

Promotion of Drinking Water among Latino Immigrant Youth



Public Health

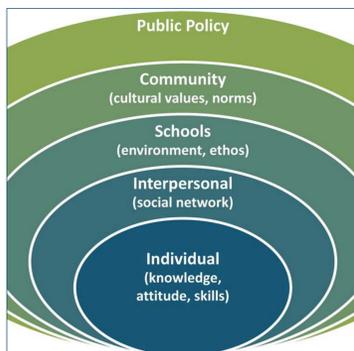
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Introduction

- **Latinos** suffer disproportionately from obesity and diabetes during childhood^{1, 2, 3}
- Sugar sweetened beverages, a major **risk factor for diabetes and childhood obesity**, are commonly consumed and heavily marketed in this population⁴
- **Replacing sugar sweetened beverages with water** can reduce energy intake and obesity risk in children, and provide the benefits of water including improvement in attention, memory, and cognition^{5, 6, 7}
- Objective: **Understand behaviors and preferences related to drinking beverages** among Latino immigrant youth, and inform a campaign to promote drinking water among this population
- **Langley Park, MD:**
 - Total population of 18,755 with 76.6% self-classified as Hispanic or Latino and 67.8% foreign born⁸
 - Dense, renter-occupied housing with low education levels and high percentage of non-English speaking residents (78.5%)⁸



Methods



- This study is grounded on the **socio ecological framework** to understand how various environments shape drink preferences
- We sought to understand beverage choice motivations, and concepts, messages, themes, and formats that are appealing to this population to promote drinking water
- Conducted **two rounds of focus groups** (n=10, 61 participants) with Latino immigrant youth, aged 6-18 years, living in Langley Park, Maryland
- Participants were stratified into focus groups by **age group and language preference**

- A professional, bilingual-speaking moderator used a semi structured discussion guide to examine: (1) what youth preferred to drink in different settings and why, (2) their reactions to promotional messages, (3) slogans that would entice them to drink more water in school and at home, and (4) concept testing.

Contact Information

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What do youth drink?

At Home

- Youth drank bottled water at home
- Parents made beverages available at home

*"M: What do you like to drink when you're at home?
P: Whatever my mom brings....mostly water though" -FG 5*



At School

- Youth drank chocolate milk, as it was most available at lunchtime

"P: I prefer the drinks they give us like chocolate milk...instead of water." -FG 1

- Youth would not drink fountain water because it did not taste good, and other forms of water were not available in the cafeteria

"P: At school the water should be cleaner. It tastes weird out of the water fountain." -FG 5

- Older youth: water is unavailable in vending machines at school, or warm and undesirable to drink

Why do youth drink water?

Level of Thirst

- When really thirsty, youth preferred to drink water and only water to quench their thirst
- They also recounted preferring water when it is hot outside, and when playing sports or being active

*"P: But, like, when I'm thirsty, or exercising, it's better to drink water." -FG 3
"P: Cold water. It refreshes you." -FG 5*

Health Benefits

- Youth preferred to drink water over other drinks for its health benefits
- Youth mentioned drinking water to be healthy, attractive, avoid dehydration, and to have energy

*"P: You should drink water when you feel dehydrated, you should drink it every day" -FG 1
"P: I know water is a healthy choice" -FG 6*

Why don't youth drink water?

Safety & Cleanliness

- Participants expressed concern about tap water safety and cleanliness, both at home and at school
- Tap water was considered unsafe and concerns were expressed that you could get sick from drinking it
- Others chose not to drink tap water because it was discolored or distasteful



"P: I don't know because I probably would be sick, or something like that, from drinking from the water fountain. I'd get sick." -FG 5

Taste

- Beverages with sugar were considered to taste good and were youth's favorite drinks
- The taste of water was considered boring

"P: I like juice because it tastes better than water." -FG 3



Access (financial/proximity)

- Youth chose beverages that were cheap, or whatever was mostly around
- They would drink more water if it was "everywhere," or if there were not any alternatives and water was the only option

Development of Promotional Materials

In schools, despite the mandate of the **Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act** to provide free access to adequate drinking water to all students, there are disparities in access levels, and disparities in behaviors and attitudes regarding water drinking behaviors.^{9, 10}

A **bilingual school- and home-based water promotion intervention** that highlights (a) the health benefits of drinking water, (b) the power of water to quench true thirst, and (c) the safety, taste and benefits of drinking tap water is a promising strategy to target some of the barriers around drinking water behaviors among Latino immigrant youth.

Promotional materials were developed to include the following elements:

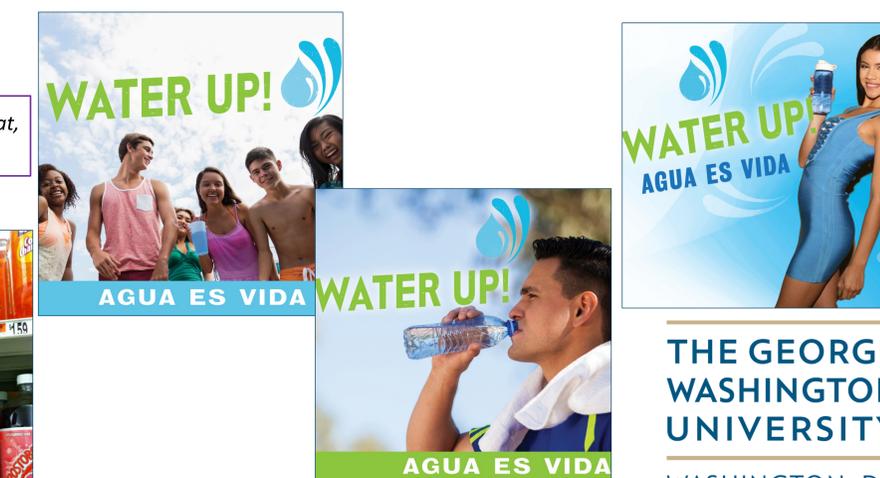
- Water when hot and thirsty or when playing sports or being active
- Informative about water and reinforce water's health benefits
- Depict people representative of the youth
- Include a celebrity or an athlete



Elementary School



Middle & High School



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