to use the school and FRC meetings as information sources because most Grafton students and Community Action meeting attendees are Latino. Most of the participants described themselves as a source of information for their friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. That is, their friends come to them to find out what's going on in town.

#### **Learning about Community Action Meetings**

Two youth and one Anglo resident did not know about Community Action Meetings sponsored by the FRC. Those who knew about the meetings heard about them through phone calls from the school's parent liaison, flyers, FRC staff, and their own initiative. Since so few Anglo students (11%) attend Grafton, phone calls to parents reach mostly Latinos. This means that to increase Anglo participation in Community Action Meetings, staff need to use a different set of communication and outreach strategies.

#### **Other social groups in Knights Landing**

One of the interviewees identified some of the social groups (primarily Anglo) in Knights Landing. To reach the broader community, the FRC could share information with these groups. These groups include: a Protestant church prayer chain, a group of male farmers that meets at the grocery store every morning, the Senior Center

daily lunch, the Garden Club, a social club of farmers' wives, a women's card game club, a Little League baseball group, residents living in a trailer park, and people who socialize at a bar and the boat yard.

### **Social networks**

Social networks describe the way people are connected to each other. Participants' social networks were quite homogeneous in terms of gender, ethnicity, and social class. People tended to communicate most with people who were similar to them in identity and life circumstances, with a few exceptions (i.e., people who communicated regularly across gender, ethnic, geographical, and class boundaries).

Other than immediate and extended family members, Latino adults tended to communicate primarily with people of the same sex—women with women and men with men. However, the two Latino youth talked to male *and* female friends. This suggests that cultural ideas about appropriate interaction between men and women shape how information is spread, and that age and acculturation to the U.S. may mediate communication practices.

## **Findings: Participation in Knights Landing, Grafton, and the FRC**

### **Participation in community groups**

Respondents participated actively in Grafton Elementary School, FRC activities, and the Knights Landing community. On average, Latinos participated in 5 groups or events (e.g., work days, planning groups, meetings, church). The two Anglo respondents participated in an average of 4.5 groups or events. Women tended to participate in more activities than men, which is consistent with women's common roles as community managers and family educators. Youth noted that participating in the youth club helped them express their ideas and made them feel happy.

### **Reasons for community participation**

The three main reasons people gave for participating in community projects were to help their children and family, to contribute to the community's well-being, and to relieve boredom. Residents saw participation in community projects as a way to help their children and families have a better life. Interviewees generally described their community work as rewarding and fun.

## **Reasons people don't participate in FRC projects and meetings**

Interviewees believed that other people in Knights Landing don't participate in FRC projects and meetings because of *life circumstances* (e.g., lack of transportation, farm workers' heavy workload, a sense of shame related to poverty), a *lack of motivation or interest* in improving the community (e.g., people won't work unless there's something in it for them), and *gender roles* (e.g., activities related to children's education are considered women's responsibility).

## **Ways to increase participation in Community Action Meetings and community projects**

### *Address or correct community residents' perceptions of the FRC*

Interviewees identified some perceptions that shaped how they or other community residents *viewed* the FRC and the clinic, and whether or not they *participated* in meetings and projects or *utilized* FRC services.

Regardless of their accuracy, the following perceptions influence how likely residents were to interact with and trust the FRC:

- 1) Three interviewees wanted the FRC to explain why a beloved staff person no longer worked at the FRC. Latino parents were upset because they were never told why s/he left, which damaged their trust in the FRC. They wanted to be informed of personnel changes.
- 2) Two women shared their and their friends' concern that "this clinic will be just like the last one." (They complained that the previous clinic had inconvenient hours and personnel problems.) The FRC should tell community residents and demonstrate that this clinic is better than the last one (e.g., services, staff, convenience).
- 3) Another resident wondered, "Why do you have to do another needs assessment to figure out what the problems in the community are?" S/he believed that some needs were obvious and that despite all of the previous needs assessments, nothing had changed.
- 4) A resident stated that Anglo residents and Latinos who do not send their children to Grafton believe the FRC is more school-centered than community-centered. They think FRC projects primarily benefit families who

send their children to Grafton. The location of the FRC and its projects on school property reinforces this perception.

- 5) A resident was invited to participate in a focus group to plan a project supported but not initiated by the FRC. S/he noted that the group seemed to have already decided what kind of services they would offer. S/he wondered, “Why participate if it’s already been decided what they’ll offer?”

#### *Provide visual and auditory information*

These suggestions include public service announcements on Spanish TV and radio stations, notices in P.O. boxes, large eye-catching posters and flyers, regular flyers with the clinic schedule, church bulletin announcements, and stating on flyers that it’s important to attend.

#### *Provide verbal, personal information*

Interviewees suggested that FRC staff or community residents could go house to house, call people, drop by regular gatherings (e.g., Senior lunch) to make announcements, encourage parents and people who attend meetings and youth to tell others, have a party to inaugurate the clinic, and tell youth to come learn more about their community.

#### *Provide food*

Having a potluck or providing other food would attract people. Interviewees enjoyed the previous potlucks at Community Action Meetings. State that food will be provided.

#### **Suggestions for improving Community Action Meetings**

Six people felt that the meetings were fine. Suggestions included keeping the meetings short; not repeating the same things from one meeting to the next; find out what the school district *will* approve rather than asking what people want, only to inform them that it can’t be done; providing food; give people more time to express themselves and ask what they need; and invite representatives of Anglo community groups to make a brief presentation.

#### **Ways to encourage people to share their opinions and ideas in meetings**

Two respondents noted no problems in this area. Some people suggested giving people “the confidence to speak,” since they are timid and are afraid of what people might think. People need time and encouragement to

share their ideas and ask questions. Tell them that they have the right to express their opinions. Most participants believed that my suggestions (small groups, written comments, ice breakers) would be effective ways to elicit opinions.

## **Other Findings**

### **Leadership**

The FRC should recognize the ways in which community residents are *already* acting as leaders. Whether or not they perceived themselves as leaders, most of the interviewees took action to solve community problems and motivated others to do so as well. For example, a Latina woman accompanied five mothers of Grafton children to demand that the school district superintendent reinstate the afternoon school bus. Because this woman is not one of the “usual suspects” that the FRC asks to plan projects, her potential may be overlooked. Other untapped leaders include an Anglo interviewee with interests in landscaping and theatre.

Burn-out hinders community participation and leadership. A resident explained that she and her husband felt she was spending too much time on community projects and not enough time with their family. She felt a great deal of pressure because many community activities fell on her. She endured criticism, rumors, gossip, and name-calling. An FRC staff person noted that in the local leadership pattern, people who take initiative are harshly criticized. Others are reluctant to take initiative because they fear the same thing will happen to them.

### **Ethnic and Cultural Divisions**

In community meetings, Latino residents have called the town *dividido*—racially divided. Three Anglo and Latino interviewees commented on the ethnic and cultural divisions and tension in the town. One person observed that many Anglo residents remember the “old” Knights Landing, a prosperous town with oak-lined streets that was inhabited primarily by Anglo-Europeans. Another person commented, “It’s hard to put the two elements of the town together.” A long-time Latina resident described in detail her experience of racism, exclusion, and rejection. She believed that most of the older Anglo residents weren’t interested in participating in FRC projects.

The loss of economic vitality, the increase of ethnic and cultural tension, and the experience of racism decrease the willingness of Latinos and Anglos to participate in FRC projects. With some notable exceptions, FRC efforts

to involve non-Grafton residents in FRC projects have met with little success. To move forward, residents must have the capacity to envision a community that includes Anglos, Latinos, and newcomers.

## **Recommendations**

### **Publicity and outreach regarding projects and meetings**

- 1) Identify a group of “town criers” (people at the center of a social network) to relay information to a wide group of people. The FRC would ask the town criers to relay messages to their circle of contacts. This would build on and formalize the ways residents already share information, and ensure that information reaches all segments of the community.
- 2) The homogeneity of Knights Landing’s social networks means that the FRC needs to (a) identify *individuals* with many connections to the social groups it wants to reach (e.g., Anglo families, Latino farm workers) and (2) use distinct *strategies* to reach them.
- 3) Create a forum in which local residents can meet and talk to the representatives of different community groups and organizations in Knights Landing. This would expand residents’ knowledge of their community and expose community leaders to the FRC.

### **Leadership development**

- 1) The FRC should build on the leadership capacities that people *already* exhibit, even if they do not see themselves as “leaders” *per se*. Identify people who would not normally step forward (e.g., women, youth), but who have a passion for improving their community.
- 2) Alleviate leaders’ burn-out and find ways to support them so that they do not feel alone and unequipped (e.g., co-leadership positions, training). Publicly dispel rumors about project leaders and protect them from unwarranted criticism.

### **Public perceptions of the FRC**

- 1) Whenever possible, give residents advanced notice of staff changes and explain the factors that shape personnel decisions (e.g., funding). Make personnel decisions as transparent as possible, while protecting privacy and confidentiality.



