

# Understanding Tobacco-Use Research among Hispanic/Latino Adolescents: A Sociocultural Perspective

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**INTRODUCTION** According to the Surgeon General's Report (U.S. DHHS, 1998; see Chapter 2), smoking rates in the United States among adolescent Hispanics/Latinos have been on the rise after what had been several years of substantial decline. Even in California, where smoking rates for Hispanic/Latino high school students traditionally have been low, there has been an increase in the prevalence of current smoking among adolescents. Between 1993 and 1996, there was a 52.1 percent increase in the number of those aged 12-17 years who reported smoking in the last 30 days (Pierce et al., 1998). Due to the large and growing numbers of Hispanics/Latinos and the youthfulness of this population around the country, this substantial increase in adolescent smoking is particularly troubling. Among older teens (16-17 years of age), overall smoking rates historically have been higher and, in 1998, this continued to be the case nationwide.

There are well over 12 million Hispanic/Latino children and youths in the United States, representing one of the largest segments of the Hispanic/Latino population (Campbell, 1996). Increases in the number of Hispanics/Latinos throughout the country are predicted to continue unabated due in part to high immigration and high fertility rates (Hayes-Bautista et al., 1994). By the year 2020, it is predicted that there will be over 54.3 million Hispanic/Latino adults, children, and youths in the United States. By the year 2080, the population will have expanded into well over 140 million (Marin and Marin, 1991). However, in many states, Hispanics/Latinos, and youths in particular, have not received the needed attention in terms of culturally competent research, services, or language-appropriate prevention and cessation programs designed to effectively curb smoking rates.

If we are to better understand these increases and the methods for preventing adolescent Hispanics/Latinos from further uptake of smoking, there is a need for research that is more refined and tailored to the realities of Hispanic/Latino adolescent life. Research with this population group calls for a clear understanding of the sociocultural context in which Hispanic/Latino adolescents lead their lives. Such research may be useful in understanding smoking rates in the Hispanic population. It may also be useful in the development of research questions, the language and youth-centered idiomatic expressions used in surveys, the recruitment and reten-

tion of Hispanic/Latino adolescents into research studies, the conduct of research and analyses of data in culturally and age-appropriate ways, and the culturally specific interpretation of data for the Hispanic/Latino population.

This monograph presents an important effort across the country to understand youth tobacco use and the research that supports it. This document will serve to better inform program planning for the nation as a whole, and to identify gaps in research for this population. This monograph includes findings from some of the largest data sets available on smoking behaviors of Hispanic/Latino adolescents.

Unfortunately, until recently, data for Hispanic/Latino adolescents have been lacking, not just in terms of tobacco use, but in general. When it is available, much of the information lacks the level of specificity needed to better understand the realities of youth smoking (Castro and Baezconde-Garbanati, 1987). For example, it is often hard to find information on youth smoking prevalence among the various sub-Hispanic/Latino groups by country of origin (i.e., Mexican versus Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Central American, among others), by gender, or by predictors of Hispanic/Latino youth smoking in particular. This lack has been due in part to the limitations of existing data collection systems and to a lack of uniformity in methods, conceptualization, operationalization of terms, and analyses (Nuno et al., 1998). Other studies contain small sample sizes and varying sampling schemes that make it difficult to draw conclusions. Even though much progress has been made in study design, the different degrees of sophistication and scope of existent tobacco-use data collection systems in various states make it hard to obtain comparable data. Even more difficult is obtaining information compiled in culturally competent ways, particularly so in the case of Hispanic/Latino youths. One attempt at culturally competent data collection is the recent focus group research effort conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These data promise to address some of the specificity needed to better understand larger scale studies on Hispanic/Latino adolescents (Crawford et al., 1998).

