



**Key Issues for
Low-Income Latino Preteens
In Santa Clara County:**

***Preliminary Qualitative
Research with
Adult Professionals***

**Commissioned by the
Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health**

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information about preteens, visit
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The preteen years, from ages 9 to 13, are a crucially formative stage for children, as they undergo physical, cognitive, and emotional changes unmatched since the first years after birth. Behavioral choices and decisions children make in this critical period often have ramifications that extend well into adulthood.

Research shows that negative choices made during the preteen years have longer-lasting impact than negative choices made during later teen years.ⁱ Early intervention is therefore key to helping children toward positive behavior.

Despite the significance of this age, empirical literature on preteens is lacking.ⁱⁱ Much more is known about younger children and older adolescents. Even less is known about Latino preteens, even though Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ By the year 2010, 20 percent of youth in the 10-20 age group will be Latino.^{iv}

To begin to address the knowledge gap about preteens and to learn more about the growing Latino preteen population, the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health (the Foundation) commissioned the Aguirre Group to explore some of the issues affecting the emotional and behavioral health of Latino preteens in Santa Clara County, California. According to the California Department of Finance population estimates for 2005, 33 percent of the estimated 122,380 preteens in the county are Hispanic.

This preliminary, qualitative research project was designed to highlight critical issues facing Latino children in this age range, and to explore the most effective ways to talk directly with preteens themselves about important subjects.

The study involved individual interviews and focus groups with adults who work on a daily

basis with preteens. Respondents were chosen for their cultural understanding of the Latino community and their extensive experience working with preteens and their families. This research primarily focused on preteen Latinos from low-income families.

Overall, respondents affirmed that Latino youth face not only the "normal" preteen pressures, but also unique culturally influenced issues involving poverty, acculturation, maturation, and violence and gangs, as well as a multitude of social realities related to being ethnic minorities. Respondents also indicated that cross-cultural issues, including the pressure to conform in both Latino and mainstream cultures, can have negative consequences on these preteens' family and school life.

Respondents also described supportive factors that contribute to the success and resiliency of many Latino preadolescents. Chief among these, not surprisingly, is family involvement and support. Other positive adult role models and participation in sports or community programs also were mentioned frequently as factors that assist preteens in setting goals, developing strong self esteem, and making healthful choices.

The study participants strongly endorsed further research with preteens themselves as a useful way to inform effective intervention strategies. Many respondents suggested that small group discussions, separately with boys and girls, would be a successful approach, but others said that one-on-one interviews would achieve the most honest results. All agreed that large group settings do not work for this age group.

Respondents recommended six next steps:

- Gather additional ethnographic data directly from preadolescents;

- Gather additional incidence and prevalence information on problems faced by Latino preteens;
- Identify ways in which community programs can better reach and work with the families of Latino preadolescents, not just the children themselves;
- Promote after-school program participation among the Latino community;
- Promote prevention programs focused on high-risk behaviors, particularly gangs and sexual behavior; and

- Collect and disseminate information on effective practices from existing programs that foster positive Latino youth development.

Many Latino preteens face issues of poverty, acculturation, gangs and violence, and maturation. Recognizing and documenting their unique experiences, as distinguished not only from non-Latino preteens but also from older and younger children, is the first step toward identifying strategies to help them overcome obstacles and make healthful life choices during the formative preteen years.

INTRODUCTION

The preteen years, from ages 9 to 13, are a crucially formative stage for children, as they experience rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional growth. Research shows that behavioral choices and decisions children make in this critical period often have ramifications that extend well into adulthood, and sometimes throughout their lives.ⁱ

Despite the significance of this age, empirical literature on preteens in general, and on Latino preteens in particular, is lacking.ⁱⁱ

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ By the year 2010, 20 percent of youths in the 10-20 age group will be Latino.^{iv} According to the California Department of Finance population estimates for 2005, already 33 percent of the estimated 122,380 preteens in Santa Clara County are Hispanic.

To begin to address the knowledge gap regarding this growing population, the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health (the Foundation) commissioned the Aguirre Group to explore issues affecting the emotional and behavioral health of Latino preteens in Santa Clara County.

This study follows earlier Foundation research that sought parental opinion about the health and well being of their preteens. This new study extends that information, and offers additional insights into Latino preteens through focus groups and interviews with adults who have frequent interactions with Latino youth outside their homes—through school, church, or community organizations.

Respondents drew on their observations, interactions, and positions as trusted adults in Latino preadolescents' lives to provide information on factors that most affected the emotional and behavioral health of pre-

adolescents. While noting that Latino preadolescents face many of the same issues as others in their age group, the respondents indicated that these issues are complicated by social and cultural factors specific to the Latino population. In addition, respondents said that older preadolescents (ages 12-13) encounter many of the same issues as younger preadolescents (ages 9-11), but they deal with them in different ways. Each age group therefore requires tailored approaches.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

One goal of the research was to document the most salient issues identified by knowledgeable adults, most of whom were professionals working at schools, churches, and nonprofit organizations. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews were used to establish a convenient, comfortable, environment within which these adults would speak freely. When distance or scheduling made a focus group inconvenient, individual interviews were conducted.