- 2) Ensure that the FRC tries to solve problems that affect the broader community, as well as school families (i.e., low-income residents, Latinos). Strive to convince Anglo residents that its work affects *their* future and quality of life.
- 3) Emphasize that this clinic is different than the last one (e.g., schedule, quality of services, wait time, responsiveness) in oral and written public information about the FRC.

### **Framing community involvement**

For Latinos in particular, frame community involvement as a way to help your family and create better opportunities for your children. This builds on the value of *familismo* (familism), which emphasizes fulfilling family duties and remaining loyal to the family (i.e., the primacy of the group rather than the individual). However, “family” should be broadly defined.

### **Expressing opinions in meetings**

Give people multiple ways to express themselves in meetings. Staff can allay participants’ fears of ridicule and encourage timid participants to share ideas through anonymous written comments and questions, small group discussions, icebreakers, giving adequate time for asking questions and making comments, eliciting and welcoming all ideas, avoiding public correction or criticism of individuals, and so forth.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a case study of the social and informational networks in Knights Landing, a rural town in California, and describes how residents perceive the community development efforts of the Family Resource Center (FRC), a community-based organization (CBO) that works with a school. The paper also provides insights into local leadership patterns and ethnic and cultural divisions in rural towns. This research confirms many of the findings of a recent study on Latino community involvement in California (*Youth* September 2003).

Knights Landing, an unincorporated rural village of approximately 1,800 residents, is located in metropolitan Yolo County, 20 miles north of Davis. Conditions in Knights Landing mirror those of rural areas in the U.S., including loss of employment (McGranahan 2003), changing ethnic composition (Saenz and Torres 2003), school consolidation (Lyson 2002), deterioration of buildings and public spaces, and disparities in access to technology, health care, transportation, housing, and education. Knights Landing's population has shifted from an Anglo to a Latino majority (59%), most of whom are Chicanos and Mexican immigrants employed by farms, canneries, and warehouses. According to the 2000 Census, 43% of the families lived below the poverty level. Racial and ethnic tension and inequality also characterize the town. The school principal is Latino and many Latino residents plan and participate in community projects, yet the official decision-making bodies are comprised of Anglo residents. Chávez (2002) found that because Anglo residents tended to define community participation as involvement in formal organizations, they tended to ignore or dismiss Latino residents' *informal* participation in soccer leagues, Mexican cultural celebrations, and the like. Despite these obstacles, Latino residents and some Anglo residents have implemented or participated in numerous community improvement efforts through the FRC.

Grafton Elementary School is a key institution in Knights Landing and a site for community development (Miller 1995). The school serves 141 K-6 students, 100% of whom qualify for free or reduced lunch. In 1998 the school received a Distinguished School Award from the California Department of Education, in part because of its community involvement efforts and collaboration with the University of California, Davis (UCD). In 2002-03, the school's ethnic composition was 89% minority and 11% Anglo. 82% of the students were Latino, compared to 32% in 1967. In 2003, the parents of 17 Anglo children transferred them to a school in a nearby district, contributing to the school's segregation.

Since 1997, UCD faculty, staff, and students have worked with leaders and residents in Knights Landing to plan and implement community development projects. UCD's partners are Grafton Elementary School and the FRC. Projects have included park and playground planning and landscaping, adult and computer education, youth development, two murals, a school garden, a seat wall, and others. The participatory planning of Healthy Start (1999-2001) entailed raising funds to build the FRC to house a health clinic, counseling center, and Healthy Start offices.<sup>1</sup> The FRC, which opened in the summer of 2003, offers health and social services such as health insurance enrollment, individual and family counseling, information and referrals for needed services, and support for domestic violence victims. The FRC supports school instruction through mentoring and after-school programs, and oversees and supports community projects such as park planning. Community residents inform the FRC's work primarily through monthly Community Action Meetings and project planning committees. FRC staff have struggled to increase Anglo residents' participation and support for Grafton and FRC projects. In the summer of 2003, FRC staff and I identified strategies to let community residents know that the FRC's health clinic was going to open. (As a post-doctoral researcher at UCD, I was helping FRC staff understand how to foster residents' participation in community development projects.) However, at the next Community Action Meeting staff were surprised to hear that, despite their outreach efforts, several people did not know the clinic had opened. Since the FRC Director had asked me to be the "point person" for community participation, I agreed to interview residents to learn about residents' (1) social and informational networks, (2) perceptions of the FRC and Community Action Meetings, and (3) suggestions for increasing participation in FRC projects and meetings (see Appendix A).

In the fall of 2003, I interviewed ten Knights Landing residents.<sup>2</sup> FRC staff suggested potential interviewees. I used maximum variation sampling to select women and men of different ethnicities, languages, ages, social classes, degrees of participation in FRC projects, and geographical location (see Table 1). I conducted interviews with Latino residents in Spanish. I took extensive notes and wrote a summary after the interview. Quotations are close paraphrases. All names are pseudonyms.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Interview Sample**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Women (n=6)</b>	<b>Men (n=4)</b>
Latino/a	5	3
<i>Born in U.S.</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>&gt;7 years in U.S.</i>	<i>2 (4 &amp; 6 yrs.)</i>	<i>1 (6 yrs.)</i>
<i>&lt;7 years in U.S.</i>	<i>2 (≥17 &amp; 23 yrs.)</i>	<i>1 (22 yrs.)</i>
Anglo	1	1
Working class (adults)	3	2
Middle class (adults)	2	1
Youth	1	1
Adults (children at home)	4	2
Adults (grown children)	1	1
Low/medium participation in FRC	1	1
High participation in FRC	5	3

**FINDINGS: SOCIAL AND INFORMATION NETWORKS**

**How do Knights Landing residents hear about what's going on in town (e.g., meetings, services, projects, events)?**

Latino residents cited the following sources of information, in order of frequency (Table 2): Grafton students, attending meetings, Grafton Elementary School, word-of-mouth, visual notices, and FRC staff. Anglo residents cited visual notices, word-of-mouth, and FRC staff.

**Table 2: Sources of Information**

<b>Source of information</b>	<b>Latinos (n=8)</b>		<b>Anglos (n=2)</b>	
	<i>Women (n=5)</i>	<i>Men (n=3)</i>	<i>Women (n=1)</i>	<i>Men (n=1)</i>
Grafton students (5)	3	2		
Attending meetings (5)	3	2		
Visual notices (4)	2		1	1
Word of mouth (4)	1	1	1	1
Grafton (3)	3			
FRC staff (2)	1		1	
Own initiative (1)	1			
Participant tells others (8)	4	3	1	

- **Grafton students:** Latino residents (adults and youth) receive information from flyers that children bring home with them from school. These children are either residents' sons and daughters or their younger siblings. A parent commented, "*Funciona bien, pero a veces se les olvida.*" [It works well, but sometimes (the children) forget.]<sup>3</sup>

"*Mandan información con mi hija. Ella la guarda en la mochila y me la da.*" [They send information with my daughter. She puts it in her backpack and gives it to me.]

"We [youth] go to play football or soccer in the park and the Grafton kids come and tell us. They sometimes have flyers from school....My little brother goes to Grafton and he tells me stuff."

- **Attending meetings:** Adult Latino residents learn information through Community Action and Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) meetings. One woman also mentioned the park planning meetings. "*Fue hasta la conferencia del miércoles que me enteré de los programas del centro.*" [It wasn't until Wednesday's Community Action Meeting that I learned about the FRC's programs.] She added that she had gotten papers for medical insurance for her kids, but didn't know how to fill them out. At the Community Action Meeting, she learned that she could get help filling them out.
- **Visual notices:** Latino and Anglo adults received information primarily through visual notices such as flyers in the grocery store and the Post Office bulletin board, two newspapers, and billboards along the State Route that goes through town (e.g., a sandwich board).
- **Word of mouth:** Regardless of age, ethnicity, or gender, residents heard about things from other people. These included people they met at Community Action and PTC meetings, spouses, church, neighbors, friends, and KLU Club (youth club) members.
- **Grafton Elementary School:** Several women heard information directly from Grafton because they work there, talk to other parents when they drop off children, or ask school staff questions.  

"*Cuando [la madre] va a la escuela a dejar a los hijos ella se comunica entre los padres de familia.*" [When (their mother) goes to school to drop off the children she communicates with the other parents.]
- **FRC staff:** Two people received information directly from FRC staff through phone calls, invitations, or meetings. Both people regularly see staff at meetings.
- **Own initiative:** One woman took the initiative to inquire about the WIC (Women, Infants, Children) program by calling their office. She then spread the word to others. She "called WIC directly" and found out

that they're coming to the clinic in November. She commented, "*Ya corrimos la voz.*" [We already spread the word.]

In addition, many of the participants described themselves as a source of information for their friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. For example, a couple talks to the other families who live on the farm where they work about events and meetings. These Latino families send their children to Grafton. Another person noted:

*"[Se enteran de lo que está pasando] por mi. Yo les comunico. Me vienen a mí y me dicen, '¿Cuándo va a haber una junta?' "* [(They find out about what's happening) through me. I tell them. They come to me and say, "When will there be a meeting?"]