The data from various states presented in this monograph represent another attempt at understanding youth smoking rates from a broader perspective. But to better grasp these data on Hispanic/Latino adolescent tobacco use rates, it is important to provide a culturally relevant framework that places these rates into the context of Hispanic/Latino adolescent life across the country. This framework will help to address the complex scenario in which Hispanic/Latino adolescent smoking is initiated, proceeds from experimentation to intermittent use, on to regular use, and ends in addiction (U.S. DHHS, 1994). At the same time, it may help to shape an understanding of the complexities of research that must take into account the interactions among culture, gender, acculturation, immigration, socioeconomic status, and the historical and environmental factors that impact Hispanic/Latino adolescent smoking. An examination of these data within a cultural perspective may generate new questions and open new avenues for research and practice. In turn, this may help to better shape the understanding of tobacco use among Hispanic/Latino adolescents throughout the country.

**A SOCIOCULTURAL  
FRAMEWORK FOR  
HISPANIC/LATINO  
ADOLESCENT TOBACCO  
USE RESEARCH**

**Hispanic/Latino  
Heterogeneity**

Hispanics/Latinos in the United States have been characterized by their heterogeneity based on a series of variables that include, but are not limited to, country of origin, the geographic region in which they reside, immigration status, language capabilities, acculturation levels, age, education, and socioeconomic status, among others (Castro and Baezconde-Garbanati, 1987). While some Hispanics/Latinos in specific regions of the country have been characterized as having high poverty rates, low educational attainment, elevated numbers of high school drop outs, and high levels of unemployment (Chapa and Valencia, 1993; Perez and Salazar, 1993), others have achieved a prominent status in society.

Nevertheless, newly arrived immigrant population groups, especially adolescent Hispanics/Latinos, often struggle between traditional family values and the lure of the new culture. Newly arrived Hispanic/Latino adolescents may experience high levels of acculturative stress (Mena et al., 1987). For some Hispanic/Latino adolescents and their families, the stress of being undocumented (Melville, 1978; Mirowsky and Ross, 1987) and the limitations it imposes are critical constraints in their lives. For example, undocumented youths may not be able to obtain a valid California driver's license—an important right of passage for Hispanic/Latino adolescents.

Hispanic/Latino heterogeneity is also apparent in terms of immigration and documentation, since some adolescents may have overstayed student or tourist visas or may have entered the country illegally, undocumented, or on a seasonal status. Others (i.e., Cuban and some Central Americans) are political refugees. Still others, such as Puerto Ricans, are considered U.S. citizens. Some may come from families in which parents may be undocumented while the children or some of the children were born in the United States. Therefore, within the same family, a younger sibling may be a U.S. citizen while an older child may be in the country illegally. Other youths may trace their roots back four or five generations to a time when California was a part of Mexico. Still others consider themselves of Spanish descent (i.e., from Spain) rather than Latin American. Therefore, the reasons for immigration and the experiences of each adolescent Hispanic/Latino group in the various states in the United States may vary widely.

Some adolescent Hispanics/Latinos may have come with family members fleeing political persecution or with families that feared their young children would be recruited into guerrilla warfare groups. Others may have immigrated with their families looking for economic or educational advancement and a better life in the United States. Some adolescents may have not had a choice and may have immigrated into the United States involuntarily, while others may have come willingly. The voluntary nature of immigration helps to frame the experiences in this country (Salgado de Snyder and Padilla, 1987) for these young people.

Latino heterogeneity is also exemplified by urban versus rural differences and by regional variations based on country of origin. For example, Hispanics/ Latinos tend to concentrate in nine (9) different states across the

United States. Individuals of Mexican origin tend to concentrate in California, Illinois, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. Central Americans tend to concentrate in California, as well as in the northeastern part of the United States, such as Washington, D.C. and New York. Cubans, on the other hand, concentrate in Florida, and have spread through other parts of the United States. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are often found in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. These groups have attained various levels of education, political strength, and economic stability and have influenced American life in multiple ways.

