Providing culturally competent services to the Spanish-speaking community of Santa Cruz County's child protective services

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Providing Culturally Competent Services
To the Spanish-Speaking Community of
Santa Cruz County’s Child Protective Services

By

Ana Ortega Bedingfeld

A Community Action Research Report presented to
The Faculty of the College of Social Work
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Social Work

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.......................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgments................................................................................................... vi

Chapter I: Introduction............................................................................................ 1
Demographics and target population................................................................. 1
Description of the agency.................................................................................. 2
Policy context..................................................................................................... 3
Current evaluation process............................................................................... 5

Chapter 2: Literature Review.................................................................................. 6
Demographic shift................................................................................................. 6
Providing culturally sensitive services............................................................. 6
Communication................................................................................................... 7

Chapter 3: Theoretical Foundation....................................................................... 10
Systems theory.................................................................................................... 10
Ecological perspective...................................................................................... 11
Cultural competence......................................................................................... 14

Chapter 4: Methodology....................................................................................... 16
Research design................................................................................................ 16
Procedure.......................................................................................................... 17
Limitations........................................................................................................ 18

Chapter 5 Results.................................................................................................. 21

Chapter 6: Discussion.......................................................................................... 24

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusions............................................................... 25

References............................................................................................................ 26

Appendix A............................................................................................................ 28
Appendix B............................................................................................................ 29
Appendix C............................................................................................................ 30
Appendix D............................................................................................................ 31
Appendix E............................................................................................................ 32
This study is an exploratory research project designed to determine the needs of monolingual Spanish-speaking parents in regards to Child Protective Services (CPS) in Santa Cruz County. A methodology of needs assessment through interviews, secondary data analysis, and content-driven focus groups was utilized. The objectives of this project are to: a) to determine what information monolingual Spanish-speaking parents of Santa Cruz County need to better access and understand the services provided by CPS; and b) provide a means by which CPS may enhance accessibility to its services and increase knowledge and understanding of CPS services among monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. This study examines the type of information that monolingual Spanish-speaking parents need to better access and understand the services provided by CPS.

Twenty-two individuals participated in this study. A total of six Latino social workers were interviewed either in person or by telephone in their workplace. Four were women between the ages of 32 and 43 and two were men between the ages of 44 to 49. Also interviewed by telephone or in person, were six Latina community agency representatives. One was 38 years old, three were between the ages of 43 and 49, and two were between the ages of 50 and 55.

Community agency representatives agreed to have this researcher conduct focus groups with parents who were already convening on a weekly basis for parenting classes in Spanish. The focus group interviews were content driven and they occurred at the site where the parents had their weekly group meetings. The first focus group consisted of five women and one man, ranging between 23 and 45 years of age. They all identified as Mexican and spoke only Spanish. They all had a child who was in the fifth grade. Only one of the members had any knowledge about CPS in Santa Cruz County. The second focus group consisted of four women and no men. The women were between the ages of
38 and 52. All identified as Mexican and spoke Spanish only. One of the four participants had prior knowledge of CPS in Santa Cruz County. All interviews were recorded in the form of field notes. These were transcribed by the researcher into fully detailed notes immediately after the interview. Upon the transcription of these field notes, a tally was taken of the predominant themes in the interviews and focus groups.

The results of this research were analyzed from an ecological systems theory and a cultural competence perspective. Six major themes were identified as necessary information for monolingual Spanish-speaking parents to have. These results lead to the conclusion that there is a need for written information about CPS for the Spanish-speaking community of Santa Cruz County, particularly in the southern part of the county where the percentage of Spanish speakers is higher. The information gathered was beneficial in the development of a CPS brochure in Spanish that can be disseminated to the Spanish-speaking community of Santa Cruz county.
List of figures

Figures
1. Percentage of total participants who felt parents should have information on alternative discipline methods/20.

2. Percentage of participants who felt that parents should know what child abuse is/21.

3. Percentage of participants who felt parents need to understand the role of the CPS social worker /22.

4. Percentage of participants who felt parents need to know more about community resources /22.
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I would have been hard-pressed to accomplish this project alone. I received assistance, support, and encouragement from various people whom I would like to thank.

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Culturally Competent Services

Chapter One: Introduction

The goal of this study is to identify what information monolingual Spanish-speaking parents need to better understand and access the services provided by the agency, Child protective Services (CPS) of Santa Cruz County. The agency will then be in a position to better address parents’ questions. The agency may also chose to address general questions about CPS by creating a brochure which may be disseminated in the Spanish-speaking community.

Demographics and target population

Any family with minor children residing in Santa Cruz County is the target population of this agency. A study of this type, which seeks to explore the needs of the county’s increasing monolingual Spanish-speaking population in regarding CPS services, is relevant and essential, considering the development of the county’s demographics and target population. The total population of Santa Cruz County is 229,734. The racial/ethnic composition includes 74.5 percent Caucasian, 20.4 percent Latino, 3.3 percent Asian, 1.1 percent African American, 0.6 percent Native American, and 0.2 percent other (US Census, 1990).

The largest city within Santa Cruz County is Santa Cruz, with a population of 49,040. The second largest city is Watsonville with a population of 31,090. Sixty-one percent of Watsonville’s residents are Latino, which is the highest concentration of Latino residents in the county. Fifty-one percent of Watsonville’s residents speak Spanish, with 20 percent of these residents speaking only Spanish (1990 US Census Bureau). Barbara Bock, Civil Rights Coordinator, reports that in 1991, Santa Cruz County’s Human Resource Agency completed a Latino needs assessment that found “86.4 percent of the county’s Latino population was of Mexican origin” (personal communication. May 6, 1997).