Interview and Focus Group Composition

Participants were selected for the focus groups and interviews because of their interaction with the Latino community and with Latino preadolescents outside the home. During the selection process, they were asked about their experiences with preteens and the issues these young people face. These adults provided a unique and valuable view of what preadolescents' lives are like, as in some cases they may spend more waking hours with the preadolescents in question than their parents do, albeit in a group setting.

Respondent also were able to discuss the issues easily, which is not always the case for preteens themselves. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

In collaboration with the Foundation, Aguirre staff identified schools and community agencies in Latino communities in Santa Clara County that work with youth and with the Latino population. Experienced interviewers conducted 20 interviews with key adult professionals. Individuals interviewed included elementary and middle school principals, teachers, school counselors, after-school program directors, a faith-based program youth activities director, mental health counselors, nonprofit health care providers, a special education teacher/administrator, and juvenile and law enforcement program activity managers.

In addition to individual interviews, four focus groups were conducted, two with nonprofit organization staff and two with school and school district staff and parents. The school staff groups were conducted in San Jose and Santa Clara, and the nonprofit organization groups took place in San Jose and Palo Alto. Focus group participants included after-school program staff, recreational program staff, school counselors, school nurses, teachers, sports and after-school program managers, a parent monitor and volunteer, and a parent liaison. As a whole, focus group participants reflected a deep cultural understanding and experience of the Latino community, diversity in socioeconomic, and a high degree of interaction with preadolescents.

Most of the respondents worked with families below or near the poverty level.

It should be noted that this study is qualitative only, and the opinions of these participants are not necessarily representative of all adults who work with Latino preteens in Santa Clara County.

Instrumentation

In developing the interview and focus group guides (*see Appendix*), the researchers sought to collect uniform information while allowing the questions to be open-ended enough to permit

respondents to raise additional relevant issues. The majority of the questions sought to generate discussion; however, selected questions asked for ratings on certain issues. Overall, a qualitative approach was selected because of the preliminary nature of the study, and because of the lack of existing research on this population.

A variety of sources were used to develop the focus group guides and interview protocols. These included the Foundation's telephone survey of parents of preadolescents in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties; preliminary data from the Foundation's report, *A Portrait of Preteens in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties*, which was conducted by Public/Private Ventures; and data from the California Healthy Kids Survey. The researchers also conducted a review of existing literature on Latino emotional and behavioral health issues, both in California and nationwide. The review helped the researchers construct themes for discussion in the focus groups and in-depth interviews. These themes included peer pressure, social relationships, school and parental relationships, and stress.

The focus group and interview guides were designed to be parallel in content. Specifically, they each addressed the general background of the respondent and his/her experience with Latino preadolescents; health, emotional, and social issues; social support for preteens; needed changes; and recommendations for designing future research studies with Latino preadolescents themselves.

FINDINGS

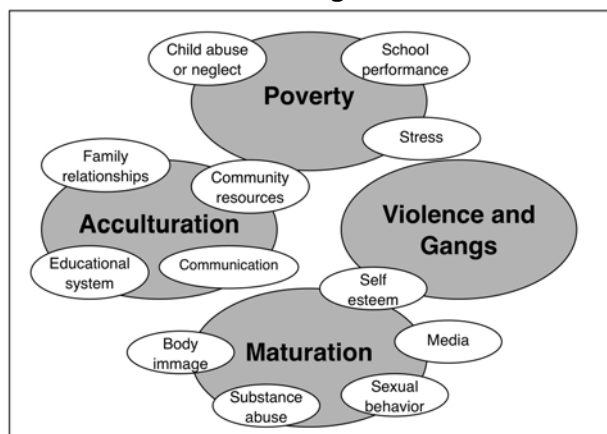
Main Themes

The interviews and focus groups were structured to explore a wide range of possible issues affecting Latino preadolescents, and to include both negative and positive factors for further study directly with preteens. (*See Appendix*)

Respondents emphasized that while Latino preadolescents face the same challenges as others their age, the responses to these challenges by many Latinos are uniquely shaped by issues of culture, language, and immigration.

Respondents tended to group these Latino-specific influences under four themes: poverty; acculturation; maturation; and violence and gangs. Within each of these themes, subcategories emerged. These subcategories are often interconnected and overlap across themes. Figure 1 presents these themes along with their related issues that emerged from respondents' answers.

Figure 1: Respondent Themes and Map of Related Issues Facing Latino Preteens



Respondents also noted that factors that promote resilience among preteens are strongly present in the Latino community. These included parental involvement and support, positive connections with caring adults in their families and communities, exposure to diverse activities and environments, and participation in community programs.