Although little is available on adolescent Hispanic/Latino subgroups, data presented in this monograph show that Hispanic/Latino adolescent smoking seems to vary by state. However, there are few data on how rates vary within the United States by country of origin. The California Youth Survey data point to wide variations in daily smoking among 12th graders, from 22 percent among those of Cuban origin to 16 percent among South Americans and 10 percent among Mexican and Central American youths (Johnson, 2000). Smoking level variations by acculturation have also been noted among Hispanics in general (Marin et al., 1989), as has the presence of strong parental sanctions against adolescent smoking (California Department of Health Services, 1998).

**Sociodemographic Factors  
and Hispanic/Latino  
Adolescent Tobacco Use**

With its high rates of poverty, unemployment, and high school drop outs, Hispanic/Latino adolescents are particularly vulnerable to engaging in tobacco use in its various forms. One study conducted in California (Morris, 1993) revealed that disadvantaged Latino youths (ages 9-12) were three times more likely to smoke or experiment with tobacco than non-Latino youths. In another study (Johnston et al., 1996), Latino 8th graders had the highest rates of lifetime and 30-day cigarette smoking. Early tobacco experimentation may be linked to alcohol and to experimentation with other drugs among Latino youths (Escobedo and Peddicord, 1996).

According to the Surgeon General's Report (U.S. DHHS, 1998), there are multiple factors associated with smoking among Hispanics and Latinos. Some of these factors include drinking alcohol, working and living with other smokers, having peers who smoke, being in poor health, enduring acculturative stress, being depressed, and being exposed to tobacco advertising and promotion strategies.

Among Hispanic adolescents, the interaction of many complex factors within the various Hispanic/Latino communities accounts for observed patterns of tobacco use. Thus, data for Hispanic/Latino adolescents that appear in this monograph need to be interpreted within the context of the complex interaction and the cultural and socioeconomic realities of this population group.

**Cultural Factors** Some factors that influence smoking among Hispanic/Latino adolescents are socioeconomic, but others are cultural in nature, and both types interact with other important factors. Some factors are environmentally determined, such as excessive tobacco promotion in sporting and cultural events by the tobacco industry or heavy advertising and promotion of pro-tobacco messages in magazine ads and movies. Other factors are cultural and these include language spoken at home, highly traditional versus less traditional norms, the quality of family functioning, household composition, attitudes about smoking, and the smoking status of parents and peers (including familial peers, such as cousins).

**Language** Language capabilities and preferences of Hispanic/Latino adolescents need to be considered at all levels of tobacco control, from the conduct of research to the development and delivery of anti-tobacco messages to this special group. Ad Americas (1999) research, for example, shows that, in California, Hispanic/Latino adolescents live in a true bilingual, bicultural world. Data showed 54 percent of Hispanic/Latino teens surveyed by Ad Americas were bilingual, 19 percent were English dependent, while another 27 percent were Spanish dependent. How these numbers vary by state is still unclear.

These data suggest that, to reach a Hispanic/Latino teen population in California, one must survey in both languages. They also suggest a need to segment advertising that is directed at these youths. Male Hispanic/Latino immigrant teens, for example—who prefer Spanish and who tend to smoke more than immigrant females—may need to be recruited for surveys in a different way than those youths who are bilingual or prefer English. English language surveys could potentially target the more acculturated Hispanic/Latino girls, who tend to smoke more than their less acculturated counterparts.

In addition, language issues among Hispanic/Latino adolescents go beyond Spanish/English level variations to incorporate terms and concepts of the Hispanic/Latino youth culture. Idiomatic expressions with varying meanings may be found for otherwise identical words. This is an area that needs further exploration if instruments developed to grasp the realities of Hispanic/Latino adolescent tobacco use are to be relevant to those completing such surveys.