Therefore, the Latino population of Santa Cruz County is predominately of Mexican descent and resides mostly in south county, an area comprised of Corralitos,
Freedom, and Watsonville, with the majority living in the City of Watsonville. The fact that a considerable number of Latinos speak Spanish, and one fifth of them are monolingual Spanish speakers renders important implications for the agency in assessing its program development, and delivery of services to its Latino population.

Description of the agency

Santa Cruz County Child Protective Services (CPS) offers a wide range of services in its efforts to protect the safety and welfare of Santa Cruz County children. CPS operates under the umbrella of the Human Resource Agency (HRA). Its central office is located in the City of Santa Cruz, the county seat, which is known locally as North County, with a satellite office in Watsonville, or South County.

CPS Social workers are called upon to intervene when a child’s safety and welfare are at risk due to abuse or neglect in his or her home. The nature of the intervention is determined by the particulars of each case. In less severe cases where there is no imminent danger to the child, the agency typically offers services to parents which are designed to reduce future risk of abuse or neglect. However, in cases where there is imminent risk to the child, CPS will remove a child from his home. The child is placed in a foster home until he can safely return to his parents. Each initial intervention is followed by a court process which ensures that actions taken by CPS are appropriate and justified.

If the court supports the agency’s allegations of abuse or neglect, the family, continues to receive services and intervention by CPS, and the child remains in protective custody. At this point, CPS develops a case plan. This case plan details the steps parents, care-givers, and agency must successfully complete before a child is returned home. The details of each case plan are tailored to the needs of each family. Parents may be expected to enter counseling or complete parenting classes. Those with drug or alcohol problems might be obliged to enter treatment programs or attend 12-step meetings. Social workers are required to provide necessary services for the family, including
monthly visits or contacts with each child, natural parent, and care-giver such as a relative or foster parent.

Each child's case passes through a continuum of departments within CPS, each of which is designed to provide specific services. These include emergency response, court services, family maintenance, family preservation, family reunification and long term services of foster care, guardianship or adoption. From the time a child is placed in protective custody until a service case plan has been drafted, approved, and carried out successfully, CPS is held accountable for a child's welfare.

Throughout this process, communication and education are critical. The social worker is continually evaluating and assessing each case. In doing so, she must talk to the child, parents, relatives, teachers, and others who may provide critical information pertaining to the case. The social worker is also educating the family about the process at each stage of the case.

It is extremely vital that parents understand what is occurring throughout the life of a case. When a parent does not speak English and the social worker does not speak the parents' language, this task is nearly impossible. It is unreasonable to expect every social worker learn the language of each new immigrant group; therefore, it is imperative that human service agencies become adept at providing services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to meet client needs.

Policy context:

Two types of federal legislation are relevant to this project: The first one is the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 92-272). The second type is the Civil Rights Act of 1964, titles VI and VII.

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act includes provisions that "reasonable efforts" be made to prevent unnecessary separation of children at risk for child abuse or neglect, or who are in crisis, from their families. In cases where separation has occurred, agencies are charged with drawing up a plan to make it possible
for the child to return home. However, the law fails to define “reasonable efforts” and each state is left to make this determination. In California, CPS is held to carrying out its concept of reasonable efforts by the Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 16500 et. seq. While CPS is expected to operate under these laws and regulations, it is ultimately the California Juvenile Court system that enforces these laws.

CPS must provide social services to the families it serves and programs to help reunite children and their biological families, or when that is not possible, to secure long-term foster care, guardianship or adoptive homes. Intensive family preservation service programs are in place to help parents work toward avoiding placement of children in foster care. Other programs provide follow-up services to families after a child has been returned from foster care. Respite care to parents and other caregivers--including foster parents--and instruction in parenting skills are also provided.

Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the Food Stamp Act of 1977--Section 272.6; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other applicable federal and state laws guide the overall practice of the agency and that of social workers providing services to the county’s population. These acts ensure that employment practices and the administration of public assistance and social services programs are non-discriminatory, “to the effect that no person, shall because of race, color, national origin, political affiliation, religion, marital status, sex, age or disability be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal or state assistance” (B. Bock, personal communication, May 6, 1997). The agency’s overall goal is to provide families with social services that guard children against child abuse and promote the well-being of families. Furthermore, these services and the environment in which they are provided must be nondiscriminatory.
Current Evaluation Process

Child Protective Services must comply with state and federal regulations to sustain full funding of its programs. The state conducts periodic audits to ensure the county is adhering to state standards. Additionally, the state collects data from county agencies to document compliance with mandates of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. Information may include the number and type of referrals reported to CPS, the range of services provided to clients, and demographic information on the client population. In addition, the Agency must comply with civil rights and non-discrimination policies in the management of its state and federal programs. A civil rights team may appear unannounced for a civil rights inspection to ensure that a county is in compliance with its civil rights regulations.

All case files are required to have the worker’s written documentation of the client’s language preference for forms and written material. The method used to provide bilingual services, such as having a bilingual worker, or the client providing her own interpreter and other approaches must also be documented (B. Bock, personal communication, May 6, 1997). The Civil Rights Bureau requires the county to report information such as the ethnic origin and primary language of each client. This information is subject to state and federal audit.

Considering these compliance regulations, Santa Cruz County Child Protective Service Agency is faced with the responsibility and the task of providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services to its monolingual Spanish speaking residents. The failure to do so could jeopardize its federal and state funding. By way of this project, this researcher aims to contribute to the agency’s understanding of the needs of its Spanish-speaking parents. Ultimately, this researcher expects to expand parents’ knowledge and understanding of the services provided by CPS.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

A demographic shift

The rapid growth of the Latino population poses increasing challenges for social workers throughout the nation. Of the total population of 248.7 million living in the United States, approximately 72 million were of Latino origin. Latinos made up nine percent of the population which constituted the second largest minority group in the country after Black Americans, which represent 12.1 percent (US Census Bureau, 1990).