However, sharing information with neighbors also had consequences. A man commented, "*Me han regañado por decirles lo que está pasando en la comunidad.*" [They've scolded me for telling them what's happening in the community.] The neighbors told him not to tell them anymore what's going on. (He supposed that they have had problems with the school and harbored bad feelings.)

Latino residents were more likely to hear about things through Grafton students, Grafton staff, and attending meetings. Anglo residents were more likely to hear about things through visual notices. All participants relied on word-of-mouth. Women were more likely than men to hear about things through Grafton, visual notices, and FRC staff. Latino residents' use of Grafton and meetings as information sources reflects the Latino composition of the school and Community Action Meetings. Furthermore, since Latina women tend to have primary responsibility for their children's education, they are more likely to take them to and from school and communicate with school staff. Therefore, they have a closer connection with Grafton.

### **How do residents hear about Community Action Meetings?**

Two youth and one Anglo resident did not know about Community Action Meetings. Those who knew about the meetings heard about them through phone calls from the school's parent liaison, flyers, FRC staff, and their own initiative (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Sources of Information for Community Action Meetings**

Source of information	Latinos (n=8)		Anglos (n=2)	
	Women (n=5)	Men (n=3)	Women (n=1)	Men (n=1)
Parent liaison calls (5)	3	2		
Flyers (3)	2		1	
FRC staff (2)	1		1	
Own initiative (1)	1			
Doesn't know about them (3)	1		1	1

- Doesn't know about them:** A resident noted that her female Anglo neighbor had not heard about the FRC or Community Action Meetings. She had seen a flyer about the FRC, but didn't think it applied to her because it mentioned health services and she sends her daughter to school in another town. This suggests that current forms of outreach about Community Action Meetings are not reaching youth and Anglo residents.
- Calls from the parent liaison:** A day before the Community Action Meeting, the liaison calls Grafton parents (primarily women) who attend meetings regularly. If she has time, she calls parents who are less involved.

*“Graciela llama a los mas involucrados, los que mas acuden a las conferencias [juntas].” [Graciela calls those who are most involved, those who attend meetings most often.]*
- Flyers:** Flyers include those that Grafton children give to their parents and flyers that are posted at the Plug 'n Jug bulletin board and the library. Several people noted that children don't always give the flyers to their parents, so this isn't the most reliable source of information.
- FRC staff:** One person heard about meetings directly from the Director and another noted that an FRC staff person called with announcements for the church bulletin.
- Own initiative:** A Latina woman took the initiative to find out when meetings were held. She also asked people at the school when the meeting would be held.

*“Tengo en mente que siempre es los miércoles.” [I keep in mind that it's always on Wednesday.]*

Since so few Anglo students (16) attend Grafton, phone calls to parents reach mostly Latinos. This means that if the FRC wants to increase Anglo participation in Community Action Meetings, staff will need to use a different set of communication and outreach strategies.

### **Which other social groups exist in Knights Landing?**

One of the interviewees identified some of the social groups (primarily Anglo) in Knights Landing. The list provides a partial map of the Anglo social networks in this rural town. These are groups with whom the FRC could share information.

- The prayer chain of the United Methodist Church is comprised primarily of elderly women.
- A group of male farmers meets at the grocery store at 6 a.m. every morning for coffee. These men and their wives also go out for dinner a couple times a year.
- The Senior Center has a 12 p.m. lunch every day in the community room. About 6-8 residents attend the lunches. The senior lunch is a time when people talk and share information.
- The Garden Club, which includes people from a nearby town, meets once a month at the United Methodist Church.
- The Priscilla Club is a social club of farmers' wives. They have lunch together and award scholarships for students.
- The women's card game club meets to play games like bunko and bridge.
- The Little League baseball group operates out of Sutter County and the Robbins area.
- Some residents live in trailers north of town.
- People socialize at a bar on the river and the boat yard next to the river.

### **What kinds of social networks exist in Knights Landing?**

**(With whom do residents share information?)**

Social networks describe the way people are connected to each other. I wanted to understand the social and informational networks in Knights Landing because I believed this information would allow the FRC to develop more effective outreach methods. Granovetter (1982) suggests that information and resources spread most rapidly through "weak ties" such as acquaintances, whereas "strong ties" keep information and resources within a tight-knit, closed group. People who have multiple weak ties that span boundaries such as gender, ethnicity, location, and language can spread information very effectively.

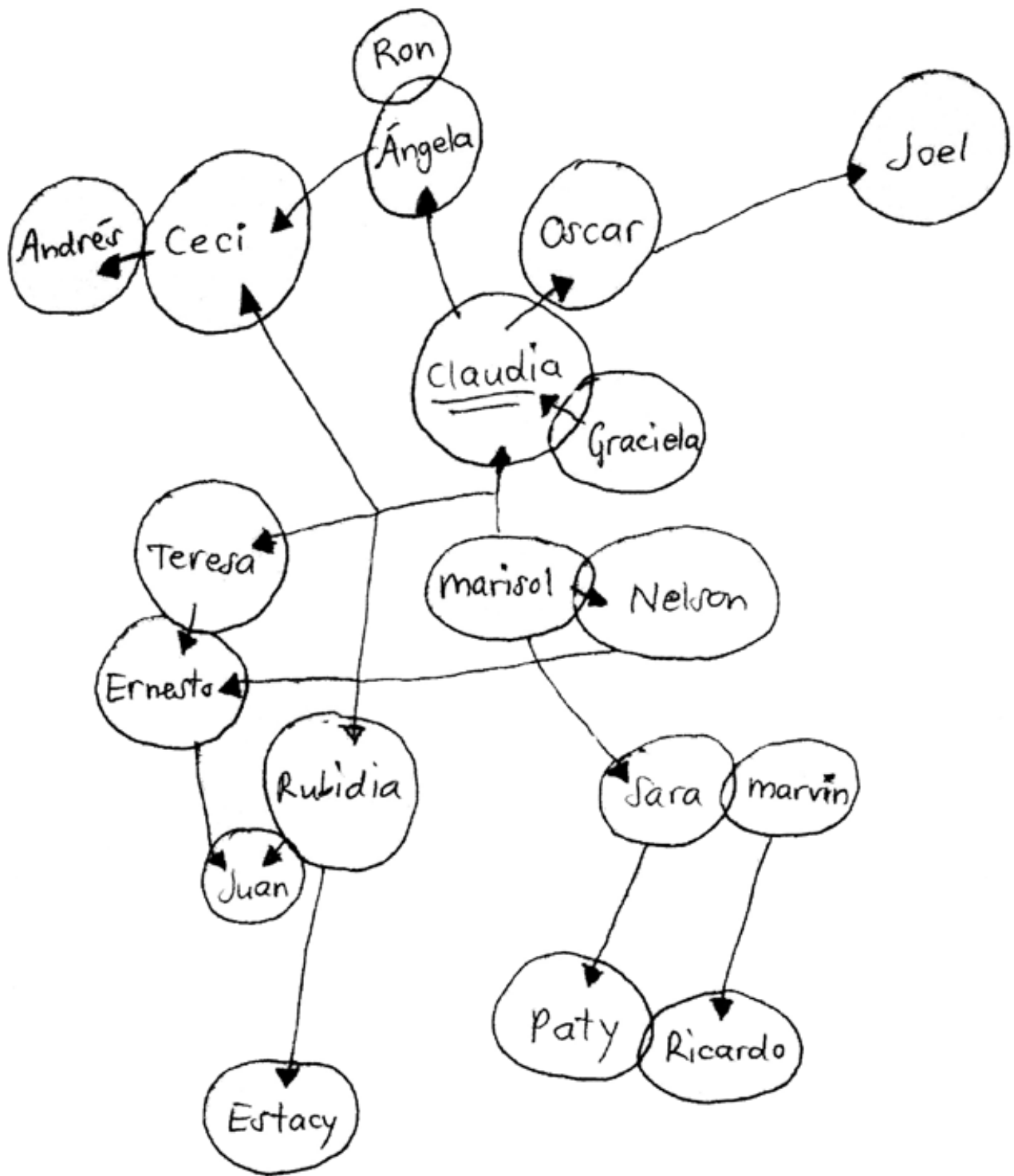


I asked interviewees to draw diagrams of their social networks, showing the individuals and groups with whom they share information (see Figure 1). The distance between the circles represents the frequency of contact. I noted the following patterns in the social networks:

- Social networks were quite homogeneous in terms of gender, ethnicity, and social class. People tended to communicate most with people who were similar to them in identity and life circumstances. For example, Latina farmworker women tend to communicate with women in similar situations; Latinos who sent their kids to Grafton tended to communicate with each other. The exceptions included a professional Anglo woman who communicated regularly with Anglos and Latinos, women and men, and people in several towns; a Spanish-speaking woman who asked her bilingual son to give information to their English-speaking female neighbor; and an Anglo man who knew few people in Knights Landing because he worked, attended church, and participated in other activities in two nearby towns.
- All participants identified their spouses and/or immediate family members among their most frequent contacts. Most of the contact was between wife and husband or between mother and children (e.g., two youth and several adult men noted that they communicated regularly with their mothers, but did not mention their fathers, even if he was living).
- Other than immediate and extended family members, Latino adults tended to communicate primarily with people of the same sex—women with women and men with men. However, the two Latino youth had both male and female friends. This suggests that cultural ideas about appropriate interaction between men and women shape how information is spread.
- Outside of family, participants identified the following individuals or groups in their networks:
  - Latinos/as:
    - Former female co-workers, who then communicate with their husbands
    - Male co-workers (most worked in agriculture and warehouses)
    - Neighbors
    - People involved in the catechism class at the Catholic Church
    - Women who ride the bus on Tuesdays and Friday to do errands in the nearby town
    - Grafton parents (women or men) and students (older children and those who work in the school garden)
    - FRC staff

- Youth communicated with friends from school (located in a nearby town) who live in Knights Landing
- Anglos
  - Co-workers and work-related colleagues outside of Knights Landing
  - Members of hobby groups outside of Knights Landing
  - Mormon Church in Woodland (but some members live in Knights Landing)
  - Protestant Church in Knights Landing
  - FRC staff
  - Friends in Knights Landing (professional, higher educational level)
  - Neighbors
- The following are some examples of information networks:
  - Claudia (see Figure 1) finds out about meetings and events from the parent liaison and then tells her husband (Oscar) and five female friends (former co-workers), who then tell their husbands. Those men then tell their male co-workers. Because of overlapping connections, some of the men hear about things both from their co-workers and their wives. This is a Latino, working-class network (agriculture, service industries) on the northern outskirts of town. This network also included an Anglo English-speaking woman neighbor with whom the interviewee communicated via her bilingual son.

Figure 1: Example of Social Network Diagram



- A Latino youth talks to his mother and “tells her what’s going on here....I come home and tell her what we did at the meeting, or she’ll ask me what we did. Then I tell the KLU Club members who are absent what we talked about. I see them at school or on the bus. We ride to school together.”
  
- A Latino man receives news from Grafton Elementary. He then tells his wife, the fathers he knows, and co-workers in agriculture, in that order. Less frequent contacts included a Latino man who lives in Knights Landing and 3 Latino families who send their children to Grafton (the 3 men are brothers or cousins).
  
- An Anglo woman most frequently shares information with her husband, church members, and family members. Other contacts included FRC staff, work colleagues, acquaintances in Knights Landing (4 women—3 Anglo, 1 Latina). Less frequent contacts include a male Latino colleague, a male Anglo neighbor, and a female, Latina neighbor.

**FINDINGS: PARTICIPATION IN KNIGHTS LANDING, GRAFTON, AND THE FRC**

**IN WHICH COMMUNITY GROUPS OR PROJECTS DO INTERVIEWEES PARTICIPATE?**

As Table 4 shows, respondents participate actively in Grafton, FRC activities, and the Knights Landing community. On average, Latinos participated in nearly 5 groups or events. The two Anglo respondents participated in an average of 4.5 events. Women tended to participate in more activities than men, which is consistent with women’s roles as community managers and family educators. Respondents spoke enthusiastically about their participation in community projects such as the park and Healthy Start planning. They were proud of what they had accomplished.

I also asked the youth respondents what they liked most about being in the KLU Club. One person said, “It makes me happy because they need us to make suggestions for helping the community.” Another noted, “It brought me out of my shell....I express myself more often....I used to be really quiet....I started to share my ideas. [That happened because] I know everyone in the group. I guess I thought to myself, ‘I know them, why be quiet?’ So I shared my ideas.”

**Table 4: Participation in the FRC, Grafton, and Knights Landing or Other Communities**

Form of participation	Women (n=6)		Men (n=4)	
	Anglo (n=1) (6)	Latina (n=5) (avg. = 4.8)	Anglo (n=1) (3)	Latino (n=3) (avg. = 4.7)
<b>FRC-related events</b>				
Community Action Meetings	1	4		2
Park work days		3		2
Park planning meetings		2		1
Fundraisers (e.g., soccer tournament) <sup>4</sup>		2		1
Mentor program		1		1
KLU Club meetings		1		1
Children involved in park project		1		
After-school program				1
Child care planning group	1			
KLU Club service (seat wall, bus barn, park, mural) <sup>5</sup>		1		
Rural Action Board	1			
<b>School-related events</b>				
PTC meetings		4		2
Volunteers at school <sup>6</sup>		1		1
School garden		1		
<b>Other community events</b>				
Church events <sup>7</sup>	1	2		1
Soccer league		1		1
4-H (previously)	1			
Community Center <sup>8</sup>	1			
No groups in KL, but involved in groups outside KL (church, singing groups, Lions Club)			1	

**Why do people decide to participate in community projects or the FRC?**

The three main reasons people gave for participating in community projects were to help their children and family, to contribute to the community’s well-being, and to relieve boredom. One of the primary motivations for community involvement was the desire to contribute to their children’s and family’s well-being. Residents saw participation in community projects as a way to help their children and families have a better life. For instance, a Latina woman decided to attend Healthy Start planning meetings several years ago “*más que nada por mis hijos. Me interesa el bienestar de mi familia, mis hijos.*” [More than anything because of my children. I care about the well-being of my family, my children.] She also considered attending the FRC parenting group

because, “*Quiero mejorar la comunicación con mis hijos.*” [I want to improve the communication with my children.]” Another Latina woman recalled:

*Cuando mis hijos eran chiquitos yo me involucraba bastante en la escuela. A veces no se portaban bien en la clase, pero cambiaron las cosas cuando yo venía....También comencé a tomar clases en el colegio....Mis hijos sintieron que tenían que ir a la escuela....*[She was an example for them because she was studying, too.] *No cuesta ningún trabajo venir a la escuela. Es algo hasta divertido.* [When my children were little I was quite involved in the school. Sometimes they didn’t behave well in class, but things changed when I came to school....I also started taking community college classes....My children felt that they had to go to school....It’s not hard to come to (volunteer) at the school. It’s even fun.]

A Latina woman participated in projects both for her *family* and for the *community*. She said:

*Soy madre de familia—es mi responsabilidad cooperar y ser miembro de la comunidad. [Participo] para que la comunidad prospere y pueda lograr algo mejor.* [I’m a mother—it’s my responsibility to cooperate and be a member of the community. (I participate) so that the community can prosper and achieve something better.]

Another motivation was to help the community and respond to its needs. A Latina woman commented:

*Veo la necesidad y por eso me envuelvo....Veo la necesidad de informarles de todo lo que está pasando....Quiero hacer algo para el bien de la comunidad.* [I see the need and that’s why I get involved....I see the need to inform people of all that’s happening....I want to do it for the good of the community.]

A Latino man started helping in the classroom a few years ago and began attending meetings and participated in events to raise money for the park project. Another Latino man stated,

*Me motivó en ayudar a los niños y ver a la comunidad más unidos...Me gusta ver a la comunidad más en armonía, menos divisiones.*

[I was motivated by helping my children and seeing the community be more united....I like to see the community have more harmony, fewer divisions.]

A Latina youth said that she “never got to find out stuff; I wanted to figure out more about my community. I’m just here in the house, bored, [so I decided to come].”

Some people, like this young woman, got involved in community projects to relieve boredom. For example, a young man said that he got bored staying at home and watching TV. His mother also encouraged him to get out of the house more often. A man who could no longer work due to a workplace injury commented:

*Estaba en casa y dije, ‘Mejor vengo a hacer algo para la comunidad.’ ...Se enfada uno estar en la casa.*

[I was at home and I said, “I’m better off doing something for the community. You get irritated/bored being in the house.]

He is now one of the most active volunteers at the FRC and the school. Interviewees generally described their community work as very rewarding. For example, one woman stated she did not expect anything in return for her community work. She did it gladly for no pay. Her reward was “*ver las sonrisas de los niños cuando están jugando*” [to see the smiles of children when they’re playing] on the playground. Another woman described working at the school as fun.

### **Why don’t residents participate in FRC projects or attend meetings?**

Interviewees shared many ideas about why Knights Landing residents do not attend meetings and participate in projects. The reasons had to do with life circumstances such as lack of transportation, a heavy workload (especially farm workers), and a sense of shame:

*“Algunos vienen cansados de trabajar.”* [Some people come home tired from working.]

*“Antes [yo] no podía asistir por la falta de transporte.”* [Before I couldn’t attend because of the lack of transportation.] (She didn’t know how to drive.) Referring to a specific woman she knows who can’t attend meetings because she doesn’t drive, she said, “*la que no maneja no acude.*” [She who doesn’t drive doesn’t attend.]

A woman encouraged people to attend PTC and Community Action Meetings, but some responded,

*“Nos da vergüenza venir gente bien trajiada [mal vestido, humilde].”* [We’re ashamed to come because we’re poor/poorly dressed.] She commented, “*Se sienten trajados, humildes...hasta comer en frente de otras*

*personas.*” [They feel poorly dressed, poor/modest...even to eat in front of other people.]