Other cultural factors among Hispanic/Latino adolescents may be common to other groups as well. Recent reports (U.S. DHHS, 1998; Penn, 1998; Lew, 1998) show that some of the same factors that contribute to adolescent smoking in other racial/ethnic groups, such as African Americans, American Indians, and Asian/Pacific Islanders, also contribute to tobacco use in Hispanic adolescents. Specifically, peers and parents who smoke (California Department of Health Services, 1998; Penn, 1998) and cultural norms that favor smoking in various ethnic/racial groups, such as giving cigarettes at weddings or as gifts in the Asian/Pacific Islander groups (Lew, 1998), also have been associated with adolescent smoking among Hispanics/Latinos. For example, among Hispanic/Latinos, pricey American cigarettes and liquor may be highly valued and often requested as gifts during periodic visits back to the home country.

**The Role of Acculturation** Income, education, and acculturation may interact in significant ways to promote smoking among Hispanic/Latino adolescents. Higher acculturation levels have been closely tied to higher education and higher income in the Hispanic/Latino community. When individuals have been in the United States for a number of years, they tend to become more similar to the general culture in terms of income and education. For example, there is higher educational attainment among Mexican Americans than among Mexican immigrants (Hayes-Bautista, 1992). In the same manner, Latino immigrants with initially lower smoking rates, especially among women, upon arrival to the United States, tend to increase their smoking as they become more educated and more acculturated (Marin et al., 1989). This characteristic, which is found mainly among Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans, is the reverse of that found among non-Hispanic Whites, who generally exhibit lower smoking rates with increasing educational attainment. The need to belong and assimilate into the general culture, to absorb the norms and reap the benefits and promises of the new culture motivates Hispanic/Latino women—and adolescent girls in particular—to be more likely to smoke the longer they are in the United States.

To understand these and other influences of acculturation, data for Hispanic/Latino adolescents need to be disaggregated. Data that are disaggregated will help to clarify varying patterns in smoking rates among Hispanic/Latino adolescents. This clarification is important because research among adults (Cantero et al., 1999) has already shown that more acculturated Latinas, for example, especially those in their middle years (45-64), tend to engage in less preventative health behaviors than their immigrant counterparts. Cantero et al. (1999) showed that acculturated Latinas (45-64 years of age) participated less in physical activity programs, had less healthy eating patterns, got less sleep, and smoked more than their less acculturated counterparts. Disaggregating data for Hispanic/Latino adolescents may help both to better identify consistent patterns among several differing groups and to understand their differences.

**Immigration Status** Once they arrive in the United States, immigrant communities are especially at risk for increased rates of smoking. Although rates for immigrant women and adolescent girls appear to be initially relatively low, some of these rates may be masked in part by immigration characteristics (Baezconde-Garbanati et al., 1999a). Such masking characteristics may include, but are not limited to, original smoking rates in the countries of origin, exposure to promotion and advertising by the immigrant group, age at immigration, and positive attitudes toward the tobacco industry. Positive industry attitudes are often the result of seeing the industry as a major source of economic wealth for a country that sends immigrants into the United States or of seeing it as a friend in the community.

For example, varying smoking prevalence rates are found in various Latin American countries that send immigrants into the United States, ranging from a low of 11 percent to a high of 20 percent in some regions. According to data from the Pan American Health Organization (Baezconde-

Garbanati et al., 1999a), 1987 smoking rates for women in Costa Rica were 11 percent, 12 percent for women in El Salvador, 11 percent for women in Honduras, 18 percent for women in Mexico and Guatemala, and 20 percent for women in Nicaragua.

Depending on cultural attitudes about tobacco promotion and advertising, it is possible that individuals with low smoking rates in countries of origin will have largely different smoking patterns once in the United States. Among those with already high smoking rates, the influence of advertising and promotion in the United States may not be as marked. However, little research addresses these issues in tobacco control or compares population groups in countries of origin with immigrants in the United States.

New research from the Transdisciplinary Tobacco Use Research Center (TTURC) at the Institute for Prevention Research at the University of Southern California promises to offer some insights into variations in cultural norms among adolescents of Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino origin in the United States and abroad (Johnson, 1999).