The following section provides key results from the interviews and focus groups.

Poverty

Of the critical themes that arose from the study, poverty was the most frequently mentioned.

Respondents indicated that poverty is one of the primary risk factors for negative preadolescent behavior. They saw it as the root cause of a variety of issues related to child abuse and neglect, stress, health, education, and gang involvement. In contrast to more settled families, many Latino families often are more mobile, living in temporary housing. Moreover, their living conditions often exceed minimal and agreed upon standards for crowding.¹ In contrast to many other demographic groups for whom a wide array of public assistance and public housing may be available, Latinos as a cultural group are less likely to take advantage of public assistance. In addition, many families fear public assistance because of one or more family member's immigration status.

“Poverty [is] the root cause of a lot of other issues...broken families, the inability of families to put time into education, [it’s] not that [families] do not care, but they are just too busy surviving. The students cannot focus and put all their energy into education as they would want to...[It’s] all related to poverty, since many live in very crowded conditions, garages...not enough space to study or do homework...”

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and neglect arose as an issue directly linked by respondents to poverty, specifically the low wages paid to many Latino parents. Parents often work long hours and many have multiple jobs. This leaves little time for parents to be at home and, consequently, preteens often have adult responsibilities within the household. While parents have positive ideals regarding safety, health, and education for their children, they often are not at home to enforce or foster

¹ Aguirre has found, through numerous studies measuring housing standards of Latino families, that it is common for families to double up in housing; single families of up to five individuals often share a single room in a household. A common criterion used to measure crowding is more than one person per room, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

these ideals. The lack of support has varied impacts on boys and girls: Respondents noted that female preteens often must play the role of caretakers for younger children, while the boys take on adult male roles early.

Respondents identified three key issues related to this “sibling parenting.” First, the young Latinas lack the knowledge and parenting skills needed to ensure the safety and well being of the younger children. Second, this heavy responsibility often leads to great resentment toward their parents and potential recklessness regarding their own future well being. Third, in families where the father is absent or rarely in the home, male preadolescents who assume the “male” role become more authoritarian and demanding. Respondents identified ideals of Latino culture as the cause: *“Boys ... follow the macho culture accepted at home.”*

School Performance

Another consequence of poverty is its effect on school performance. This also is related, in part, to the lack of time for parents to supervise school work and attendance. Respondents noted that parental absence leads to a large amount of unsupervised time after school in which kids are just “hanging out.” Other respondents noted what they perceived to be poor quality schools for low-income children. Finally, respondents pointed to the difficulty of doing homework in crowded homes with few academic resources.

Stress Due to Poverty

Given that many of these preteens face increased responsibilities at home, a lack of parental supervision, and limited personal space, it is not surprising that nearly half of interview participants said that, in general, Latino preadolescents experienced stress. A third of the respondents also felt that 11-13-year-olds have higher stress levels than the younger group. Respondents noted that these preteens are absorbing parents’ worries about finances, and

are concerned with personal safety both at home and at school. Moreover, these youth deeply feel the peer and societal pressures to be consumers and to conform to a youth culture in which they often cannot afford to partake.

“Some of the preadolescents come from very stressful family situations. Some have parents working all day, more than one job; others live in crowded conditions with little time or space for normal family relationships; others have parents or older siblings with emotional problems or engaged in drugs or criminal activities; others have parents who are very apathetic. These preadolescents have to fight constantly against those kinds of situations to succeed.”

Immigration and Acculturation

While respondents said that poverty is the root cause of many problems for preteen Latinos, immigration and acculturation issues set Latino families apart from other demographic groups in similar economic circumstances. Acculturation refers in this context to the process of immigrants becoming acclimated to U.S. culture and society, and learning to negotiate U.S. institutions. Acculturation issues vary for Latino preadolescents, depending on when their families immigrated to the United States. Preteens may themselves be immigrants, have first generation immigrant parents, or have parents who are U.S. citizens.

In the focus groups and interviews, the adults who work with preteens noted that for preadolescents with immigrant parents, acculturation leads to additional tensions because families are dealing with cultural norms and experiences that are different from those in their country of origin. The acculturation process affects each family member differently, as children seek to adopt local customs rapidly while adults may resist new cultural values and norms. This clash, both at home and within their

family's interaction with the community, can be complicated by the family's stress and economic circumstances. The most common issues deriving from acculturation are strained family relationships, lack of knowledge to navigate through the education system, and inadequate skills to utilize community resources.

Although they touched on this only briefly, respondents mentioned that acculturation issues also can cause preadolescents to focus upon and adopt the negative aspects of U.S. culture while abandoning the positive aspects of their culture of origin.

“Unfortunately for some, instead of learning the good... they pick-up the negative... such as less family support, bad eating habits, drugs, gangs....The longer they are here, the worse they get.”