Some interviewees attributed non-participation to a lack of motivation or interest

*“Algunos lo ven de diferente manera. No les interesa. No sé porque....Y algunos por flojero no salen de la casa....Se entierran en la casa y no salen para nada....’Ya no quiero ayudar en la escuela,’ dicen algunos. Yo les digo, ‘Piensen en sus hijos. Si ustedes vienen a la escuela a ayudar, van a ser un ejemplo para ellos. Se animan a seguir en la escuela.’”* [Some people see it differently. They’re not interested. I don’t know why....And some don’t leave the house because they’re lazy....They bury themselves in the house and don’t leave for anything.... Some say, “I don’t want to help at the school anymore.” I tell them, “Think about your children. If you come to school to help you’ll be an example for them. They’ll be motivated to continue in school.”]

*“Les falta interés. Se enfocan más en trabajar que en saber como es que están sus hijos en la escuela y que necesitan.”* [They’re not interested. They focus more on working than on knowing how their children are doing in school and what they need.]

*“La gente a veces tiene la información, pero piensan que no pertenecen en participar. “Piensan que es obligación de la escuela.”* [Sometimes people have information, but they think that it doesn’t pertain to them. They think it’s an obligation of the school.]

“People in Knights Landing don’t participate unless there’s something in it for them,” with a few exceptions of people who always pitch in. This person thought maybe it was because people are working so hard and making so little money.

*“Mucha gente quiere trabajar para recibir.”* [A lot of people want to work in order to receive.]

Gender roles also affected who participated in community meetings and projects, especially those related to the school. For instance, a woman noted, *“Las mujeres son las que asisten mas. Así es en México, también....Los padres no les gusta involucrarse en lo de la escuela. En mi familia también, yo soy la más preocupada [por la educación de mis hijos]. Les animo. Hablo con ellos. El papá casi no.”* [Women attend meetings the most. It’s like that in Mexico, too. Fathers don’t really like to get involved in school-related things. In my family too, I’m



the one who's most concerned (about my children's education). I encourage them. I talk to them. Their father hardly does.]

**What could the FRC do to encourage more participation in  
Community Action Meetings and community projects?**

**Address perceptions of the FRC**

Interviewees identified a number of perceptions (their own or those they heard others express) that shaped how people *view* the FRC and the clinic, and whether or not they *participate* in meetings and projects or *utilize* FRC services. The FRC can increase participation by understanding and addressing these perceptions. The accuracy of these perceptions is not the issue. The point is that deeply held perceptions have real consequences because they influence how residents interact with each other and community-based organizations.

Three Latino residents commented that the FRC should tell people what happened with a staff member who no longer works there. One person commented:

*Deben de informar del personal que se fue [Liliana]...Ella daba todo por la comunidad." No nos informaron nada—si renunció, si la despidieron, o que. Fue muy activa en la comunidad. Quiero que nos informen que es lo que pasó a ella. Por ejemplo, con Raymundo nos han dicho que tiene 6 semanas porque se va a acabar el dinero. Nos hicieron saber. Liliana fue una persona muy servicial. Jamás lo han mencionado en una junta. Yo anduve investigando, hablando con varias personas, y me dijeron que se acabaron los fondos. Pero ahora hay 3 personas haciendo el trabajo que ella hacía. Que nos informen que es lo que pasó a ella....Cuando un personal se va, avisarnos que fue lo que pasó y que fue de él. [They should tell us what happened with the staff person who left (Liliana). She gave everything for the community. They didn't tell us anything—if she resigned, if they fired her, or what. She was very active in the community. I want (the FRC) to tell us what happened to her. For example, with Raymundo they've told us that he has (at the time) 6 weeks before the money is gone. They let us know. Liliana was a very helpful person. They've never mentioned it in a meeting. I was investigating, talking with various people, and they told me that the funds ran out. But now there are 3 people doing the work she used to*

do. (S/he implied that this didn't add up or make sense.) They should tell us what happened to her....When a staff person leaves, they should tell us what happened and where he ended up.]

Another told me:

*Están molestos [los padres] porque Liliana ya no está trabajando allí. Ella les ayudó mucho [demasiado]. Ella nada mas veía por la comunidad. Liliana nos trajo el programa del car seat. La gente no lo cree justo. Se sentía demasiada confianza con ella. Ella no iba a buscar a la gente; la gente buscaba a ella. La gente no ha sentido tanto la confianza [en los que están trabajando allí, en la clínica].* [The parents are upset because Liliana no longer works there. She helped them so much. She only looked out for the community. Liliana brought us the car seat program. People don't think it's fair. They trusted her so much. She didn't go to look for people; they sought her out. People don't have as much trust in the people working at the clinic now.] [S/he noted that instead of being told to come back another day to fill out papers for a particular service, Liliana would help people right then and there with whatever they needed. [I asked what FRC staff could do to address this problem.] “Motivar a la gente.” *Hablar en una junta acerca de la posición de Liliana—por que la quitaron....No entiendo ¿Por qué contratar a 3 personas para hacer el trabajo de uno? También corrieron a Marisol [an Americorps volunteer], y a Liliana. Marisol tenía un programa para la niñas. Ahora ¿a quien van a ir?... “Hay mucho desacuerdo por lo de Liliana. Te ayudaba. También se sentían [las mujeres] con más confianza hablando con una mujer acerca de los problemas médicos.* [Motivate people. Talk in a meeting about Liliana's position—why she doesn't work there anymore....I don't understand why they've hired 3 people to do one person's work. They also fired Marisol, and Liliana. Marisol had a program for girls. Now who are they going to go to? There's a lot of disagreement because of what happened with Liliana. She helped you. Women also felt more comfortable talking with a woman about their medical problems.]

These comments illustrate how residents can lose trust in an organization when they are not informed of the reasons for changes in personnel. Residents grow attached to personnel and may withhold participation to express their disapproval of how hiring and firing are handled.

Two Latina women shared their and their acquaintances' concern that "this clinic will be just like the last one." (The previous clinic had closed because people didn't use it, but residents complained that the hours were very inconvenient.) One woman explained:

*"Las personas no tienen confianza [en la clínica] porque piensan que es como la clínica anterior.<sup>9</sup> El problema con esa clínica fue que no había servicio todos los días. También hubo problemas con el personal. Lo que hace falta es que nos comuniquen que es distinto. [People don't have trust (in the clinic) because they think that it's like the previous clinic. The problem with that clinic was that it wasn't open every day. There were also problems with the staff. What they need to do is let people know that this one is different.]* The FRC could *"hacer el comentario en los avisos—que hay mejores servicios, el personal es mucho mejor, no tiene que esperar mucho tiempo para que le atiendan"* [note on flyers that the services are better, the staff are more qualified, you don't have to wait long in line].

She mentioned an acquaintance who *"no cambió los hijos porque no tenía confianza"* [didn't switch her children from a doctor in a nearby town to Knights Landing because she didn't have trust/confidence in the Knights Landing clinic]. *Tienen temor de que vaya a ser igual a la anterior... "Hemos tenido malas experiencias en la clínica de Woodland. Piensan que va a ser lo mismo."* [They fear that this one will be like the last one. We've had bad experiences with the clinic in Woodland. They think it'll be the same.] Another person confirmed this perception when she observed that in the trailer park, *las mamás dijeron que iban a ir a la clínica en el otro county* [the mothers said they were going to go to the clinic in the bordering county].

A Latina woman observed that some of the services the FRC offers aren't closely related to people's needs. For instance, *"Han cancelado las clases para padres porque la gente no venía."* [They've cancelled the parenting classes because people didn't come.] This was an example of a service the FRC provided that didn't correspond to a need parents had expressed. Parenting classes were initiated by FRC staff, not local parents.

An Anglo resident wondered, "Why do you have to do another needs assessment to figure out what the problems in the community are?" She mentioned this to a UCD Landscape Architecture professor whose class wanted to do another needs assessment, even though one had been done a few years before. She commented that it's obvious that Knights Landing needs childcare; the FRC shouldn't have to conduct another needs

assessment to figure that out. (The FRC and a group from UCD were exploring the possibility of starting a childcare cooperative.) She felt that despite all the needs assessments, nothing had changed in the town.

The same person believed that the FRC is “too school-centered” instead of being “community-centered.” The FRC should be following what the community wants, not what the school wants. She believed that Anglos or Latinos who do not send their children to Grafton do not see FRC efforts as community-oriented. (i.e., they think the FRC only serves families who send their children to Grafton.) Currently, meetings and projects are located at the school and the projects seem to be chosen by the school leadership. She understood that this is partly because the school receives grants for FRC projects. She observed that the FRC landscaped its building (on school property) rather than the park because the school district would not allow them to landscape other than school property. However, the original plan was to landscape the community park, not the FRC. She was disappointed to see weeds growing in the landscaped area. She also wanted to ensure that 4-H did not become a program only for Grafton students.