Although human service organizations across the country are experiencing similar demographic shifts, “California is leading the nation. Its children collectively speak more than 100 languages, and one out of three school-children come from a home in which English is not the main language” (Chang, Salazar & Leong, 1994. p.5).

Providing culturally sensitive services

Historically, social workers have rendered services to culturally diverse populations based on outdated theories and paradigms which do not acknowledge the needs of a diverse population. These theories have been grounded on a deficit-orientation which perceives that people obtain services as a result of a personal flaw. That is, for being ill, failing school, becoming addicted to drugs, or lacking the English language and not understanding the dominant culture. It is not surprising, then, that people and communities soon come to be defined primarily by their deficits. By addressing only what individuals lack, social workers neglect strengths and assets, and resources often go unrecognized.

McPhatter (1997) warns against attempting to understand cultural competence traditional models that offer fragmented explanations and simplistic views of such a complex process. She defines understanding cultural diversity as a long-term professional endeavor requiring constant restructuring of one’s world view through the development of a sound knowledge base and skills.
Communication

The ability to communicate clearly and directly with clients is crucial. Without a common language, families cannot ask social workers questions or raise concerns. Lack of a common language builds further barriers when staff members are unable to advise clients in a mutually understood language. Therefore, it is essential for agencies to provide services in a linguistically and culturally relevant manner. This may include hiring bilingual staff to serve clients who do not speak English. In 1993, California Tomorrow, a non-profit agency, based in San Francisco, California conducted a survey of 98 collaboratives and found that of all the programs surveyed throughout California:

Only 4 percent served clients who spoke English only. The other 96 percent served clients who spoke languages other than English. Fourteen percent of the collaboratives surveyed had staff who collectively spoke four or more languages; 18 percent had staff who spoke three or more languages; 45 percent had staff who spoke two or more languages and among 23 percent only one language was spoken by staff (p. 54.)

The same study found that language was a greater problem for parents than children. When asked whether they had problems communicating with parents because these clients spoke a language other than English “95 percent of the responding programs said yes” (p.54).

This survey supports the hypothesis that agencies with bilingual workers are understaffed. Only 45 percent of the agencies surveyed had staff members who spoke two or more languages. The need for additional bilingual social workers is further supported by findings that 95 percent of survey respondents affirmed they had problems communicating with parents who spoke a language other than English.
Castex (1994) underscores the diversity of national origin, immigration status, religion, and language within the Latino population and admonishes social workers against making assumptions that all Latinos share the same cultural heritage. When working with Latinos, she suggests that social workers must do the following: Ask where the client is from; request the client’s nationality; ask if the client is a member of an ethnic group within that nationality; become familiar with the group’s history and the history of the group’s migration; and identify formal or informal providers of services directed toward members of this national group, such as religious and civic organizations, sports clubs, political organizations, and political office holders.

Furthermore, Castex argues that the consideration of language in providing services is not a trivial point. “Spanish may be a second language for many Spanish-speaking Hispanic immigrants. Immigrants from highland Guatemala (Mayan), highland Peru and Bolivia (Quechua and Aymara), and Coastal Honduras (Garifuna, a creole language) are common in the United States” (p. 291). The social worker attempting to communicate with Latino clients will need to assess in which language the client best communicates, and exercise sensitivity to the possibility that people who are in crisis or who are experiencing powerful emotions may have additional difficulties communicating in a second or third language, and, at minimum, use trained staff as interpreters or translators when necessary.

Many agencies underestimate the importance of employing or training professionals who can communicate directly with families in their native tongues. Instead, agencies often rely on non-professional translators, or ask youngsters to translate for their parents. Although the worker’s intentions to establish communication are admirable, a child forced to act as a translator of the predominant culture is put in a position of power that could affect the family structure. A culturally sensitive and responsible agency will avoid using children as interpreters or translators. In cases where the social worker and the client do not speak the same language, the agency has an
ethical responsibility to provide a professional translator to interpret in a culturally sensitive manner for the parents and the social worker.

Issues of diversity are vitally linked to efforts to reform the institutions that serve non-English speaking individuals. However, addressing diversity goes beyond increasing the understanding and sensitivity of individual providers. Agencies must have in place policies that truly promote assistance to individuals to become self-sufficient, productive members of society in a culturally relevant manner. McManus (1988), emphasizes that in addition to making efforts to understand the population it serves, an agency must design and manage culturally sensitive programs through the regular examination of its delivery of services, its goals, its mission and its organizational structure.

In summary, diversity is an essential element to consider in the provision of services. To be effective, an agency must acknowledge cultural diversity and administer its services based on the specific cultural needs of the population it serves. This is critical in creating the circumstances that assist people in becoming educated, successful, contributing members of our society. Burgest (1989) illustrates this position:

There is no doubt that the culture of a particular minority member is of crucial significance to the practice of social work and other helping professions, for the culture of a people determines its language, lifestyles, folkways, marriage, habits, customs, religion, art, how they view themselves, their relationship to family structure, the peer group interactions, as well as how they view the notion of receiving help and their role as client (p. 57).
Chapter Three: Theoretical Foundation

This study is based on a social systems, ecological perspective, and cultural competence theoretical foundation. This study is also driven and informed by social work values.

**Systems Theory**

Social Systems Theory stresses the connection and interaction between systems, focusing on the gaps in institutional services to individuals from outside the dominant culture, and how such gaps may prevent clients from achieving their full potential. Moreover, its emphasis on resources and environment calls attention to both problems and strengths related to ethnicity. Systems theory was a useful framework for identifying areas of concern brought up during the development of this project, such as the absence of needed resources for the Latino population and the lack of linkages between individuals and resource systems.