**Gender Issues in Tobacco Use among Hispanic/Latino Adolescents**

Marin et al. (1989) found some gender differences with acculturation on the attitudes, norms, and expectations regarding tobacco use. They also report that more acculturated females tend to smoke more than their less acculturated counterparts. Hispanic/Latino adolescent females who are trying to fit into the dominant culture will tend to take on the values of that culture in their attempts to break away from the more traditional nonsmoking norms.

As in other population groups, more Hispanic/Latino adolescent males than females smoke. However, although smoking rates may still be relatively low among Hispanic/Latino girls, especially immigrants, these rates are increasing rapidly (U.S. DHHS, 1998). A high level of teen pregnancy only adds to the complexities of Hispanic/Latino adolescent girls' smoking behavior (LCHC, 1999; Baezconde-Garbanati et al., 1999a). Although smoking among pregnant Hispanic/Latino adolescent girls is not a large problem at this time, increasing smoking rates among a population at risk for early pregnancy means we may see more cases of fetal and newborn problems related to smoking within the Hispanic/Latino community. Other problems confronted by pregnant teens may be exposure to secondhand smoke from either their peers, their boyfriends, or a parent who smokes. Exposure to secondhand smoke has been linked to the delivery of low-birth-weight babies, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and high infant mortality rates (CDC, 1994).

Special attention needs to be given to Hispanic/Latino adolescent girls and exposure of the fetus to cigarette smoking. There is a high percentage of Puerto Rican women and adolescent girls who deliver low-birth-weight infants; these problems are less prevalent among those of Mexican origin (Zambrana, 1991). But these statistics are cause for concern, as data from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (Brown et al., 1997) reveal that one of every three Latinas younger than age 17 is uninsured. Furthermore,

rates of early prenatal care among Mexican-origin women in California are even lower than rates of prenatal care for women in Mexico (Secretaría de Gobernación, 1996). If smoking rates do not decline, education and research on maternal smoking among this young population will be vital to the continued health of the Hispanic/Latino community.

**Hispanic/Latino Social Networks** According to several authors (Hayes-Bautista, 1992; Hayes-Bautista et al., 1994; Vega et al., 1998; Gilbert and Cervantes, 1986; Marin et al., 1989; Baezconde-Garbanati, 1994), in spite of some serious risk factors, immigrant Latino subgroups experience some very positive behaviors. These include low levels of alcohol consumption, relatively low overall rates of adult smoking, less psychopathology, and less depression. Some of these positive behaviors have been tied to traditional cultural values and the strong presence of familial networks (Hayes-Bautista et al., 1994; Baezconde-Garbanati, 1994). These networks are reinforced by the continuous communication back and forth between the United States and the immigrants' countries of origin. This contact with extended families and often with a nonfamilial fictive kin system offers support and helps preserve the values of the culture among adolescent Hispanic/Latinos; it may also at times protect these youths from engaging in unhealthy behaviors (Golding and Baezconde-Garbanati, 1990; Baezconde-Garbanati, 1994). However, these mechanisms often erode as young people live longer in the United States, move across the country to different areas, or achieve mobility within the social and educational strata of society (Vega et al., 1998).

Peer and family influences are considered the strongest predictors of smoking initiation among Puerto Rican and Central American adolescents (Morris et al., 1993). For example, data show that peer, parental, and familial modeling are all critical aspects of adolescent smoking among Hispanic/Latinos. In California, significantly more of the youths who smoke, versus those who do not smoke, report living with a parent who also smokes (55 percent versus 33 percent). Research has shown (Marin et al., 1989) that, in the Hispanic/Latino population, males tend to smoke more than females, and there are varying attitudes about parental and youth smoking, many of which are gender based.

