



*Qualitative Market Research and Ethnography*

Executive Summary of the

**General Market Formative Immersion Research**

**To Support Brand Development For the Youth Media Campaign**

**Prepared for the**

**Department of Health and Human Services**

**Public Health Service**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

**Atlanta, Georgia**

The *primary objective* of this research was to uncover the story that the CDC's Youth Media Campaign can own as a brand—to understand the motivations, images, and language that will *connect* with both tweens and their families. The ultimate aim of the Campaign is to encourage healthy lifestyles among young people by emphasizing involvement in positive activities (and support from parents and influencers)—both physical and prosocial.

PortiCo Research conducted a total of 25 in-home immersion interviews with tweens and their parents and with 12 influencers in Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Washington, DC, San Francisco, and Phoenix. The youth recruited for this multicultural component of the brand research comprise “general market” tweens, representing a broad range of demographics, including age, sex, ethnicity, geography, urbanization, and activity level. In each market we videotaped interviews with tweens and their parents, with their permission, as well as tween influencers (teachers, coaches, youth organizers, and so on). These interviews elicited the following themes from tweens, parents, and influencers.

### ***“My Kid Just Took to It”: The Story Parents Tell Themselves***

Parents, whether highly involved or passive, attribute their kids' level of interest and success in activities to a natural tendency or talent. They want to believe that their child's interests develop freely and independently. They do not want to acknowledge the degree to which their own input affects their child's involvement. Parental and familial passions, physical involvement, emotional support, motivation, and facilitation are, in fact, key to a child's engagement

### ***Reaching At-Risk Kids: Sparking Kids' Interest and Parental Attention***

Tweens rely heavily on their parents for support and motivation. Getting kids involved in activities means both sparking their interest directly and getting parents more involved in their kids' interests.

### ***Tweens Are Changing***

Tweens' interests and abilities change from day to day, a situation that results in some setbacks but also opens new possibilities. They need guidance in exploring these interests and sticking with activities until their skills improve.

### ***Communicating with Kids: Asking, Listening, and Facilitating***

Parents need to maintain open communications with their kids. They must keep asking questions and listening for cues about what is capturing their imaginations. They must show an interest in the things that stimulate their kids, helping them to find, sign up for, and attend activities.

### ***Offering Praise and Recognition***

Tweens crave recognition of their achievements, including the baby steps along the way to mastery. They want verbal praise, but especially respond to visual cues (eg, a parent's attentive regard or certificates of achievement). Recognition is directly connected with their self-esteem.

### ***Motivating Kids and Achieving the Joys of Success***

Tweens do not always have the staying power to stick with an activity long enough to see their skills improve and experience the joy of success. Thus, parents need to encourage and motivate their kids, helping them balance exploration with discipline and commitment.

### ***Dreaming and Finding One's "Thing"***

For tweens, finding their “thing”—an activity that they enjoy and that makes them feel good—begins with dreaming. They must be encouraged to imagine the possibilities and then to take the first step toward turning their dreams into realities.

### ***The Spark of Adventure: Discovery, Challenge, and Exploration***

Tweens get excited by the idea of adventure. They are curious and stimulated by a sense of discovery, challenge, and exploration.

### ***Connecting with Others and Social Interaction***

For tweens the social aspect associated with an activity can be just as important as the activity itself. Sharing an activity with friends adds to the fun and offers opportunities for peer recognition. Participating in an activity with friends is particularly important for girls.

### ***The Rewards of Doing: Fun and Feeling Good***

Tweens need to experience the in-the-moment joy of being involved in after-school and downtime activities. Kids who are not particularly good at athletics need to engage in the activity for the fun of it, not to be the best at it. Even if they are not the best, they can experience the star power of feeling good about something. They need this short-term motivation to potentially reach a long-term goal of internalizing the activity.