Anderson and Carter, (1990) define a system as “an organized whole made up of components that interact in a way distinct from their interaction with other entities and which endures over some period of time” (p. 266-267). This definition suggests that all systems, whether large or small, from governmental institutions to the individual, are simultaneously whole, and part of other systems. An interdependence exists among resources, people, and formal and informal systems. Schriver, (1995) argues that organization is vital to a system because it provides the necessary structure to meet its goals or get its work done. An additional characteristic of systems is hierarchy, the particular order in which systems are arranged.

Pincus & Minahan (1979) refer to intervention from a systems approach as a “mode of action” which includes two components applicable to this study. One is establishing initial linkages between people and resources. A social worker has the primary responsibility to locate those individuals or agencies with the ability to help the worker and client in their efforts toward positive change. The second component is
facilitating interaction within resource systems. Here, the social worker is responsible for examining the system to ensure that resources are being used in a manner compatible with the client’s needs. In this project, upon examining the resources from the Agency, it was determined that a Spanish language brochure would help Spanish-speaking clients to access the agency more efficiently and ultimately assist them in achieving self-sufficiency.

Ecological Perspective

This study uses an ecological framework to provide a simultaneous focus on people and environments. Germain & Gitterman (1986) refer to the usefulness of the ecological framework as a way of analyzing the function of social work in this country’s diverse society. This perspective considers the relationships between organisms and the elements of their environment. In applying the concept to this study, it is essential to examine how well the organisms--Spanish-speaking parents--and their environment, Santa Cruz County, interact and adjust to each other. Therefore, one must look at how effectively Spanish-speaking parents interact in their environment and the County of Santa Cruz. This consideration takes on even more weight with the fact that Santa Cruz is a county where the dominant language is English, but where a significant portion of the population is Latino and Spanish-speaking.

Devore & Schlesinger (1991) describe the interconnectedness and intereffects of systems from an ecological perspective by arguing that “all living organisms require stimulation and resources from the environment. In turn, these living forms act on the environment, which becomes more differentiated, more complex and able to support more diverse forms of life” (p. 148). Thus, if an agency provides the resources to meet the client needs, the clients in turn will interact productively with the agency, thereby transforming the nature of the individual as well as that of the agency. In turn the larger system will see a more supportive and diverse environment.
Bureaucratic organizations and social networks are key elements to the social environment. Bureaucratic networks are usually complex in their organization, and involve much red-tape, creating difficulty, if not hardship, for clients who need to understand and interact with the system. It is important to keep in mind that the nature and structure of the bureaucratic system has a profound impact on the relationship and interactions between persons and their environment. If the system is simple and easy to access, agencies will serve clients better.

By contrast, social networks tend to occur naturally, serving as mutual aid systems to provide help, resources, information, and emotional support. The extended family system can be viewed as a social network which may provide members support and resources when needed. When individuals require help, they turn to their social networks first and then to the agencies which operate under a bureaucratic system.

Adaptation, stress, and coping are also concepts in the ecological perspective that are relevant to this study. Germain & Gitterman (1986) define stress as “an imbalance between a perceived demand and a perceived capability to meet the demand through the use of available internal and external resources” (p. 620). Stress develops when there is conflict between a person and his environment. In this study, the perceived demand is by the monolingual Spanish-speaking community to have full access to all agency services. When an agency is unable to provide equal access to its services, stress develops between the agency and the client who is denied services.

Coping refers to the effort made to deal with stress which usually requires internal and external resources. Internal resources refer to the individual’s level of motivation, self-esteem, and problem-solving skills which are in part acquired by the training gained from external resources in the environment such as family, schools, churches and other organizations.

Monolingual Spanish speakers cope in a variety of ways in a primarily English-speaking environment. When needed, they rely on friends and extended family to
assist them in accessing the proper service agencies. If a family system does not have access to a social network of friends and extended family, it looks to itself for support. If the family is monolingual Spanish-speaking children who have learned to speak English are given roles of translators and interpreters. While useful in the short-term, having children translate may be ultimately detrimental to the family, because it changes the dynamics of the relationship between child and parent. A child may experience a sense of false power when he speaks to authority figures on behalf of his parent, thus disempowering the parent.

The ecological perspective is therefore applicable to this study because it recognizes that environmental pressures affect the interaction between the individual and his or her environment. Devore and Schlesinger (1991) argue that environmental pressures may result from the unavailability of needed resources; people’s inability to use available resources; and environments and resources that are unresponsive to particular “styles” and needs (p. 149).

In summary, the ecological perspective calls for strengthening the relationship and interactions between people and their environment. This goal is made increasingly difficult to achieve due to people’s inability to access and use available resources. The social worker is called on to assume a variety of roles, such as a facilitator, teacher or mediator in an effort to assist clients in reaching this goal. When a problem exists between the client and the environment, the social worker may need to coordinate and link the client to available resources, organizations, and social networks. The social worker may also need to advocate and perform the task of filling in the gaps that exist in accessing services, programs, and resources. It becomes imperative for the social worker who assumes one or more of the aforementioned roles with families to do so in a culturally sensitive manner.
Cultural competence

Service agencies have responded to the multicultural nature of demographic change primarily by developing strategies to examine cultural competence in program design and service delivery. Cross (1988), Devore & Sehlesinger (1996), Green (1995), Mathews (1996) and McPhattter (1997) have expressed the necessity to create methods of serving ethnically and culturally diverse populations effectively.