Family Relationships and Communication

When asked to rank various acculturation-related issues either as a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem, respondents indicated that family relationships were a big problem. Over a quarter of the interviewees felt that strained family relationships were a big problem for female preteens, while a third said the same for boys.

Breakdowns in communication occur frequently as Latino children are quicker to adopt English as their native language; family structures change, as there is no longer an extended family on which to depend; and often fundamental cultural values wither away.

“Preteens are very close (to their families) and depend on family decisions to act. Sometimes it creates conflicts, because parents do not understand the culture and are afraid to let their kids explore more opportunities, such as participation in sports. The kids do not like to challenge or contradict their parents.”

Education

Respondents identified two issues related to education: fundamental cultural differences in parental involvement in school; and the impact schools have on Latino preadolescent children, especially new immigrants from Mexico.

Latino parents generally view the educational system as a separate entity disconnected from their familial structure, unlike many U.S. parents who are integrally involved in their children's school life. This different viewpoint can be exacerbated for parents and children who have limited English proficiency. Respondents concurred that immigrant parents are unaware that they have a right to question their child's education or request supportive academic services. Even when assistance is available to guide parents through the system, respondents said, parents often choose not to take advantage. Reflecting the confusion and difficulties Mexican parents face, one respondent said:

“What exactly do you mean by parent involvement? In Mexico, you as a parent . . . went to all of the meetings; it did not mean that you went into the classroom and helped the teacher...you would never see that [in Mexico]. And so here they won't go into the classrooms to help the teachers and so there is that misunderstanding—what is parent involvement and really the intimidation of not understanding how the system works.”

Many interviewees mentioned how school and social settings can be a problem for preadolescents. Acculturation and assimilation issues play a part in how new immigrants are treated at school, even by other Latino preadolescents. One respondent said that less acculturated children often are picked on by other Latinos. In addition to the normal preteen segregation, new immigrants also are ostracized for language reasons.

“[Spanish speakers] don’t mingle with English-only kids. There’s lots of discrimination that happens in playgrounds; [they are] called names, picked on because they don’t speak English.”

Community Resources

In addition to viewing the school systems differently, many parents of Latino pre-adolescents do not seek community resources, such as health services and after-school programs, because this is not common practice in their country of origin, respondents said. Locating services for one’s child is routine in the U.S., but such resources exist to a much more limited extent in many of the developing countries from which Latino immigrants come. Moreover, there is often a sense of guilt or a feeling of pride that can act as a barrier for many parents seeking programs or services for their children. In addition, many Latino families are isolated and may mistrust community resources, believing them to be linked to governmental entities and even the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

“When those from Mexico first come, they are so ‘closed off’ from the rest of the world. They have little interaction with the rest of the community, and are unaware of how to develop socialization to function in society. We work with them because they are not familiar with available resources besides the schools.”

Gangs and Violence

Gang involvement emerged as a top issue affecting the daily lives of many preteens, although it is unquestionably interwoven among many of the themes in this report. Gangs and violence were more often rated as a big problem for boys than for girls, and as a bigger problem for 11-13-year-olds than younger preteens.

However, many respondents commented on the increase in gang violence not only among boys

but also among girls. The violence girls now are displaying has become more aggressive and even fatal in occasional cases. Females in gangs represented a big problem for over a third of interview respondents, while males in gangs were a big problem for more than half. Bullying and other violence was called a big problem by over a third of the respondents.

“The 6th grade girls are involved with the gangs, wearing the colors. The girls are very loyal to the boy gang members.”

In some cases, gang membership is a legacy.

“Their family members are in gangs and the girls are born into it. It is very difficult for the girls to get away from it. It is in the area where they live.”

Latino gangs provide a built-in support system. As mentioned, parents of this preteen population might have multiple jobs or be single parents. The lack of parental support and supervision make gangs a natural surrogate family, respondents said, particularly because these preteens live in neighborhoods where there is a high exposure to gangs. Gangs provide a bridge for youth between two cultures, a way for pre-adolescents to cope or fit in, and, ironically, a feeling of safety. Virtually all respondents mentioned that the gangs in Santa Clara County are composed of Norteños (Northerners), who are predominantly second or third generation Latinos, and Sureños (Southerners), who tend to be new immigrants and first generation Latinos. Respondents commented that some newly arrived immigrants are pressured to select a gang in order to protect their family.

“The ones that are recent immigrants to the U.S. feel that they need to prove themselves. They are stereotyped. So you have the gangs that reflect this, the Norteños and Sureños.”

Maturation Issues

Latino preteens naturally must contend with the issues of growing up that every child faces, but respondents noted the strong influence on that process of poverty, acculturation, and gangs. While many respondents observed that Latino preadolescents mature at a much faster rate in some selective behaviors, at the same time they are psychologically immature and lack the experience to understand the repercussions of their actions.

“I see a lot more 9-11-year-olds dealing with issues that 12-13-year-olds were dealing with years ago.”

