

# **Synthesis of Learning across 3 Years of Concept and Message Testing among Hispanic/Latino Tweens and Parents**

Formative audience testing has been a critical component of the VERB™ campaign's development, driving its content, tone, and implementation. Before new advertising is launched, concept testing is conducted to validate the communication strategy and aid in the selection of concepts that resonate strongly with the target audience; are acceptable, understandable, culturally appropriate, and motivating; and have few unintended effects. After an advertising concept is produced, message testing is conducted to explore the target audience's reactions to specific concepts; to determine which messages the target audience finds understandable, relevant, appealing, unique, and motivating; and to identify anything that is confusing or controversial. Though much of this information gleaned from the testing is specific to each ad, these data contain a wealth of valuable information about key target audiences—tweens and parents—that can be used to help shape other health communication efforts on physical activity.

Two reviewers from the VERB evaluation team independently analyzed qualitative investigation reports from both the concept and message testing to identify recurrent themes and recommendations for each audience segment. In this report, findings are presented for the African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and American Indian tweens, their parents, and other adult influencers. Health communication practitioners can utilize these findings to assist them in developing more effective, culturally competent, and appropriate messages that encourage physical activity among youth.

## **Findings for Hispanic/Latino Audiences**

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The following thematic summary is generated from focus groups and individual interviews with Hispanic/ Latino children and their parents that were conducted as part of the VERB's campaign message development process. These themes were derived from the reports that were generated from five rounds of qualitative data collection conducted between August 2002 and June 2004. The reports covered both concept and message testing for ads promoting physical activity among tweens (children aged 9–13 years) and their parents. Table 1 summarizes participant characteristics and methods for each investigation. Participants took part in focus groups or in-depth interviews in which they shared their responses to television, print, and radio ads. The resulting reports were then analyzed for their overarching themes and concepts, which are presented here. It is our hope that these findings can be used to support and inform the development of concepts and messages that promote physical activity among Hispanic/Latino tweens and encouragement from their parents to be physically active, leading to more culturally sensitive messaging and effective physical activity promotion for this audience.

Please note: Qualitative techniques have certain limitations. These investigations are exploratory in nature; that is, they are used to stimulate dialogue, elicit a range of

responses, generate ideas, and drive message development. Because of the limited number of participants, unstructured questioning procedures, and the potential for one respondent's opinions to influence those of other respondents, the formative investigation findings reported here should not be considered conclusive or generalizable. The findings contained in this report represent insights gleaned from 3 years of qualitative investigation for the development of messages for a physical activity campaign. When applying these findings within your community and situation, they should be viewed within the context of their limitations.

**Table 1. Methods and Participant Characteristics**

<b>Location and Date</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Number Conducted</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Length of Interview/Focus Group</b>
<b>Chicago, IL August 2002</b>	Focus group	6	4 <sup>th</sup> 7th grade girls and boys	75 minutes
	Focus group	4	Mothers of 4 <sup>th</sup> and 7th grade girls and boys	90 minutes
<b>Chicago, IL September 2002</b>	In-depth interview	4	4th and 5th grade girls and boys	60 minutes
	In-depth interview	6	6th and 7th grade girls and boys	30 minutes
	Focus group	2	Mothers of children ages 9–12 years	75 minutes
<b>Chicago, IL June 2003</b>	Mini focus group	12	6th and 7th grade girls and boys	45–60 minutes
	Mini focus group	4	Mothers of 4 <sup>th</sup> and 7th grade girls and boys	1 hour

<b>Chicago, IL</b>  <b>July 2003</b>	In-depth interview	9	4th–7th grade girls and boys	30 minutes
	Mini focus group	4	Mothers of 4th–7th grade girls and boys	30 minutes
<b>Chicago, IL</b>  <b>April 2004</b>	Focus group	3	Mothers of 4th–7th grade girls and boys	1.25 hours
	Focus group	3	Male adult influencers	1.25 hours
<b>Chicago, IL</b>  <b>May 2004</b>	Focus group	1	Mothers of female tweens	1 hour
	Focus group	1	Mothers of male tweens	1 hour
	Focus group	1	Male adult influencers of boys	1 hour
	Focus group	1	Male adult influencers of girls	1 hour

\* Focus groups comprised at least six participants, mini focus groups comprised four participants, and in-depth interviews were conducted one-on-one.

## **Thematic Summary of Hispanic/Latino Findings**

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✓ **Use audio and visual cues that convey positive tone.**

Hispanic/Latino mothers responded favorably to ads that generated the excitement of being active! The body language and facial expressions of individuals featured in ads should support the positive tone of the ad and the message of becoming physically active. Conveying a sense of irony through extreme changes in the tone or emotion was sometimes distracting, especially when transitions were too extreme.

✓ **Use Action to Promote Physical Activity.**

Parents and children responded more favorably to ads that used sounds and images that projected action, especially those that included music with a lively tone and scenes with continuous motion. Sounds associated with activity—like a ball bouncing—were easily understood. Children especially enjoyed seeing other children being active. In addition, parents responded favorably to slogans that associated energy with physical activity.

✓ **Family unity supports physical activity messages.**

Hispanic/Latino mothers responded positively to messages that encouraged parents and families to take an active role in supporting their children. They valued the concept of family unity and togetherness and liked ads that reminded them of their responsibility to support their children's involvement in physical activity. Several mothers suggested that family support should not be limited to mothers and fathers, and that including extended family (aunts, uncles, and cousins) would give the message a stronger impact. Mothers also liked the concept of taking pride in their children's accomplishments, no matter how small they might seem. Mothers also reacted negatively to ads that appeared to exclude children from engaging in physical active because of a physical deficit and requested that ads be inclusive.

✓ **Messages should convey a single unified thought.**

Materials that promote physical activity should clearly communicate the intended message without bearing resemblance or alluding to other messages. Ad messages should present a unified thought supported by images/sounds.

✓ **Activities should be realistic yet imaginative.**

Realism should be balanced with imagination. Mothers liked the idea of children using their imagination, but the activities should also be grounded in reality. Ads that depicted people and situations that parents and tweens could relate to spurred their thoughts. Tweens preferred ads that showed activities in which they enjoyed participating. Parents and tweens preferred depictions that showed “safe” activities. For instance, tweens responded negatively if the activity depicted could lead to someone being injured or was potentially dangerous. For example, tweens viewed a depiction of someone walking home alone from school as potentially dangerous.

✓ **Choose your words carefully.**

Words in Spanish may mean different things to different people depending on the country they are from and the part of the country they live in. In developing messages, care should be taken to ensure that the meaning of the words do not have negative denotations. Recognize that not all Hispanic or Latino audience members will interpret and respond to the same word in the same way.