Strategies to bring about an agency’s cultural competence leading to an individual’s access to services can be divided into two categories: The first focuses on the social worker, emphasizing the individual’s awareness of his own culture, such as customs, values and beliefs, and how their own culture can affect their work in a multicultural environment. In addition to developing knowledge of his own culture, the social worker is encouraged to develop some knowledge of the clients’ culture. He is to be aware of the manner in which he responds to cultural differences. Baker (1989), Cross (1989), Mason (1990), Paniagua (1994), Rogler (1989) and Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis (1992) argue that the goal of the cultural competence model is to explore attitudes and behaviors that are vital to the development of a culturally competent practice. The second category focuses on the agency’s structure, management, and policies that would develop a responsive system to the needs of a multicultural environment. An agency is responsible to provide services perceived as relevant by the client population. An agency may therefore have to provide services in the client’s language to enable the client to access and use the services.

However, the provision of culturally appropriate services is at times difficult to achieve because an agency may run into various obstacles. Morrison (1995) suggests a number of factors which must be addressed by an agency to ensure cultural relevance and competence: These include a culturally relevant mission statement, an administration that includes representatives from the community being served, and policies instituted based on a knowledge of and sensitivity to culturally diverse populations. Morrison
argues that there must be coordination with other agencies within the community, including schools, churches and local community organizations to ensure cultural relevance.

Agencies must continually evaluate their effectiveness in providing culturally appropriate services in order to stay current with the changing demographics. Effectiveness may be measured in part by consumer questionnaires and implementing self-evaluation techniques regarding cultural content. The agency’s board of directors must endorse the agency’s efforts toward a culturally sensitive practice.

McPhatter (1997) views understanding cultural diversity as a long-term professional endeavor requiring constant restructuring of one’s own world view while developing a sound base of knowledge and skills. The underlying assumption of McPhatter’s model is that children and families should be provided with health care and psychosocial services that are culturally acceptable and support the integrity and strengths of the client. The culturally competent practitioner is aware of the long-standing institutional and environmental structures that have often created obstacles for culturally different people. The culturally competent worker must be able to intervene effectively at the organizational, community, socio-economic, and political levels. The effective worker engages in removing organizational or community obstacles to the benefit of the clients.
Chapter Four: Methodology

Research design

This was an exploratory research design and the measures used were qualitative. The primary goal for this research was to provide a means by which CPS of Santa Cruz County could enhance accessibility to its services, and increase knowledge and understanding of CPS services and community agency services available to monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. “What type of information do monolingual Spanish-speaking parents need to better access and understand the services provided by CPS?” was the primary question that drove this study.

Research was from a purposive sampling plan and a sampling plan of convenience. As a result of interviews with community agency representatives, two of them agreed to have this researcher interview groups of parents who met weekly for parenting classes taught in Spanish. The focus group interviews were non-directive and they occurred at the parenting class site. This researcher took care to let the parents know the nature of the research and their rights to human subjects protection (See appendix A).

Individual interviews were scheduled with social workers and community agency representatives, and took place by telephone or in person at the individual’s office. Each social worker and agency representative was asked, “In your opinion, what information do monolingual Spanish speaking parents need to better access and understand the services provide by CPS?” and “Do you feel there is a need for CPS information in Spanish?” All social workers and agency representatives were advised by this researcher about their rights to human subjects protection (See appendix B).

In all, twenty-two individuals participated in the study. They represented six Latino CPS social workers aged 32 to 43, with monolingual Spanish-speaking clients in Santa Cruz County; six Latina community agency representatives, ages 38 to 52 who worked with monolingual Spanish-speakers; nine monolingual female and one male...
Spanish-speaking parents ages 23 to 52 who lived in Watsonville and took part in local agencies’ parenting classes.

Procedure

In December, 1997, Lynne, Coyle, Program Manager for CPS approved this research project (See appendix C). Also in December, the Human Subjects- Institutional Review Board of San Jose State University approved the request to use human subjects in the study (See appendix D).

Data collection began by interviewing the “gatekeepers,” people who had first-hand knowledge working with the Spanish-speaking community. These included social workers and community agency representatives. In the months of January through February, social workers with Spanish-speaking clients were identified from the agency’s telephone directory, and community agencies serving Spanish-speaking clients were selected. The parents were identified later at the interviews with the community agency representatives. In late February, community agency representatives were contacted by telephone. The purpose of the research was presented, and in-person or telephone interviews were scheduled.

In late February and March, 1998, interviews with CPS social workers and agency representatives took place. The parent sample group was obtained at the interviews with the agency representatives. The parents participated in focus group interviews. Originally ten parents were expected to participate in each group; however, half of the parents did not attend, leaving one group of six parents and another of four.

On March 11, 1998 all interviews, including focus groups were completed. In all, the sample group consisted of twenty-two participants including six agency representatives, six CPS social workers, and ten parents.

All the interviews, including those of the focus groups, were recorded in field notes—typically in an outline form of the conversations. These notes were transcribed by the researcher into fully detailed notes immediately after the interviews. A tally of the
predominant themes in the individual interviews and the focus groups was extracted for analysis.

Limitations

The first limitation was that the expected number of parent respondents reached only 50 percent of what was expected. Also, those who did participate were initially reluctant to share their ideas. The researcher had to encourage parents by asking questions about what they knew of CPS. Two parents--one in each group--had heard about CPS. Interestingly, they were the ones who had some thoughts to share about what CPS information they would like to have explained to them in Spanish.

During the design of the research, this researcher concluded that it would not matter whether parents had any prior knowledge about CPS or had been recipients of CPS, because the question applied to the general Spanish-speaking population, not just parents who had knowledge of CPS. However, this project would have been more productive had the researcher elected to interview parents who had some knowledge about or experience with CPS.