Spanish-speaking adults, for example, are more likely than other groups to believe that smoking is not addictive and that, as smokers, they themselves are not addicted (Palinkas et al., 1993). They perceive themselves as being less susceptible to addiction than other groups. Although they may recognize the harmful effects of nicotine, there is a certain belief of invulnerability, such that they feel they can quit at any time. These beliefs are passed on to younger members of the family, especially when living arrangements for Hispanic/Latino adolescents may include the presence of other same-age or older extended-family members, such as cousins and uncles, inside the home.

Hispanic/Latino individuals with lower incomes have better possibilities of economic survival if they live together with other individuals and/or family members. It is not uncommon for Hispanic/Latino adolescents to live in a household in which the home has been opened to newly arrived immigrant relatives, for example, in an effort to facilitate the process of adaptation and provide financial means while exchanging goods and services (Baezconde-Garbanati et al., 1999a). It is possible, however, that these extended familial arrangements are composed of individuals of several generations that may have varying norms and rules about smoking within the same Latino households, and some may even see smoking as a “right of passage” for the Latino youth.

In focus groups conducted among Hispanic/Latino adolescents in California by Ad Americas (1999), both male and female youths expressed being highly influenced in their decision to smoke by familial peers, such as older brothers, cousins, and other such extended-family members.

Parental norms against smoking significantly affect the smoking patterns of adolescents. Testimony before the U.S. Congress by a panel of youths, including Hispanic/Latino teens, revealed that one of the most important factors to influence teen smoking is the value their parents and families place on youth smoking (Penn, 1998). Even though the majority of smoking and nonsmoking parents (90 percent) have rules against youth smoking, only 41 percent of smoking parents versus 70 percent of nonsmoking parents actually prohibited smoking in the home (Pierce et al., 1998). This is an important fact for Hispanic/Latinos, due to the traditional values placed on the family and the high influence of familial members, including extended family members. The lack of enforcement of parental household rules on smoking among Hispanic/Latinos may also be tied to the traditional values of “*simpatía*” and “*personalismo*” (Marin and Marin, 1991), which emphasize respect and politeness and frown on confrontational situations and direct criticisms (Marin et al., 1989, Marin and Marin, 1991). Furthermore, Hispanic/Latinos highly value family relationships. This value of “*familismo*” defines families within nuclear and extended kinship networks, such as *compadres* (godparents), that promote feelings of loyalty and reciprocity for the exchange of goods and services among family members and those who associate closely with them as fictive kinships (Bird and Canino, 1982). It is important to Hispanic/Latinos to maintain these ties throughout life.

Inasmuch as Hispanic/Latinos value smooth social relationships and smooth social personal interactions with people, it may be difficult in some families to ask other extended-family members, especially if it is a father or grandparent, not to smoke. This reluctance may translate into a lack of enforcement on household rules, which may in turn imply easy access by Hispanic/Latino teens to cigarettes around the home. It may also promote the purchase of tobacco products for Hispanic/Latino adolescents by familial social sources.

While peer and family influences are considered critically important (Nuno et al., 1998), broader environmental influences affect Hispanic/Latino youths and their peers and families alike. For example, the relationship between tobacco use among Hispanic/Latino adolescents is highly influenced by the extensive media advertising and promotion campaigns that have targeted youths, women, and ethnic minorities in the United States, especially African American and Hispanic/Latino youths.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:  
TOBACCO ADVERTISING  
AND PROMOTION** Hispanic/Latino youths are particularly vulnerable to the extensive pro-tobacco advertising and promotion that has targeted communities with large minority populations. The influence of advertising and promotion, and of the entertainment industry, is particularly important among adolescent Hispanic/Latinos. Advertising, promotion, and movies portray highly acculturated heroes and models living a life of glamour and success that is very appealing to Hispanic/Latino youths. It is especially appealing to those striving to “fit in” to the dominant culture. Advertising, promotion, and the entertainment industry present those who smoke as living a life of glamour and sexual prowess. They appeal to a sense of manliness or “machismo” among Hispanic/Latino boys and a sense of freedom and breaking away from traditional cultural and family norms for Hispanic/Latino girls. This promotion has come in many forms and is increasingly focusing on the distribution of attractive gear with smoking messages and on the sponsorship of cultural events at which Hispanic/Latino youths tend to participate. According to the Federal Trade Commission (1995), the tobacco industry, in 1993, spent over \$6 billion on advertising and promotion, much of it in minority communities, including Hispanic/Latino communities. The CDC (1994) reported that the tobacco industry advertises heavily in ethnic communities using ads that are particularly appealing to youths and women. Evans et al. (1995) revealed that adolescents have a greater probability of taking up smoking if exposed to heavy advertising and promotion of cigarettes. According to this study, the influence of advertising is even more critical than peer pressure, family members who smoke, or scholastic behavior.