She was invited to participate in a focus group regarding the childcare cooperative, but noted, “It seemed like the group had already decided what kind of childcare they were going to offer....Why participate if it’s already been decided what they’ll offer?” She also observed that the childcare shouldn’t be school-centered; if it is, it won’t meet the needs of “middle class white parents” who do not send their children to Grafton.

### **Suggestions for increasing participation**

Interviewees identified several ways that the FRC could publicize and increase participation in meetings and projects (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Suggestions for Increasing Participation**

Suggestion	Latinos	Anglos
Provide visual and auditory information	<p>Put a public service announcement on a popular Spanish <b>radio</b> station and on <b>Univisión's</b> news program, <i>Noticiero 19</i>, at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. A woman noted that she has seen reports about area schools and which have the best test scores and results.</p> <p>Communicate the clinic hours more frequently. Send out another <b>flyer</b> with the new clinic schedule.</p> <p>Make all FRC <b>flyers</b> “<i>más llamativos</i>” — larger and more eye-catching. Put a huge poster on the church, on the door at the Saturday catechism class, the stores, and the school cafeteria (a lot of mothers walk by there at noon or after school). Make the letters bigger and use a marker. The poster should say “<i>ya está abierta la clínica</i>” [the clinic is open] and list the services. Continue insisting with the <b>flyers</b>. Give people a reminder. Write on the flyer, “It’s important that you come to ____.” Send out <b>flyers</b> about the KLU Club (youth club).</p>	<p>Putting a notice in the <b>P.O. box</b> might be worth a try, but may not bring results.</p> <p>Put announcements in <b>church bulletins</b>.</p>
Verbal, person-to-person information	<p>“We need to <b>go house to house</b> and bring people information.” However, another person noted, “A lot of people don’t open the door because they’re undocumented. They’re afraid.”</p> <p>“We parents should <b>tell others</b>. “Involved parents are the key. It’s important to insist that they come and participate.”</p> <p>Tell people who attend the PTC and Community Action Meetings to <b>communicate with other people</b>. Have a <b>party</b> to inaugurate the clinic and invite people.</p> <p>Have pamphlets there listing the services that are offered. [This was done.]</p> <p>The PTC President should <b>call people</b>.</p> <p>Tell youth to <b>come to learn more about their community</b>. Members of the youth club could <b>tell other kids</b> and invite them.</p>	<p><b>Call people.</b></p> <p>Drop by the 6 a.m. gathering at the <b>grocery store</b> and go to the <b>Senior Lunch</b>.</p>
Provide food	<p>A lot of people come to meetings and events when there’s <b>food</b>. State on the flyer that there will be <b>refreshments</b>.</p>	
Other	<p>“<b>Seeing the results, people will come.</b> ...I had a good experience [at the clinic] and I saw the good results. They attended to my needs and helped me.”</p> <p><b>People will attend meetings and use services when they need to.</b></p>	

## How could Community Action Meetings be improved?

Six people remarked that the meetings are fine as they are. Comments included, “It’s fine the way they do it. They try their best to let the community know what’s happening.” They liked that the schedule can change according to the agricultural season when many residents work in the fields. “They focus on the information. They give the information, plan the timing, and if we get too far off the subject they say, ‘We’re going on to the next point.’”

- Keep the meetings short and don’t repeat the same things from one meeting to the next.

*Son muy largas las juntas. Deben de ser mas cortas—1 hora no más....A veces vienes a la casa bien regañada....Deben de tocar los temas breves.*

[The meetings are really long. They should be shorter—no longer than an hour. Sometimes you come home to a scolding (i.e., husband is mad because the wife is at the meeting)...They should keep the topics short.]

Regarding the park project, an interviewee’s friend said, “Why do they tell us that the school district said ‘no, no, no?’ Don’t tell me what the district *didn’t* approve. Don’t tell me until they approve something. Why do you ask our opinion about what we want to see happen if the district doesn’t approve anything? If it hasn’t been approved, then why pursue it?”

People were frustrated that they were asked what they wanted to see in the park, yet some of these things weren’t approved by the district. The suggestion was to find out what the district will approve and then ask what people want.

- Provide food (potluck). Two people recalled that during the planning of the clinic people brought food to share. They would have the meeting and then take a break to eat together.
- Give people more time to express themselves.

*“Las personas necesitan más tiempo para expresarse. Dejarles más tiempo y libertad para hablar de sus necesidades. Preguntarles, ¿Qué es lo que les gustaría tener aquí—de servicios. ¿Qué servicios les gustaría tener para sus necesidades? Preguntarles ¿Cómo les está gustando los servicios que hay?”*

[People need more time to express themselves. Give them more time and freedom to talk about their

needs. Ask them, “What kinds of services would you like to have here? What services would you like to have for your needs?” Ask them how they like the existing services.]

- Invite representatives of Anglo community groups such as the Services District, the Senior Lunch group, the Fire Chief, and the Community Center Board to make a brief presentation at Community Action Meetings. This would not only expose local residents to what these groups do and who the leaders are, but would also give those leaders a specific reason to attend the Community Action Meeting and learn about what the FRC is doing. This would also help bring Anglos and Latinos together.

**How could the FRC encourage more people to share their opinions  
and ideas in Community Action Meetings?**

I noticed that the same people — informal community leaders and a few others — tended to share their ideas at meetings. Interviewees shared their suggestions for eliciting people’s ideas.

- Two respondents said that the meetings are fine the way they are.
- Give people *la confianza para hablar* [the confidence to speak].

*“Tambien es falta de experiencia.” [Anteriormente yo no hablaba mucho porque] “tenía temor que fuera perjudicar a alguien. Pero ahora sé que me van a comprender....Cambié a través del tiempo. Nos dan confianza para que nos comuniquemos.”* [It’s because of the lack of experience. I didn’t talk much before because I was afraid I would harm or jeopardize someone. But now I know that they’ll understand me....I changed over time. They (staff) give us confidence so that we can communicate.]

*“Anteriormente era así. No daba mi opinion, pero ahora sí. Tengo más seguridad en mi mismo para poder hablar.”* [I was like that before. I didn’t give my opinion, but now I do. I have more confidence in my ability to speak.]

*“Darles más confianza. Hablarles ¿Qué creen de esto? Si ¿les está sirviendo o no? ¿Les está ayudando? Si no, ¿creen que debemos de cambiarlo? Para darles más confianza: cuando están dando información,*

*parar un poco para que las personas hagan preguntas y compartan sus opiniones.”* [Give people more confidence. Tell them, “What do you think about this? Is this useful to you or not? Is this helping you? If not, do you think we should change it?” To give people more confidence, when they’re living information (they should) wait a little so people can ask questions and share their opinions.]

*“La timidez no les deja hablar. Tienen buenas ideas, pero te las platican a ti.” Yo estoy ahí y me dicen, ‘Mira, dile que esto y el otro,’ pero no quieren hablarlo.”* [Their timidity doesn’t allow them to speak. They have good ideas, but they tell them to you. I’m sitting there and they (women) say to me, “Look, tell them this and that,” but they don’t want to say it themselves.] [i.e., women whisper their ideas to their more outspoken friends and ask them to share their ideas with the group.] *“Decirles que tienen derecho de opinar. Motivarles a expresarse.”* [Tell them that they have the right to express their opinion. Motivate them to express themselves.]

I suggested several ways of eliciting opinions and asked participants what they thought of these. Nearly everyone thought they could be successful.

- Small groups: *“Hacer una reunión pequeña para dar sugerencias y discutir necesidades.”* [Use small groups to give suggestions and discuss needs.]
- Written comments (ask people to write down their questions or comments before or during the meeting)

*“Si escriben la idea se expresan más que los que por palabra no pudieron.”* [They’ll express themselves more in writing than verbally.]

*“Se ponen más nerviosos cuando tienen que hablar en frente de las personas.”* [They get more nervous when they have to speak in front of people.]

- *Dinámicas*: These are ice breakers and participatory methods designed to put people at ease, get to know each other, and elicit and analyze ideas. Common in popular education and community development (especially in Latin America), *dinámicas* are a great way to enable people who are shy and timid to share their ideas.



## OTHER FINDINGS

### Leadership

The FRC should recognize the ways in which community residents are *already* acting as leaders. Most of the interviewees are informal leaders in the town, whether or not they perceive themselves as such or hold an official position. For example, in the fall of 2003 Claudia, a Latina immigrant woman, and five other mothers went to the school district offices to request that the superintendent provide a bus for children who did not participate in the after-school program. They brought with them a petition with the signatures of 20 or more parents. Claudia and the other parents had spoken with the principal and organized themselves around this issue. They were upset that a school bus had been cancelled, which forced parents who could not pick up their children to enroll them in the supposedly voluntary after-school program. Noting how isolated she felt before she learned to drive, Claudia also shared that she was teaching some of her women friends to drive. Her story illustrates the leadership roles she is already playing, and her potential to motivate others to action. However, because she is not one of the “usual suspects” that the FRC calls on to volunteer or plan projects, her potential may be overlooked.