A second limitation was encountered in the nature of the interviews in the parents' groups. The nature of the focus groups requires that the participants share their ideas and thoughts freely. It was this researcher's experience that the parents had little to say. In retrospect, this could be due to a couple of things. First, it is possible that the parents did not know the researcher, so there was no pre-established rapport, or building of confianza--a sense of trust that would allow parents to feel free to share feelings which might be interpreted as a criticism of the agency, and of the researcher who was representing the agency. Second, perhaps the parents did not feel comfortable discussing a subject about which they had little knowledge.

The researcher addressed these two limitations by approaching the parents' groups in a manner that would create as little stress as possible to the parents. Two weeks prior to the focus groups, the instructor announced the researcher's impending
visit. The parents were informed that the researcher would be coming to discuss how they thought the agency could assist monolingual Spanish-speaking parents in understanding CPS and its services. The instructor also briefly talked about CPS and some of its services.

On the day of the focus group interviews, the researcher arrived early and greeted parents as they arrived. The instructor introduced the researcher, and the researcher observed the class. The researcher also acquainted herself with some of the group members during the class break. By the time the focus group discussions began, rapport had been established between the researcher and the parents.

When it became evident to the researcher that the parents did not have much to say about the subject, she inquired if they had heard about CPS. Because only one parent in each group had, the researcher gave an overview of CPS then asked again whether they had any ideas about what type of information monolingual Spanish-speaking parents needed to better access and understand CPS and the services provided. At this point some of the parents had some input and raised questions based on the CPS presentation.

Had the parents been selected from a group with prior knowledge about CPS, the findings may have been different, as evidenced by the responses by the two parents who had some familiarity with CPS. Their input was more specific. They thought parents would benefit by having Spanish literature which explained the CPS process.

The individual interviews with CPS social workers yielded more information than the parents’ focus groups. During the research design, this researcher concluded it would be easier to communicate with the social workers on an individual basis due to their busy schedules. It was noted in the interviews that CPS social workers had a wide range of ideas on how CPS could enhance its services to Spanish-speaking parents, and the type of information to be included in a Spanish brochure. Had they been provided a setting to discuss these ideas with their co-workers, they would have had the opportunity to elaborate upon and prioritize their suggestions. A focus group for social workers may
have been more effective than individual interviews. A focus group may have yielded more complete information of how CPS could enhance understanding and access to its services for monolingual Spanish-speaking parents.

The individual interviews with agency representatives worked well. Perhaps, a discussion in the form of a focus group also would have worked with the agency representatives; however, the researcher kept in mind the difficulty in trying to coordinate a time and place to meet for individuals whose schedules were booked far in advance.

In conclusion, the researcher found a need for basic information about CPS and its functions for the monolingual Spanish-speaking community. This researcher recommends a brochure in Spanish that introduces CPS to the Spanish-speaking community. To include more respondents, a questionnaire may have been helpful. However, when considering a written questionnaire, it must be acknowledged that some parents may have low or no literacy. This can be remedied if the researcher reads the questions to the parents and records the answers herself.
Chapter Five: Results

A total of six themes were identified: 1) parents need literature in Spanish, 2) parents need information about CPS reporting, 3) parents need to know alternative discipline methods, 4) parents need to know what is considered child abuse, 5) parents need to understand the role of the CPS social worker, and 6) parents need information about community resources. Each agency representative, CPS social worker, and parent said monolingual Spanish-speaking parents should have information in Spanish, and that parents need information about CPS reporting, giving a 100 percent consensus on these two themes.

For the third theme, parents need to know alternative discipline methods, 38 percent of the total participants who agreed with this statement were parents, 37 percent were agency social workers and 25 percent were social workers.

![Figure 1. Percentage of total participants who felt parents should have information on alternative discipline methods.](image)

For the fourth theme, parents need to know what is considered child abuse, the parents represented the largest number responding affirmatively. Figure 2 indicates 43 percent of the total respondents who felt parents needed to know what constitutes child abuse were parents themselves, while the second largest group, 36 percent was agency
representatives. At 21 percent, social workers constituted the smallest percentage of those who felt parents needed to know what child abuse is.

Figure 2. Percentage of participants who felt that parents should know what child abuse is.

The fifth theme was, parents need to understand the role of the CPS social worker. Figure 3 indicates 43 percent of the total respondents who felt parents need to understand the role of the CPS social worker, was made up of parents. Thirty-six percent was made up of agency representatives. Twenty-one percent of the social workers felt parents need to understand the role of the CPS social worker.

Figure 3. Percentage of participants who felt parents need to understand the role of the social worker.
The sixth theme, parents need information about community resources is represented on figure 4. Social workers and agency representatives responded equally, at 37 percent for each group, agreeing that parents should know about community resources. Parents, on the other hand felt less strongly about their need to know more about community resources and 26 percent comprised the smallest percentage.

![Figure 4. Percentage of participants who felt parents need to know more about community resources.](image)

In four of the six themes 100 percent of the parents agreed they needed information in Spanish: 1) parents need to have literature in Spanish, 2) parents need information about CPS reporting, 3) parents need to know alternative discipline methods, and 4) parents need to know what is considered child abuse. Similarly, in four of the six themes, 100 percent of the agency representatives responded that: 1) parents need literature in Spanish, 2) parents need information about CPS reporting, 3) parents need to know alternative methods of discipline, and 4) parents need information about community resources. Finally, four of the six themes also had 100 percent consensus among CPS social workers: 1) Parents need literature in Spanish, 2) parents need information about CPS reporting, 3) parents need to understand the role of the social worker, and 4) parents need information about community resources.
Chapter Six: Discussion

The findings in this study are indisputable regarding the need to provide Spanish literature to monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. One hundred percent of the agency representatives, CPS social workers, and parents agreed that having information in Spanish was necessary.