When asked to rank maturation issues as a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem, respondents differed in their rankings for boys and girls. Body image, self esteem, and sexual activity were seen as the top three problems for girls, while self esteem, substance abuse, and peer pressure were the top three problems for boys.

Many respondents cited the media as having a negative effect on the maturation process for Latinos. Music, radio, video games, and television contribute to forming a culture of disrespect toward authority and women, they said. Spanish language television, which promotes sexuality, was cited as exerting pressure to mature early.

“Sex and sexuality are misrepresented in movies and television. [It] plays a big part in pre-adolescent lives.”

The media influence has a stronger impact on girls than boys, particularly on how they view their bodies, respondents said. More than half of the interviewees said this was a bigger problem for older preadolescents.

“By the time they get to junior high, the way they look is more important.... For girls it is the way

they dress, trying to show their womanhood by wearing more make-up and revealing clothes, and the way they talk and stand in front of boys. For boys, it is by validating their status by the girl they have, trying to be ‘studs.’”

Although body image issues were more prominent with Latina preadolescents, respondents noted that Latino males, especially those who are overweight, also are concerned about their image.

One of the greatest concerns among respondents is the risky sexual behavior of Latino preadolescents. Over half of all respondents cited the media influence on both boys and girls, but found the major problem to be with girls ages 11-13. Respondents also noted the strong effect of preteens modeling the sexual behavior of their older siblings. Some respondents commented that preadolescent girls initiate sexual activity without being forced, though girls also are pressured to be sexually active by older boyfriends.

Over a third of the interviewees felt that drugs, alcohol, or smoking were big problems among both girls and boys, with nearly half finding those problems more prevalent among 11-to-13-year-olds. Respondents, in both interviews and focus groups, felt that many preadolescents, through peers or through members of their own family, have tried or been exposed to alcohol, cigarettes, or marijuana. Some even are experimenting with crystal methamphetamine.

RESILIENCE

Despite the challenges facing Latino preadolescents, respondents observed that several factors contribute to the success and resiliency of this population. Parental involvement and support have been key to success for many children, as have positive connections with caring adults (teachers, counselors, mentors, etc.), exposure to different activities and environ-

ments, and participation in sports or community programs. As with every group, some preteens also demonstrate seemingly innate qualities that help them to succeed despite adversity.

Respondents did note, however, that while opportunities may exist for preteens to participate in community activities, family obligations may prevent participation, particularly by girls.

Just having an adult presence can make the difference between motivating and helping the child achieve positive goals or having a pre-adolescent who is in and out of the juvenile justice system, respondents said.

“Sometimes you get these doors or windows that open for you. And they’re kind of mentors or angels... it doesn’t happen often, and some kids don’t get that.”

Exposure to varied environments and activities allows preadolescent Latinos the chance to see that there is a range of opportunities outside of their communities or home life, respondents said. They noted that many of these preteens and their families simply do not know about the existence of other options. Visits to museums, outdoor spaces, recreation settings, and various work environments can spark changes and help create positive future goals.

“[Visiting] a place where you engage with language, with communication, and with expression in very different ways than they’re able to do in schools . . . can sometimes be the key.”

As their families often are isolated because of language and fear, many Latino preadolescents are not naturally made aware of different environments, so they must find these opportunities through school, sports, or community-sponsored events.

Involvement in these activities gives pre-adolescent Latinos the opportunity to be

connected to something positive and have something about which to feel good. However, school-based sports leagues or after-school programs may not have been available in their countries of origin, so Latino immigrant parents may not pursue or encourage participation in such activities, respondents said.

Regardless of their socioeconomic conditions, respondents noted, preteens whose parents have instilled the value of education and working hard to reach goals generally manage to do well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to increasing awareness about the salient issues facing Latino preteens, a second purpose of this study was to identify the best methods for eliciting honest information from preteens about these issues. Respondents said that small groups were the best venue, and several interviewees suggested separating boys and girls to obtain more forthright responses. Incentives such as food or music or small gifts could be used to encourage participation. Some respondents, however, said that individual interviews are the only way to gather such information. All agreed that preteens become lost in larger group settings.

Respondents also suggested that several topics would be worthwhile to discuss with preteens: the impact of poverty; the influence of gangs and gang violence; self esteem and body image; the influence of media; acculturation issues; family relationships and communication; neglect; sexual behavior; stress; and drugs, alcohol, and smoking.

Issues that respondents thought preteens might find more challenging to discuss included: educational problems; violence not related to gangs, e.g., bullying; anxiety or depression; peer pressure; suicide and self-mutilation; and obesity, weight issues, and nutritional health.

While respondents found these issues to be important, they said that several (e.g., suicide and self-mutilation) are probably too sensitive to discuss in group settings. Respondents also said that issues such as weight and nutrition would be challenging, as Latino cultures generally view these issues as less of a problem.