The Anglo man I interviewed had never heard of the FRC or its projects. However, he had many interests (e.g., gardening, landscape architecture) and was willing to support the FRC’s work. Identifying people like him — middle-class, Anglo residents with a different set of social networks — could enable the FRC to include more segments of the community in its work.

Burn-out also affects community participation and leadership. A Latina resident explained why she is burned out. Her spouse wanted her to spend more time with their children; he felt (and she seemed to agree) that she was spending too much time on community projects. She felt that all the community activities fell on her. In addition, someone started an unsubstantiated rumor about her handling of money at a community fundraiser. She said that people criticized, made fun of her, and called her names. Consequently, she felt a great deal of pressure. In fact, she stopped talking on the phone because she didn’t want to hear all the criticism. Her leadership role subjected her to pressure, criticism, and rumors, which led to a decrease in her participation. An FRC staff person noted a local leadership pattern among Anglos and Latinos in which people who take initiative

are harshly criticized. Others are reluctant to take initiative because they fear the same thing will happen to them.

### **Ethnic and Cultural Divisions**

In community meetings, Latino residents have called the town *dividido* — racially divided. Three Anglo and Latino interviewees commented on the ethnic and cultural divisions and tension in the town. One person observed that many of the Anglo residents remember the “old” Knights Landing — a prosperous town with oak-lined streets that was inhabited primarily by Anglo-Europeans. S/he observed that people are in denial that the “old” Knights Landing no longer exists and that Anglos no longer constitute the majority. As an example of exclusionary attitudes, s/he cited a meeting in which Anglo residents said they did not want any more low-income housing built in the town because it would attract the wrong kind of people.

An Anglo resident noted the need for more bilingual community leaders, adding, “It’s hard to put the two elements of the town together....We’ve lived here for X years and it just stays split. It’s really sad....There’s a lot of racism on both sides. [She mentioned an incident in which a Latino student called an Anglo student “white trash.”]...The school is segregated.”

A long-time Latina resident (Reina) described in detail her experience of racism in the town. She observed that most of the older Anglo residents aren’t interested in participating in FRC projects. Furthermore: “*No admiten que estamos aquí. Es muy raro el Anglo-Sajón que asista a las juntas. Se sienten superiores. Es muy difícil....No les gusta que sus hijos se revuelvan con los hispanos.*” [They don’t accept that we’re here. There are very few Anglos who attend (school and FRC) meetings. They feel superior. It’s very difficult....They don’t want their children to mix with the Hispanics.]

Reina mentioned that one of the town’s prominent decision-making bodies is comprised of Anglo residents. When Latinos have tried to attend meetings, Anglos made it clear they did not want them there. They made this known because “*No son cortés. No saludan. Se nota que no quieren la presencia de hispanos aquí.*” [They’re not polite. They don’t greet you. You notice that they don’t want the presence of Hispanics here.] She also wondered why Anglo residents believe that the government is “taking money away from them to educate

Hispanics.” *{Creen que el gobierno les está quitando el dinero para educar a los hispanos.}*] She asked me why people think Latinos are just here taking money, when in fact they work very hard.

Reina reflected on the relationship between Anglos and Latinos in the town:

*No podemos pelear contra ellos [Anglo residents] ni nada. Entonces ¿qué podemos hacer? Nunca podemos cambiar la moda de pensar de ellos. Si los llegáramos a necesitar, nunca podríamos contar con ellos. Tenemos que buscar la manera de sobrevivir sin ellos, sin necesitar su apoyo. Los tenemos en contra y así va a ser por mucho tiempo....Los padres les dicen a los hijos, ‘No se van a ir a revolver con ellos [Latinos].’ Los niños se están metiendo en su mente que no van a revolver con nosotros. Si nuestros niños pueden superarse sin necesidad de ellos, está bien. A veces [los niños Anglo-Sajones] les ofenden, les humillan [a los niños Latinos]. Son sensibles, pero sienten el orgullo de su origen, entonces les ignoran. Nunca vamos hacer cambiar a esta gente. Nunca....Se van a morir y sus descendientes van a pasar igual....Yo tengo X años aquí. Y no puedo tener amistad con ellos. Todavía siento el rechazo. [Algunos Anglo-Sajones que conozco] me ven y me saludan, pero son muy indiferentes. No he visto ningún cambio en los años que he vivido aquí. Hay uno o dos que no tienen el rechazo para uno de hispano. Pero son contados. [We can’t fight against them or anything. So what can we do? We’ll never be able to change their way of thinking. If we were to need them, we’d never be able to count on them. We have to find a way to survive without them, without needing their help. We have them against us and it’ll be like that for a long time....Parents say to their children, “Don’t go mixing with them (Latinos).” The children get it in their heads that they’re not going to socialize with us. If our children can get ahead without needing them, that’s fine. Sometimes (Anglo kids) offend and humiliate (Latino kids). They’re sensitive, but they have pride in their origin (i.e., ethnic heritage), so they ignore them. “We’re never going to change these people. Never. They’re going to die and their descendents will be the same.”...I’ve lived here for X years. And I haven’t been able to have a friendship with them (Anglos). I still feel the rejection. (Several Anglo individuals I know) see me and greet me, but they’re very indifferent. I haven’t seen any change in the time I’ve lived here. There are one or two (Anglos) who don’t reject us Hispanics. But they are few.]*

Reina described a situation that is the antithesis of community development: two groups of people living in separate worlds, trying to make it on their own without counting on the other’s help. The loss of economic

vitality, ethnic and cultural tension, and the experience of racism have enormous implications for the willingness of both Latinos and Anglos to participate in FRC projects.

Baum's (1997) concepts of communities of memory and of hope are relevant here. Based on these interviews and nearly two years of working in Knights Landing, I wonder if some long-time Anglo residents may be grieving the loss of their community of memory — a thriving culturally and economically vibrant town inhabited by people of European heritage. However, with some notable exceptions, FRC efforts to involve non-Grafton residents in FRC projects have met with little success. To move forward, Knights Landing residents must have the capacity to envision a “community of hope,” a community of the future that includes Anglos, Latinos, and newcomers. This means recognizing that some immigrants may retain cultural traditions and continue speaking their native language even as others forget their first language and assimilate. I believe that unity in Knights Landing will depend on creating a community of hope that acknowledges the town's socio-economic and demographic reality, that understands the reasons for economic decline and migration patterns, that welcomes people from different cultural, language, and economic groups, and that brings people together to work toward shared goals that benefit the common good, thereby enriching everyone's lives.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although these recommendations apply specifically to the FRC in Knights Landing, the strategies may be appropriate for CBOs in other areas.

1. Publicizing and relaying information about projects and meetings.
  - a. Identify a group of “community mobilizers,” “promotores,” or “town criers” to relay information quickly to a wide group of people. FRC staff would call this group of people (the hubs) and ask them to relay a message to their circle of contacts (the spokes). This strategy would build on, systematize, and formalize the ways residents already share information. The FRC should recognize and honor these people as volunteers. By identifying people of different genders and ethnicities who live in different parts of town, the FRC can ensure better coverage.
  - b. The homogeneity of Knights Landing's social networks means that the FRC needs to (1) identify *individuals* with many connections to the social groups it wants to reach (individuals with many weak

ties that span social boundaries) and (2) use different *strategies* to reach them. For example, Anglos are more likely to read the newspaper, whereas Grafton flyers reach almost exclusively Latino parents. Information in this report specifies how Anglo and Latino respondents receive and relay information.

- c. Create a forum in which local residents can meet and talk to the representatives of different community groups and organizations in Knights Landing (e.g., Services District, churches, fire department). This would not only expand residents' knowledge of the organizations and social groups in their community and introduce them to official representatives, but also expose the leaders and representatives to the work of the FRC, which currently involves mostly Latino residents.

## 2. Developing and supporting community leaders.

- a. The FRC could expand its base of available leaders by building on the leadership capacities that people *already* exhibit. Previous studies show that some Latinos see themselves as “helpers,” not “leaders” *per se* (*Youth* September 2003). For example, Claudia displayed courage and initiative by speaking to the District Superintendent. The FRC should identify people who would not normally step forward or think of themselves as leaders, but who have a passion and drive to improve their community. Using the term “leader” may even discourage people who do not think they have the necessary skills. For instance, at a meeting attended by 11 women and 4 men, an FRC staff person asked for “group leaders” for a landscaping work day. Until I prompted one of the women, only men volunteered or were nominated.
- b. Alleviate leaders' burn-out and find ways to support them. Find out what kinds of support and training leaders need so that they feel confident and supported. For example, co-leadership or apprenticeships could help residents learn how to take on roles such as Parent-Teacher Council President. The FRC should publicly dispel rumors about project leaders and protect them from unwarranted criticism. Ray Suarez quipped that conspiracy theories fill all information vacuums. Community organizations can prevent conspiracy theories by being as transparent as possible about their work.