These findings confirm the need to have literature about CPS in Spanish to increase parents' understanding of the agency's services. This need, according to the literature review, must be addressed by a culturally sensitive agency. In doing so, the agency is, at the same time, assisting monolingual Spanish-speaking parents to develop to their full potential as they are better informed about the purpose and services of CPS.

Under the cultural competency model, an agency has a responsibility to provide services that are seen as culturally relevant by the client. The culturally sensitive agency and social worker are aware of the obstacles which culturally diverse populations face when attempting to access services, and they work towards removing these barriers.

This study suggests that monolingual Spanish-speaking parents, community agency representatives, and CPS social workers perceive language as a barrier for monolingual Spanish-speaking parents to adequately access services provided by CPS. Further, the cultural competency model, as well as the ecological perspective call for a strengthening of the relationship and interactions between people and their environment. In order to do this, social workers and agencies must be willing to carry out a variety of roles such as facilitator, teacher, or mediator. In addition, social workers are called upon to perform the task of filling in the gaps that exist in services, programs, and resources. This study suggests one of the tasks which the agency and social workers might take is that of providing literature in Spanish for monolingual Spanish-speaking parents.
Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusions

The rapid growth of the Latino population in Santa Cruz County poses challenges for its child welfare agency to provide culturally sensitive services to this population. The ability to communicate effectively is crucial. Lack of a common language creates barriers between social workers and the clients. Without a common language, clients are unable to ask questions, or raise concerns that may be vital in their efforts to understand and access services provided by CPS.

When a common language is not shared, there is always risk of doing a disservice or even harm to the client. It is necessary for agencies to make a conscientious effort to provide services in a linguistically and culturally relevant manner. Native language literature about CPS and its services is limited and not readily available to monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. While not intended as a starting point in this process nor a conclusive end-all solution, the CPS Spanish language brochure (See appendix E), is an example of the needed linguistically and culturally relevant materials when serving non-English speaking clients. It was developed in an effort to add to the existing body of CPS’ printed materials available in Spanish.
References


Appendix A
Parents Agreement to Participate in Research
Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Ana Ortega Bedingfeld, MSW Student, San Jose State University.

I understand that I am being asked to participate in a research study. My participation in this study on assessing the needs of Spanish-Speaking parents for a resource guide to Santa Cruz County Children Protective Services will involve participating in a focus group and discussing relevant information to be included in the Spanish resource guide.

It should take no more than twenty-five minutes to conclude this group meeting. The results of this study will help develop a Spanish resource guide that will address the questions and concerns parents have about Santa Cruz County Child Protective Services.

My consent is being given voluntarily without being coerced. I may decline to answer any question/questions, and I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to my relations with Santa Cruz County Child Protective Services or San Jose State University. I understand that there is no risk in participating. There is no direct benefit except for having participated in a research study. I will not receive any compensation for my participation.

The information I provide will remain confidential. This information will be published in a form in which I can never be identified as an individual and I will not be identified by name. The results of this study will be available to participants upon request.

Any questions I may have about my participation in this study will be answered Josephine Mendez-Negrete, Ph.D. at (408) 924-5850. Any complaints about research procedures may also be presented to her. For questions or complaints about research subject’s rights, I may contact Serna Stanford, Ph.D., Associate Academic Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

My signature acknowledges my willingness to be a participant in this study. I understand that I can keep this letter of information.

Subject’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: ___________

Investigator’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: ___________
Appendix B

CPS Social Worker and Agency Representative Agreement to Participate in Research
Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Ana Ortega Bedingfeld, MSW Student, San Jose State University.


I understand that I am being asked to participate in a research study. My participation in this study will consist of an interview either in person or by phone. I will be asked my opinion on what CPS information will be beneficial to Spanish-speaking parents of Santa Cruz County. The interview will take approximately fifteen minutes.

The results of this study will help develop a Spanish resource guide. Such guide will address questions parents have about Santa Cruz County Child Protective Services. The guide will also include information which social workers and community agencies identify as vital for Spanish-speakers.

My consent is being given voluntarily without being coerced. I may decline to answer any question/questions, and I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to my relations with Santa Cruz County Child Protective Services or San Jose State University. I understand that there is no risk in participating. There is no direct benefit except for having participated in a research study. I will not receive any compensation for my participation.

The information I provide will remain confidential. This information will be published in a form in which I can never be identified as an individual nor will I be identified by name. The results of this study will be available to participants upon request.

Any questions I may have about my participation in this study will be answered by Josephine Mendez-Negrete, Ph.D. at (408) 924-5850. Any complaints about research procedures may also be presented to her. For questions or complaints about research subject’s rights, I may contact Serna Stanford, Ph.D., Associate Academic Vice President for graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

My signature acknowledges my willingness to be a participant in this study. I understand that I can keep this letter of information.

Subject’s Signature: ___________________________ Date: _________

Investigator’s Signature: ___________________________ Date: _________
Appendix C

Agency Authorization
December 3, 1997

Our agency is aware that Ana Ortega Bedingfeld is doing a research project as part of her course requirements at San Jose State University. The purpose of her project is threefold: 1). To determine what information Spanish speaking parents need about Santa Cruz County CPS. 2). To develop a parents' Spanish resource guide of Santa Cruz County CPS, 3.)The Spanish resource guide may be used as an educational tool by the Agency in its outreach effort with the Spanish-speaking community.