Respondents also said that preteens might not fully understand, or would have limited experience with or exposure to, issues of sexual harassment or eating disorders. Including these issues in a study with preteens would probably not be fruitful, they said.

Study participants clearly conveyed that interventions that strengthen resiliency and mitigate barriers to healthy development would benefit these youth, and they noted the importance of trying to involve the whole family and providing education and resources for parents.

The majority of the respondents also mentioned the need to make important changes at the school level; many noted how limited funding affects the quality of the education for Latino preteens. The respondents overwhelmingly mentioned the need for additional funding to implement much-needed prevention programs, including recreational activities, such as art and sports programs, as well as mentoring, tutoring, and after-school programs. All respondents felt these services would address the need to promote positive self esteem among preteen Latinos. Equally important, respondents said, is the need to focus on helping the family unit. Parental involvement and education is essential for families to become healthier.

Specific respondent recommendations were to:

1. ***Gather additional ethnographic data directly from preadolescents.*** Work with school or nonprofit agency staff members who have built relationships with preteen Latinos to act as liaisons and help gain access to preteens and their families. Conduct focus

groups/small group discussions with the pre-adolescents, specifically around their views of issues such as stress; acculturation issues; family relationships and communication; influence of media; sexual behavior; self esteem and body image; neglect; poverty; and drugs, alcohol, and smoking. Talk to them individually and observe them in their communities to further document the impacts of poverty, violence, and gangs.

2. ***Gather additional incidence and prevalence information on problems faced by Latino preadolescents.*** Insufficient statistical information is available on the poverty, acculturation, maturation, and violence issues faced by Latino preadolescents, specifically. Data on how many youth are facing specific issues will assist program planners, funders, community leaders, nonprofit and public agencies, as well as researchers, and enable them to marshal better resources and target programming to meet the needs of this age group.
3. ***Identify ways in which programs can better work with the families of Latino preadolescents.*** Effective strategies require involvement from the whole family, along with assistance for parents and preteens in locating and utilizing community resources and services.
4. ***Promote after-school program participation among the Latino community.*** Develop liaisons to bridge the gap between positive recreational/educational programs and family/cultural expectations. Since the findings presented here suggest that when parents work multiple jobs, Latino preadolescents may lack positive adult role models, it is important to include mentoring in school- and community-based programs.
5. ***Promote prevention programs to address high-risk behavior,*** such as gang participation, substance use, and sexual behavior, by

targeting communities where such issues are a major problem for preteens, and developing early intervention programs to educate parents and preadolescents about the dangers of such activities, as well as providing families with resources to intervene early with their children.

6. ***Collect and disseminate information on effective practices from existing programs that foster positive Latino youth development***, and create a guide of promising practices. Support the sustainability of programs that have a proven positive record of accomplishment with the preteen population.

CONCLUSION

Recognition is growing of the need to focus on the crucial developmental stage of preteens. At this phase in life, children are faced with numerous developmental challenges, including physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. Their responses to these changes will help shape their future behavior and world view as teenagers, and, ultimately, as adults in our society. This study highlights significant additional issues that Latino preadolescents face regarding poverty, acculturation, violence, and maturation. Recognizing the unique experiences of Latino preteens, as distinguished not only from other preteens but also from older adolescents, is the first step toward identifying ways to help them overcome obstacles and make healthful life choices during these formative years.

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APPENDIX

Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health – The Aguirre Group
Adult Professional Interview Guide

Name of Organization/Program: _____
 Address: _____

 Name: _____
 Interview Date: _____
 Interviewer: _____
 Interview Language: _____

GENERAL - BACKGROUND


1. What is your experience working with preteen Latinos? (Probe: number of years, other organizations)
2. What languages do you speak?
3. Please describe the Latino preadolescents you currently work with...

| How frequently do you come in contact with preteen Latinos? | Average number of hours per day? | On a typical day, how many preteen Latinos do you encounter or work with? | What are their ages? (or age range?) |
|---|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| EVERY DAY (5 DAYS A WEEK) | | | |
| AT LEAST 3 DAYS A WEEK | | | |
| 1 OR 2 DAYS A WEEK | | | |

4. What are the preteen families’ countries of origin? What is the most common country of origin?
5. On average, how long have their families been in the US?
6. Approximately, what percent of the Latino preteens you work with are foreign born?

And...US born?