## 3. Actively address the perceptions that could hinder residents' participation in the FRC.

- a. Discuss personnel issues in a public forum. Without divulging private information, explain the general reason why a staff member was dismissed, how the FRC funds staff positions, and how personnel decisions are made. For example, community residents may not understand how funding shapes hiring

decisions. Whenever possible, give residents advanced warning of staff changes. Make these decisions as transparent as possible, while protecting confidentiality.

- b. Ensure that the FRC tries to solve problems that affect the broader community, as well as those that affect school families (i.e., low-income, Latinos). Consider rotating meeting locations so that they are not always held on school property. To gain more Anglo residents' support, the FRC will have to demonstrate and convince them that its work also affects *their* future and quality of life.
- c. Emphasize that this clinic is different than the last one (e.g., schedule, quality of services, wait time, responsiveness) in oral and written public information about the FRC.

#### 4. Framing community involvement.

For Latinos in particular, frame community involvement as a way to help your family and create better opportunities for your children. For example, “*Ayude a su familia e hijos a salir adelante.*” [Help your family and children get ahead in life.] These motivations led many interviewees to participate in community projects. However, “family” should be defined not only as a biological nuclear or extended family, but also as connections with neighbors and other residents. This conception of family would include the elderly, widows, singles, youth, childless couples, and others whom the FRC serves.

A core value among Latinos is *familismo* (familism), which emphasizes fulfilling family duties and remaining loyal to the family, such that the interests of the group usually take precedence over individual concerns (Valdés 1996). For example, because the well-being and survival of the household is primary, family members who move away still visit often and contribute financially to the extended family. By contrast, in middle- and upper-class Anglo families, the individual's needs often transcend those of the group. Parents typically strive to help their children get ahead *as individuals*, even if this weakens family connections (emotional, geographic, financial). By linking helping one's family to helping one's community, the FRC could show residents how *they* and the *community as a whole* benefit when people work together on community projects.

#### 5. Give people multiple ways to express themselves in meetings.

Many people, especially women, are too shy to speak in public. Instead, they may ask a friend sitting beside them to speak for them. This behavior reflects the “culture of silence” that denies the ability of poor or working class people to think or speak for themselves (Freire 1973). Economic, social, and political inequality breeds

powerlessness and silence among marginalized groups such as the poor, women, people of color, *campesinos*, youth, and the like. It takes a great deal of encouragement and practice to overcome the inner voice that says one's idea is dumb, people will laugh, no one will listen, or it won't make a difference anyway.

Community-based organizations need to disprove and allay people's fear of ridicule by validating their right and ability to speak. Staff can encourage timid participants to share their ideas through anonymous written comments and questions, small group discussions, *dinámicas*, giving adequate time for asking questions and making comments, eliciting and welcoming all ideas, avoiding public correction or criticism of individuals, and so forth.

This study suggests that CBOs should tailor outreach strategies to local social networks and communication mechanisms, discover and correct or dispel the perceptions that may prevent people from getting involved, and support and protect leaders while finding ways to spread leadership; and motivate people to participate in ways that resonate with cultural values.

The findings of this study are consistent with other research on Latino community involvement, particularly regarding outreach strategies and motivations for community participation (*Youth* September 2003). This study also highlights the "dark side" of community participation, such as the way that criticism and gossip can lead to burn-out, discourage others from taking initiative, and hinder community development efforts. Furthermore, the changing demographics of rural America challenge CBOs to bring people together across language, social class, and cultural boundaries, and to acknowledge the way that social exclusion or perceptions of immigrants may affect people's willingness to join community projects.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

[Note: I obtained UC Davis Human Subjects approval for all interviews. I told interviewees that their participation was voluntary, the information was confidential, and I would change their names. All interviewees signed consent forms.]

### Social Networks

- 1) How do you hear about what's going on in town? (meetings, services, projects, events) (*¿Cómo se entera usted de lo que está pasando en la comunidad? (juntas, eventos, proyectos)*
  - a) How do you find out about Community Action Meetings? (*¿Cómo se entera de las juntas del comité de acción?*)
  
- 2) How do your friends hear about what's going on in town? (*¿Cómo se enteran sus amigos de lo que está pasando en la comunidad?*)
  
- 3) Who do you tell about things that are going on? (To whom do you pass on information?) (*Cuando Ud. se entera de alguna junta o evento, ¿a quien se le dice? [¿Con cuales personas o grupos comparte información sobre juntas, eventos, y recursos en la comunidad?]*)
  - a) Mapping: draw yourself in a circle at the center; think about the people with whom you regularly share information; draw lines to circles with names of people and groups; the closer the circle is to you, the more frequently you communicate with that person or group (*Haga un diagrama. El círculo en el centro representa usted. Con una línea, conecte su círculo con los otros círculos, que representan las personas o grupos con las cuales usted comparte información. En cuanto más cercano está el círculo al suyo, más contacto tiene usted con esa persona o grupo—se comunican con mucha frecuencia.*)
    - i) e.g., I pass on information to people at church, my best friend, colleagues at work, people at FRC] (*p.e., yo comparto información con la gente de mi iglesia, mi equipo de correr, mi mejor amiga, y los compañeros de trabajo*)

### Opinions about FRC and Community Action Meetings

- 4) In which community groups or projects do you currently participate? Community Action Meetings or FRC projects? (*¿Cómo participa usted en la comunidad actualmente? En cuales juntas o proyectos del CRF participa?*)

### Community-wide

Church

Soccer league



Citizens Advisory Committee  
Service District  
Gun Club  
Volunteer fire department  
Library  
4-H

School or FRC-related

PTC  
Mentor program  
Park planning group  
Child care planning group  
Park work days (seat wall, playground)  
Parent support group  
RAKL Board/FRC Steering Committee  
Community Action Meetings  
KLU Club

Other

- 5) What led you to participate in the FRC activities? (*¿Como fue que usted decidió participar en las juntas o proyectos del FRC?*)
- 6) If s/he participates in FRC: What could the FRC do to get more of the people you know to attend Community Action Meetings? To participate in projects (e.g., park)? (*¿Cómo pudiera el CRF atraer a sus amigos y familiares a participar en las juntas del comité de acción? ¿...A participar en los proyectos? (e.g., parque)*)
- a) If s/he doesn't participate: What could the FRC do to get you to come to Community Action Meetings? To participate in projects (e.g., park, seat wall)? (*¿Qué podría hacer el CRF para que usted viniera a las juntas del comité de acción? ¿...A participar en los proyectos?*)
- 7) What suggestions do you have for improving Community Action Meetings? (e.g., more dynamic, participatory, appealing, effective) (*¿Qué sugerencias tiene usted para mejorar las juntas del comité de acción? [¿Cómo podrían ser mas dinámicas, exitosas, participativas, convenientes, etc.?]*)
- 8) How could the FRC encourage more people to share their opinions and ideas in Community Action Meetings? (*¿Cómo pudiera el CRF animar a las personas a que den su palabra [compartan sus ideas] en las juntas?*)
- 9) Any other comments or questions? (*¿Tiene algo más que agregar? ¿Alguna pregunta, inquietud, preocupación?*)

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Healthy Start supports educational, health, and social service programs at or near schools in low-income communities. In Knights Landing, Healthy Start focuses on health care, which residents identified as a key concern.
- <sup>2</sup> One of the people I called did not want to be interviewed because she was tired of talking to university researchers. However, she still gave me a lot of information over the phone and shared specific suggestions for improving the FRC. I included this person's comments in the report.
- <sup>3</sup> Quotation marks denote direct quotes. The other excerpts are close paraphrases based on extensive notes.
- <sup>4</sup> "*Participo en alguna venta que hacen para recaudar fondos. Me gusta estar ahí vendiendo y atendiendo a la gente.*" [I participate in the sales they do to raise funds. I like to be there selling and attending to people.]"  
Another person said, "*Traigo y vendo comida en los torneos [para recaudar fondos].*" [I bring and sell food at the soccer tournaments (to raise funds).]
- <sup>5</sup> "The mural was fun; it was something different. I'd never painted anything that big before."
- <sup>6</sup> One person helped a teacher by making copies and doing other tasks for a month. A teacher told her students they could come help out at the school if they ever needed something to do, so they wouldn't be out in the streets. The participant liked helping at the school because she could be "closer with my brother and help with homework." Another person helped a Grafton teacher with grading papers and giving out tests. He is now interested in teaching.
- <sup>7</sup> I did not ask everyone this question. Informal conversations with interviewees and Knights Landing residents suggest that more than 4 of the interviewees attend church.
- <sup>8</sup> This person pays dues, goes to the yearly meeting, votes, and attends the dinner.
- <sup>9</sup> *Confianza* means trust or confidence and denotes closeness. If someone is "*de confianza*" s/he is a trusted friend. "When individuals have *confianza* in each other, they are willing to make themselves vulnerable to the other, to share intimacies without fear of being hurt or taken for granted. *Confianza* allows people to engage in important transaction without fear of being deliberately deceived and used. The saying "*No le tengo confianza*"... communicates that one does not find a particular individual trustworthy and must be consciously vigilant in his or her presence" (Stanton-Salazar 2001:27).