

## **Executive Summary of the Hispanic/Latino Formative Immersion Research To Support Brand Development for the Youth Media Campaign**

In 2000, the U.S. Congress charged the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the task of planning, implementing, and evaluating a national Youth Media Campaign (YMC) to change children's health behavior. The objective of the YMC is to help youth develop lifetime habits that foster good health; these habits include appropriate behaviors relating to diet, physical activity, and avoidance of illicit drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. The CDC has the responsibility of designing and testing messages with various youth audiences, involving young people in campaign planning and implementation, using tactics employed by today's best youth marketers, and enlisting the involvement and support of parents and other role models.

Children aged 9 to 13 years, or "tweens," constitute the youth audience particular to this report. In September 2001, the CDC chose Frankel as the general market agency for their mainstream YMC efforts. Frankel in turn hired Portico Research to engage in an ethnographic study of mainstream tweens.

Inasmuch as the YMC will be a comprehensive nationwide effort, the CDC included several ethnic market segments to ensure the Campaign's overall success. In this context, in mid-September 2001, the CDC selected Garcia 360° to develop ethnic overlay research focused on the Hispanic/Latino and American Indian populations.

In November 2001, Garcia 360° selected the Brain Group to develop the ethnic overlay research focused on the Hispanic/Latino and American Indian populations. The

Brain Group's unique expertise in international youth markets qualified that organization to gain deep insight into the cultural and communication dynamics of U.S.

Hispanic/Latinos and American Indians. Together, the three firms are referred to herein as the "overlay team." Moreover, the overlay team contracted with InnerFocus for immersion interviews within the Hispanic/Latino audience.

The primary objective of this research was to obtain the perspectives of lower-income and foreign-born Hispanic/Latino tweens, parents, and influencers with regard to health, physical, and pro-social activity. The participants consisted of low-income Hispanic/Latinos, who were mostly Spanish-dominant, and included migrant families and new immigrants. Consideration was given to representing those of Mexican, Cuban, and Caribbean (Puerto Rican, etc.) origin.

Altogether, 16 immersion interviews were conducted in Chicago, Illinois, and Santa Ana, California. The research methodology consisted of one-on-one and dyad videotaped interviews with prescreened participants, with their permission. Some interviews were conducted in the home, in recognition that this environment is a critical factor in determining lifestyle, attitudes, motivations, behaviors, and predispositions. Interviews were also conducted in schools and at leisure sites. The interview environment was important for understanding whether and how positive activities are integrated into these tweens' lives.

In Chicago the following interviews were conducted: two dyads with boys ages 12–13 years, one with active boys and the other with inactive boys; one dyad with active girls ages 11–12; two one-on-one interviews with 11-year-old inactive girls; two one-on-one interviews with educators; and two one-on-one interviews with mothers who had

been in the United States for several years. (These mothers were not related to the tweens interviewed.)

In Santa Ana the following interviews were conducted: a one-on-one interview with an inactive girl aged 8, a one-on-one interview with a low activity girl aged 12, a one-on-one interview with a low activity boy aged 11, a one-on-one interview with an inactive boy aged 13, a one-on-one interview with a religious educator, a dyad with educators/influencers, and one-on-one interviews with two mothers, one a recent immigrant and one more acculturated. (These mothers were not related to the tweens interviewed.)

### **Key Findings**

Hispanic/Latino tweens are encouraged to put family needs above their own, and so activity for personal benefit is often secondary or not allowed. Household chores and baby-sitting younger siblings after school while parents work are regular barriers to participation in activities (mostly for girls).

*“ In most families around here, both parents work and can’t dedicate enough time to their kids.” —HL Influencer, Santa Ana*

The realities of limited finances also affect the opportunity for these lower- to middle-income Hispanic/Latino tweens to participate in organized activities.

*“There are classes where you need to pay and not all parents can afford to—like ballet. I would love to enroll my daughter but it costs so much.”—HL Mother, Chicago*

When asked about physical activity, many respondents defined it merely as playing and a distraction. There was no connection drawn between physical activity and health benefits or recognition that group involvement is beneficial to self-esteem. Parents' definitions of good health center on their being able to fill their children's stomachs and have their kids not be sick.

*"I keep my kids well fed. They sleep well. They never get sick on me."—HL*

*Mother, Santa Ana*

New immigrant, Spanish-dominant parents impose a kind of isolation on themselves and their family. Being language-dependent excludes them from opportunities in the general market, because they either don't understand what those opportunities are or are unaware of them. Parents showed reluctance to involve their kids in programs that didn't seem culturally relevant or at least sanctioned by cultural authority figures they trust.

*"We just got here to the U.S. and I don't know how things work. We also don't make enough money to give our kids the best yet."—HL Mother, Santa Ana*