The proposed method of research used will be focus groups and needs assessment through interviews and second data analysis. The type of subjects will be parents, social workers, and community agency representatives. The parents will be in a psychoeducational setting which may provide support any further discussion about CPS issues with parents if needed. Parents will also be given information on who to contact in case they have personal concerns to discuss with CPS.

There are no anticipated risks to the subjects in this study, and there will be no compensation awarded to subjects for participation in the study. Furthermore, the subjects will not be directly identified with the data. The subject’s input will remain anonymous. The research will take place between January and March of 1998.

If any significant changes are to be made to this project, Ana will first discuss these with the Agency and get its approval.

The signatures below indicate that Ana has discussed and shared her plans with the agency, and that the agency is not in opposition to the project.

Program Manager:  
Field Instructor:  
Student Signature:  

Date: 12/4/97  
Date: 12/4/97  
Date: 12/4/97
Appendix D

San Jose State University Human Subjects Review Board Approval
TO: Ana Ortega Bedingfeld
    215 Bronson Ave.
    Santa Cruz, CA 95062

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

DATE: December 19, 1997

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

"A Parents' Spanish Resource Guide To Santa
Cruz County"

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

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

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

Santa Cruz County CPS Spanish Brochure
SUS DERECHOS

Si su caso llega al tribunal de menores usted tiene el derecho de:

- Ser representado/a por un abogado, o a representarse a sí mismo/a.
- Tener un abogado asignado para que lo represente si usted no puede contratar a uno.
- Un intérprete si usted no entiende o habla el idioma Inglés.
- Ser notificado/a de todas las audiencias en el tribunal y de estar presente en ellas.
- Ver y hacer preguntas a los testigos en su contra.
- Recibir asistencia de servicios sociales para ayudarle a recuperar a su niño.
- Ser consultado/a con respecto a tratamientos médicos y viajes de vacaciones si su niño está desplazado fuera de su hogar.
- Mantenerse en contacto y visitar a su niño, a menos que exista una orden del tribunal de menores con especificaciones contrarias.

RECURSOS DE LA COMUNIDAD

Existen muchos servicios dentro de nuestra comunidad. Estos recursos le pueden ayudar a evitar y resolver los problemas en su hogar. La siguiente lista son los nombres de algunos recursos locales.

Servicios y Protección de Menores (CPS)
763-8850 ó 454-4222

Child Abuse Hotline
para reportar abuso hacia un menor llame al 454-2273. Esta línea está abierta las 24 horas.

Child & Family Mental Health
Salud Mental para Niños y Familia
763-8990 ó 454-4900

Parent Center/Centro de Padres
426-7322 ó 724-2879

Defensa de Mujeres
722-4532 ó 426-7273
En caso de crisis llame: 685-373

Women’s Crisis
728-2925 ó 477-4244
Línea abierta las 24 horas 429-1478

Servicios FENIX
722-591

Servicios Para Jovenes - Youth Services
425-0771 ó 688-8856

Pajaro Valley Family Services
724-7123

Clinica Salud Para la Gente
728-0222

Testigos de Victimas
454-2010 ó 763-8120

Departamento de Servicios y Protección de Menores

Child Protective Services (CPS)

Agencia de Servicios Sociales del Condado de Santa Cruz

Child Protective Services Building "k"
1400 Emeline Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

12 Beach Street
Watsonville, CA 95076
PROPOSITO

El propósito del Departamento de Servicios y Protección de Menores (CPS) es de proteger a los niños en el condado de Santa Cruz y asegurar su bienestar.

CPS se esfuerza en mantener la integridad de la familia. Para este fin, CPS ayuda a los padres de familia a obtener servicios diseñados para asistirles a superar los problemas o las crisis en el hogar.

Algunos ejemplos de los servicios que existen en la comunidad son:
- Consejería para toda la familia
- Grupos de apoyo para los padres de familia
- Guardería
- Alojamiento
- Programas para superar la adicción al alcohol y las drogas

¿QUE ES EL ABUSO?

El abuso existe en varias formas. Las más típicas son:
- **Abuso físico**
- **Abuso sexual**
- **Descuido/Negligencia**

Los niños que corren más riesgo de ser abusados son los más pequeños. Ellos no pueden, o no saben expresar sus necesidades. Nos corresponde a todos nosotros abogar por ellos. Si sospecha que se le está maltratando a un menor de edad, llame al teléfono 454-2273 las 24 horas y permita que un trabajador o trabajadora social tome la investigación en sus manos.

DESCUIDO/NEGLIGENCIA

Existen dos tipos de descuido.

- **El descuido general** significa el descuido y la falta de los padres o el guardián en proveer comida, vestidura y techo adecuado, atención médica, o falta de supervisión para el menor de edad.

- **El descuido severo** significa el descuido negligente de los padres hacia los niños, o el guardián voluntariamente causan o permiten que la persona o la salud del niño corra peligro. Esto incluye falta de proveer comida, vestidumento, techo, o cuidado médico apropiado.

¿QUE PASA CUANDO SE REPORTA EL ABUSO HACIA UN MENOR?

Un trabajador social se comunicará con los padres y su niño para investigar y determinar si hubo abuso o no. El/Ella hará un inventario de las necesidades de la familia para determinar como ayudarle. El objetivo de CPS es de eliminar el riesgo y peligro para el niño.

Cuando no se encuentra algún riesgo para el niño, se le ofrecen servicios a la familia como consejería y se cierra el caso. Si se comprueba que el niño corre peligro de abuso o negligencia se ofrecen servicios más específicos a la familia para ayudarles a superar los riesgos hacia el niño.

En casos donde el peligro es más grave hacia el menor, se hace una apelación al tribunal de menores para que ampare al menor y se exija que los padres tomen acción para resolver los problemas que los trajeron a la atención de CPS.