

Executive Summary of the Asian American Formative Immersion Research To Support Brand Development For the Youth Media Campaign

The primary objective of this research was to understand the Asian American audience segment of the CDC's Youth Media Campaign that was not covered by general market formative research.

The focus of this research project was to uncover the habits, practices, and attitudes of this audience segment regarding health, particularly prosocial and physical activities to inform development of a Campaign brand platform. Based on extensive experience in kid marketing, the Campaign's advertising agencies determined that the Campaign would benefit from having a strong "brand," so that children would associate the Campaign's brand with qualities they find favorable.

The respondents for this research project included bicultural Asian tweens, aged 11–13 years, from urban and suburban areas and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, with either one or both parents working. These tweens' parents are first-generation immigrants, and the tweens themselves have lived in the United States for at least 5 years. Although the tweens are quite Americanized outside of their home environment, the participants enjoy music and movies of both cultures and speak their family's native language at home. The tweens were enrolled in public school full time and attended sixth or seventh grades. The research included tweens ranging from very active to inactive in positive activities (prosocial and physical).

The parents recruited for this study were unassimilated Asian parents. They are first-generation immigrants, whose length of residence in the United States did not exceed 10 years. The parents had at least one tween (aged 11–13) currently attending public school and living at home with them. No criteria were set on income and education level.

Altogether, four 90-minute focus groups were conducted with both male and female tweens in Los Angeles from January 31 to February 1, 2002. The focus groups consisted of persons of various Asian origins, including Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Asian Indians. Additionally, four 90-minute dyad interviews and one 90-minute individual interview were conducted with parents in Los Angeles. Dyad interviews were conducted with Chinese mothers, Vietnamese mothers, Filipino mothers and a separate dyad interview was conducted with Korean fathers. An individual interview was conducted with an Asian Indian mother.

Key Findings

Results of this study show that the CDC's Youth Media Campaign will be welcomed by tweens because these Asian tweens engage in a variety of extracurricular activities, the majority of which are educational in nature. The respondents in this study were interested in participating in prosocial physical activities because they are "fun," make the tweens feel good about themselves, and offer opportunities to socialize with friends.

“I don’t like to go to language school (after normal school hours) but my mom makes me because there is no one home. I would rather see my friends and play.”—Chinese girl

“They always say, ‘Don’t do this, don’t do that.’ They always tell me not to go here not to go there. . . so I don’t think they’ll let me go with my friends.”—Boy

Although the tweens are motivated to participate, availability, accessibility, and parental approval are barriers to their doing so. With such parental influence, many of the tween respondents had experienced “fun” activities (such as horseback riding, swimming, skateboarding) only a few times. As tweens become older (especially girls), scheduled cultural and physical activities become less a part of their lives.

Low priority is given to physical activities among the parent respondents because education, cultural bonding, and discipline training at home come first. The dependence of tweens on their parents for transportation acts as a strong disincentive for parents to commit their tweens to any long-term external activities.

For both the tweens and parents in this study, health is a concept associated more with mental and physical health than with physical strength. Freedom from illness, a normal physique, and avoidance of health-damaging habits such as drinking, smoking, drug abuse, and fast-food consumption are considered basic standards of health.

“I believe my child is healthy because she doesn’t get sick all the time and she seems to be happy and pleasant emotionally.”—Mother

“(A healthy person is) someone who doesn’t smoke, drink, or do drugs. . . . someone who is clean inside.”—Boy

“As long as my girl has some waist, she is not fat.”—Mother

Parents in this study strongly believe that their children are both mentally and physically healthy and there is little need for increasing their kids' physical activity. Social activities were perceived as requiring too much of a time commitment from the parents. Strong parental control on tweens' activities means that parents must be convinced of the value of prosocial physical activities before they will actively support them and encourage their children to participate.

“My parents are the most important people to me because they provide for me, send me to school, teach me a lot of things, so I do what they tell me to do.”—Girl

“My mother tells me not to do this and not to do that. . . . I (listen to her because) I only want her to be happy.”—Boy