But with the new multi-state Master Settlement Agreement, promotion and advertising by the tobacco industry may soon take a different shape in minority communities. According to the Hispanic/Latino Tobacco Education Network (Baezconde-Garbanati et al., 1999b), there has been an increase in the number of alcohol and tobacco messages that appear in much of the print advertising in magazines widely read by Hispanics/Latinos.

In addition, industry promotion in Hispanic/Latino communities has taken the shape of providing funds and scholarships for students to be able to attend college or trade schools, a direct targeting of 18- to 24-year-old Hispanic/Latino young adults. In the Hispanic/Latino community, the industry has been strategic in associating themselves with trusted community gatekeepers in order to promote the image of a contributor to the financial stability of impoverished communities (Durazo Communications,

1998). They do so through the funding of cultural events, Hispanic/Latino chambers of commerce, and other grassroots-level organizations and community groups. Due to these types of activities, communities see the tobacco industry as a partner with trusted organizations that have traditionally attracted youths, and this view helps to shape community attitudes that favor tobacco use.

In the fall of 1999, the industry invested over \$100 million in an image-remaking campaign (Brown and Houseman, 2000). Apparently, one of the expected outcomes of this campaign was to change people's attitudes about the industry itself, so it would be seen as a good corporate citizen that cares about the causes communities care about. The purpose seems to be to focus attention on what the industry does for the community rather than on its continuous sale of a deadly product. As part of the campaign, television advertising was released regarding programs to feed the hungry, assist flood victims, and fund anti-domestic violence programs. However, Brown and Houseman (2000) point out that, almost simultaneously, the industry released a \$40 million advertising campaign targeting women and produced a new brand of cigarettes, Marlboro Milds, which attracts a predominantly African American and Hispanic market. These authors point out that, although the industry invested some \$2 million in anti-domestic violence programs, it spent close to \$100 million to let communities know about it. This is the kind of media environment youths are exposed to when making decisions about smoking. Due to the poverty and domestic violence issues existing in many minority communities, these are powerful conflicting messages that youths may not know how to counter.

**RESEARCHING TOBACCO  
USE AMONG HISPANIC/  
LATINO ADOLESCENTS**

If we are to change Hispanic/Latino adolescent smoking behavior, it is imperative to understand the sociocultural environment, the heterogeneity of the population, its cultural values and norms regarding tobacco use, and to interpret data within the context of Hispanic/Latino adolescent life. Hispanic/Latino adolescents are not a monolithic population. They are influenced by cultural smoking norms in their own homes and respective countries of origin, as well as by the influence of American culture once in the United States. Although there is a youth culture that seems to unite Hispanic/Latino adolescents with other groups, subcultural and ethnic variations permeate Hispanic/Latino adolescent life.

Regardless of the stage at which we find Hispanic/Latino youths—some are trying to break away from cultural traditions, some struggling to find their center in later adolescence, while others fit in with more acculturated groups—the prevalence of Hispanic/Latino adolescent smoking needs to be researched and interpreted within the historical, demographic, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic context of their lives. The consideration of sociocultural issues in the planning, development, conduct, analyses, and interpretation of scientific data will lead to better program planning that may directly impact adolescent smoking rates.

