



PORTRAITS OF AMERICAN LIFE STUDY PANORAMA DE LA VIDA EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

August 2010

Thank you for being in PALS!

In 2006 we asked you to participate in the PALS research study. By sharing your time, you help researchers better understand Americans and how their lives change or stay the same over time. We know your time is valuable, and we appreciate your sharing it with us during interviews. (And as researchers dig through the results, they will never have access to your personal information.) Thanks again!

A Snapshot of PALS

In this important study, you represent the perspectives of many other Americans age 18 and older, and your involvement helps researchers to better understand all segments of our society. We thought you would like to know a little about the members of PALS and the Americans you represent.

- About half of all households lived with a child age 17 or younger.
- One third of Americans rented their home.
- One out of five adults have never been married.
- Four out of ten Americans gave time as an unpaid volunteer during the prior 12 months.
- Two out of three Americans like doing things for a thrill.
- One third of adults have five or less people they feel close to while another third of adults have ten or more persons to whom they feel close.
- Two out of three Americans gave advice to close family in the prior year.



Whether or not you count yourself in these numbers, we count YOU as important to the PALS project. Please stay in touch.

Get ready...

Our research team will be contacting all the PALS members (you) in the future. We want to continue with the next phase of the study, and we appreciate you for sharing your time with us. As before, we will have a "thank you" gift at the end of each interview.

Meet one of our Principal Researchers: Dr. David Sikkink



David Sikkink earned his doctorate in Sociology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and has been a professor of sociology at Notre Dame since 1999. His main research interests are in education, religion, and volunteering.

In 2008, he published an article* about why some Americans volunteered to provide relief to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack victims, their families, or workers. He and his co-author found that Americans were more likely to volunteer if they had a personal connection to victims or those in danger. Many people offered their support as a patriotic response to the tragedy. For other people, a sense of sorrow is what moved them to support relief efforts.

Dr. Sikkink is currently conducting interviews to learn about the volunteer activities of recent graduates from high schools across the country.

He would like to remind all the PALS members that their continued participation is very important to understanding many aspects of Americans' lives. He explains, "Because it would be impossible to interview every American, each PALS member is essential to this statistical picture of Americans and what they think."

Living in Michigan, he and his wife enjoy taking care of their four children, three horses, two cats, and a dog (most of the time).



Have You Moved??

Let us know when you have a change in address, phone number, email address, or name change and we'll send you a \$20 gift card! Call **866-888-PALS (7257)** toll free or email pals@rice.edu.

* Kraig Beyerlein and David Sikkink. 2008. "Sorrow and Solidarity: Why Americans Volunteered for 9/11 Relief Efforts." *Social Problems* 55(2):190-215.



A Note on Your Privacy

The PALS research team takes the confidentiality of your survey responses very seriously. Original interview data are stored on a thoroughly secure computer server, accessible only to select PALS personnel through security codes. When the results of the project are published, all personal information is always removed, so that the individual people cannot be identified. Protecting your privacy is of the utmost importance to us.

If you have any questions or need information regarding the study, contact the PALS Project Administrator, Adele James, at **866-888-7257 (PALS)** or pals@rice.edu

We Are in the News!

Research using the PALS data is mentioned in several news articles. Here are a few.

- "Studies Find God is Alive and Well Among America's Youth," January 20, 2010, and
- "Study on Race, Religion Lifts Up Unpopular Truth of Two Americas," January 6, 2010. Both articles are by David Briggs and appeared in *Ahead of the Trend*, Association of Religion Data Archives.
- "Some Kids are Never Spanked - Do They Turn Out Better?" by Po Bronson, *Newsweek*, December 30, 2009.

This spring college students from across the country wrote research papers for a contest using the PALS data. Their diverse topics covered such issues as risk, friendship, and decision-making.



The Portraits of American Life Study (PALS) is a collaborative project between Rice University and the University of Notre Dame. Funding to start the project was provided by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.



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