7. What are their primary languages? What is the most common primary language?
8. Approximately what percent speak limited English?
9. Which language do they most often use amongst themselves?
10. What languages do they (preteen Latinos) most often speak with you?
11. Overall, what are the biggest problems or issues that affect the Latino preteens you work with? [PROMPT: It can be about anything, such as issues related to health, family, school, behavior, community, emotional or social issues, etc.]
12. Are there any major differences among the preteen Latinos (you encounter or work with) in terms of:... [SEE GRID ON NEXT PAGE]

| 12. Are there any major differences among the preteen Latinos (you encounter or work with) in terms of... | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|--------|----------------|
| HOW DOES IT AFFECT...  | INCOME LEVEL? | | ACCULTURATION? [DEFINE FOR PARTICIPANTS] | | CULTURAL ISSUES? [DEFINE FOR PARTICIPANTS] | | OTHER? | |
| | NO | YES (EXPLAIN): | NO | YES (EXPLAIN): | NO | YES (EXPLAIN): | NO | YES (EXPLAIN): |
| | | | | | | | | |
| THEIR BEHAVIOR, DECISIONS THEY MAKE? | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS |
| | | | | | | | | |
| HOW THEY INTERACT WITH OTHERS? | | | | | | | | |
| HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THEMSELVES | | | | | | | | |
| THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH? | | | | | | | | |

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

13. I'm going to show you a list of problems that may affect the social or emotional lives of preteens. Please tell me which ones of the following, in your opinion, affect these preteen Latinos.

| ISSUES ABOUT PRETEENS' BEHAVIOR & EMOTIONS: | Girls? 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | Boys? 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | Preteens Ages 9-10 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | Preteen Ages 11- 13 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| BULLYING | | | | |
| VIOLENCE | | | | |
| GANGS | | | | |
| DRUGS, ALCOHOL, OR SMOKING. [If drugs, which ones?] | | | | |
| SEXUAL ACTIVITY | | | | |
| SEXUAL HARRASMENT | | | | |
| BODY IMAGE | | | | |
| EATING DISORDERS SUCH AS ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA | | | | |
| OBESITY/OVERWEIGHT (poor exercise or eating habits) | | | | |
| CUTTING / SELF-MUTILATION | | | | |
| STRESS | | | | |
| SCHOOL PERFORMANCE | | | | |
| SELF-ESTEEM | | | | |

| | Girls? | Boys? | Preteens Ages 9-10 | Preteen Ages 11- 13 |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| ISSUES ABOUT PRETEENS' BEHAVIOR & EMOTIONS: | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] |
| PEER RELATIONSHIPS AND PRESSURES | | | | |
| FEELING SAD OR DEPRESSED | | | | |
| SUICIDE | | | | |
| OTHER?: _____ | | | | |

| | Girls? | Boys? | Preteens Ages 9-10 | Preteens Ages 11- 13 |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| ISSUES ABOUT FAMILY, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, SOCIETY: | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] | 1 BIG PROBLEM 2 SOMEWHAT A PROBLEM [ENTER RESPONSE NUMBER AND EXAMPLE] |
| RACIAL AND CULTURAL TENSIONS | | | | |
| FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS | | | | |
| CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT | | | | |
| POVERTY | | | | |
| INFLUENCE OF MEDIA AND INTERNET | | | | |
| QUALITY OF EDUCATION | | | | |
| OTHER?: _____ | | | | |

14. What are the three most common issues you encounter when working with the preteen Latinos?

15. What are the unique and positive attributes or characteristics of Latino preteens? Please describe.
16. Do preteens ever ask you for help to deal with any of the issues we covered? If so, please elaborate
17. There are preteen Latinos who do well in spite of a number of challenges and issues they face; what do you think contributes to this success? [PROBE: How are some preteens able to overcome challenges more than others?]
18. For kids who don't do as well, what do you think prevents them from succeeding?

EXPECTATIONS

19. Tell me about what expectations or dreams the Latino preteens you work with have shared with you? [PROBE: What types of plans have they shared with you about their future?]

HEALTH

20. What are the biggest physical health issues for the Latino preteens you work with?

SOCIAL SUPPORT

21. What are the “social supports” -- assistance available to individuals and groups from within their families, friends, and communities -- used by these kids? [PROBE: Where do these kids turn when they need help? For what issues? Do different kids turn to different places?]
21. What social supports or strengths are particular to preteen Latinos?
23. Do you interact with parents in your work? If so, how?

IDENTIFYING CHANGES NEEDED

24. Suppose that you are the person in charge of programs or policies designed specifically to help enhance the overall development of preteen Latinos: what would you do to achieve this end? Or what would be some of the challenges and how and what would you do to address these challenges? [PROBE: What information or resources would help improve their ability to support or work with preteens?]
25. How should we go about asking preteen Latinos questions about their lives? [PROBE: Are there any ways to ask preteen Latino girls and boys? More specifically, by age groups, how do we ask 9-10 year olds and 11-12 Latino preteen boys and about 9-10 year olds and 11-12 Latino preteen girls? Are there any other sources to obtain information about them? [PROBE: Do you have any thoughts on how to go about conducting a study with preteens?]

DEBRIEFING

We are now finished with the interview, and I want to thank you for your time and assistance. Now I would like to get your feedback to the interview and the kinds of questions we asked you.