Research data on Hispanic/Latino adolescent tobacco use cannot be interpreted in isolation from the realities that make Hispanic/Latinos in the United States who they are today. For example, the interaction between acculturation, education, and smoking rates among Hispanic/Latino adolescents needs to be explored further. Several authors have shown that, when research data are analyzed accounting for variations and interactions between different levels of acculturation with varying degrees of education, significant differences are observed in the various Latino subgroups (Flores et al., 1995; Balcazar et al., 1995). This is especially true related to socioeconomic indicators, such as income, employment, health insurance, self ratings on health and perceptions of satisfaction, and attitudes toward healthy behaviors.

Tobacco-use data for Hispanics/Latinos, and especially Hispanic/Latino adolescents, should be considered a product of the historical, political, social, and economic realities of the population (Flores et al., 1995). The migration history of Hispanic/Latino adolescents is important, as are the sociocultural, environmental, and psychological impacts of migration (Williams, 1990) and the ways in which this migration may have influenced attitudes about smoking and cultural smoking norms. According to Flores et al. (1995), the culturally appropriate interpretation of data for Hispanic/Latinos must begin with an understanding of the geographical areas from which Hispanic/Latinos originate. This understanding must include their geographic distribution throughout the United States and the historical underpinnings and conditions of immigration by the various Hispanic/Latino groups into the United States. These are important because they provide for Hispanic/Latino adolescents the context of acceptance within the United States. The experiences of children of highly educated Cuban refugees, versus those of Puerto Rican U.S. citizens, undocumented immigrants, or of individuals fleeing conditions of war or economic hardships in countries of origin are all incredibly different. Yet, in unique ways, they form the context for resiliency in engaging in risk behaviors or challenge-coping strategies of adolescents during a critical stage of their lives.

Once in the United States, the conditions and quality of life for Hispanic/Latino adolescents working in fields and labor camps as part of migrant farm-working families are also very different realities from those for young Hispanics/Latinos in the inner city. The context of Hispanic/Latino children and adolescents includes variations by neighborhood or cities, safety issues within those neighborhoods, engagement in gangs, and other risk behaviors that adolescents are exposed to. This context goes beyond tobacco-specific issues that may include policies within the schools and communities and enforcement of laws and regulations against smoking; there are also interactions between sociocultural, environmental, and psychological factors that affect adolescent groups. Sociocultural and socioeconomic factors (income, education, occupation, age, gender, acculturation, and high school dropout rates) are also important to consider when interpreting Hispanic/Latino adolescent smoking data.

In essence, tobacco use research among Hispanic/Latino adolescents needs to be planned to consider the complexities of adolescent life in the United States. As Hispanic/Latino children grow and mature, traditional norms from their younger years that protect against smoking are challenged by the broader society. Societal engagement of Hispanic/Latino adolescents implies interactions with multiple ethnic and racial groups, various cultures, and individuals with varying social and cultural norms regarding tobacco use. The mixture of values and norms creates new expectations and challenges at a time when young people are truly beginning to define themselves and are searching for who they are as individuals. Pro-tobacco media has deceptively portrayed experimentation with tobacco use, smoking uptake, and having a choice in continued tobacco use as important parts of the exploration in becoming an adult. The influences exercised by these conditions are important areas for research among Hispanic/Latinos and other adolescent groups. These are critical aspects of the contextual environment of adolescent life that all have important effects on smoking behavior. If we are to develop better program planning and implementation, and to evaluate the successes of programmatic tobacco control activities, the scientific foundation for these endeavors needs to be grounded in the cultural and social realities of Hispanic/Latino adolescent life. Doing otherwise will delay Hispanic/Latino adolescents from reaping the benefits of a life free of tobacco-related diseases. The real choice for our youths is to use their culture and adolescent energy in protecting their health and that of others. It is time for adolescent awakening grounded in scientific endeavors helping to create a new generation of tobacco-free adults that will live free of tobacco-related diseases well into the 21st century.

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