26. Were there any questions that I did not ask, but you think are important for us to ask? If so, please detail.
27. Were there any questions that you thought were not important to ask?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health – The Aguirre Group

Adult Professional Focus Group

Moderator's Guide

Name of Agency / Program: _____

Name of Location: _____

Address: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Date: _____

Time (start / end): _____

Moderator: _____

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

Let me ask you some general questions about the preteen Latinos you encounter or work with...

1.1. How frequently do you come in contact with preteen Latinos?

1.2. What are their ages?

1.3. On an average or typical day, how many preteen Latinos do you work with or encounter?

1.4. What are their countries of origin?

1.5. On average, how long have their families been in the U.S.?

2. SOCIO-CULTURAL

2.1. What language do they most often speak among themselves? With you?

2.2. Of the Latino preteens that you work with, what socio economic group do you think most of them come from?

2.3. Are there any major differences among the income levels of the preteen Latinos (you encounter or work with)? If so, what are those differences?

3. HEALTH, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

- 3.1 Overall, what do you think are the biggest problems or issues facing the Latino preteens you encounter or work with? It can be anything, such as issues related to health, family, school, behavior, community, or social issues, etc.
- 3.2 Are these issues different for boys and girls? How?
- 3.3 How about for younger preteens, are the issues different for preteens (around 9-10) as compared to older preteens (around 12-13)?
- 3.4 Do you think their families are aware of these issues? If not, why do you think that is?
- 3.5 I am going to show you a list of problems that may affect the lives of preteens.

(1) Please tell me which ones of the following, in your opinion, are the biggest problems (most serious or most common) for preteen-Latino males and females

(2) Now, can you give me (an/some) brief examples or stories about this (these) issue(s)?

ABOUT PRETEENS' BEHAVIOR & EMOTIONS:

| (1) ISSUES | (2) FROM PARTICIPANTS | |
|---|-----------------------|--------|
| | MALE | FEMALE |
| BULLYING | | |
| VIOLENCE | | |
| GANGS | | |
| DRUGS, ALCOHOL, OR SMOKING. [If drugs, which ones?] | | |
| SEXUAL ACTIVITY | | |
| SEXUAL HARRASMENT | | |
| BODY IMAGE | | |
| EATING DISORDERS SUCH AS ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA | | |
| OBESITY/OVERWEIGHT (poor exercise or eating habits) | | |
| CUTTING / SELF-MUTILATION | | |
| STRESS | | |
| SCHOOL PERFORMANCE | | |
| SELF-ESTEEM | | |
| PEER RELATIONSHIPS AND PRESSURES | | |
| FEELING SAD OR DEPRESSED | | |
| SUICIDE | | |
| OTHER?: _____ | | |

ABOUT FAMILY, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, SOCIETY:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| RACIAL AND CULTURAL TENSIONS | | |
| FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS | | |
| CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT | | |
| POVERTY | | |
| INFLUENCE OF MEDIA AND INTERNET | | |
| QUALITY OF EDUCATION | | |
| OTHER?: _____ | | |

- 3.6 What issues, whether mentioned or not mentioned, are unique to preteen Latinos?
- 3.7 In contrast to what we have listed, can you tell me some positive attributes/characteristics among Latino preteens?

4. EXPECTATIONS

- 4.1 What are some of the expectations or dreams the Latino preteens you work with shared with you?
[PROBE: How do expectations vary for different types of kids? For boys, girls, younger, older, etc?]
- 4.2 What are the major challenges that preteens face to reach those expectations and hopes?
[PROBE: What gets in the way of achieving their dreams?]

5. SUPPORT

- 5.1 There are preteen Latinos who do well in spite of the challenges and issues they face; what do you think contributes to this success?
- 5.2 Do you think most preteens' families are supportive or helpful in dealing with the issues we listed?
- 5.3 Do preteens ask you for help to deal with any of the issues we've discussed? Please describe
- 5.4 In general, who do you think preteen Latinos trust the most when they need to talk or need help? [PROBE: Why?]
- 5.5 What are the social supports or strengths particular to preteen Latinos?
[PROBE: Where (else) do they go when they need support or help? What resources (could be websites, info, people, etc) or programs do you think are particularly helpful to these preteens?]

6. ROLE PLAYING

- 6.1 Suppose that you are the persons in charge of programs or policies designed specifically to help enhance the overall development of preteen Latinos. What would you do to achieve this end? What would be some of the challenges and how and what would you do to address those challenges?

7. ADJOURNMENT

- 7.1 How should we go about asking preteen Latinos questions about their lives? Are there any other sources you know of to obtain information about them?

[PROBE: Do you have any thoughts on how to go about conducting a study with preteens? What would be a good way to gather information from them (preteens)?]
- 7.2 What information or resources would help improve your ability to support or work with preteens?
- 7.3 Before concluding this meeting, I'd like to ask you if you have any comments, questions, suggestions about this session. [PROBE: Anything else we should have asked or discussed?]

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.