



Hablando Claro Plain Talk

Focus Group Results and Recommendations Hablando Claro-Plain Talk Brawley, California

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Executive Summary

In early 2006 the National Latino Research Center (NLRC) collaborated with Clínicas de Salud Del Pueblo in conducting a set of 9 focus groups in the community of Campo Nuevo in Brawley California. Campo Nuevo is a largely Latino immigrant farmworker community.

The Hablando Claro/Plain Talk project aims to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases through improved adult-teen communication and community consensus building surrounding issues impacting adolescent sexual health.

Statistics show that Imperial County has a higher rate of teen pregnancy than the state as a whole. In 2003 for example 14.6% of all live births in the county were by teen mothers ages 15-19 as opposed to 9.5% of births statewide. The rate of live births to teens in Brawley indicates a rate even higher than Imperial County as a whole; 17% of all live births were to mothers under 20 years old.¹ According to the community survey implemented in Brawley both teens and adults consider teen pregnancy to be a pressing issue for the community.

The primary purpose of the focus groups was to assess community beliefs about the causes and consequences of teen pregnancy as well as issues related to communication between parents and adolescents. The focus groups were intended to gain additional insight into the results of the community survey conducted in the community in October 2005. Major findings of the focus groups indicate that teens and adults lack clear communication when it comes to issues surrounding sex and sexuality. Parental authority was also found to negatively impact communication between adults and teens. Differing perceptions regarding responsibility when it comes to decisions regarding sexual activity and when a pregnancy occurs also impacts the relationship between teens and adults in the community.

The NLRC recommends that the Hablando Claro project works with the community in addressing how to better improve communication through examining these issues of authority and responsibility. Further, the NLRC recommends that the project look to documenting and disseminating a model of communication between teens and adults that is culturally and linguistically relevant to the specific community. Such a model is greatly needed among Latino immigrant parents who do not necessarily have such models by which to guide their interactions with their teen children.

¹ Source: State of California, Department of Health Services, Birth Records



Hablando Claro-Plain Talk

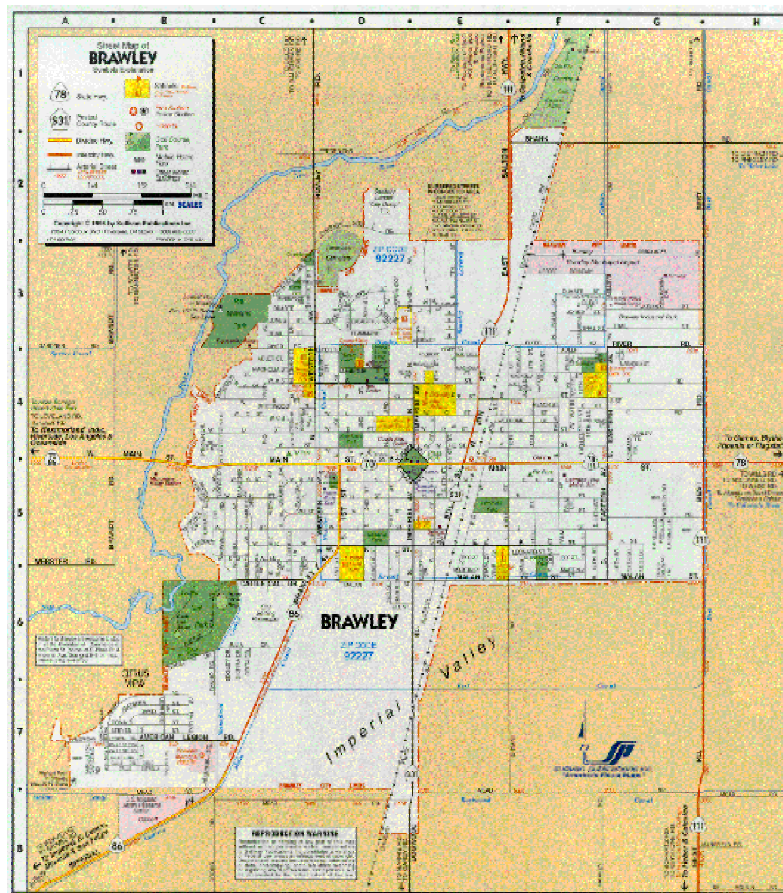
The Hablando Claro/Plain Talk project aims to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases through improved adult-teen communication and community consensus building surrounding issues impacting adolescent sexual health

Introduction

The Hablando Claro/Plain Talk project was initiated in the Campo Nuevo region of the city of Brawley in 2005 to address the issue of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases among the region's youth. The Hablando Claro/Plain Talk project aims to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases through improved adult-teen communication. The project also aims to create a consensus among the community about the need to protect those teens already sexually active and make quality medical care available to them.

The Hablando Claro/Plain Talk project in Brawley California focuses on the community of Campo Nuevo, a primarily agricultural community comprised of newly arrived and second generation Latino families. Clínicas de Salud del Pueblo worked with community members in implementing the project in the community.

Together, CSP and the community team conducted three hundred surveys throughout Campo Nuevo as a way to understand the community's feelings about sexuality and begin creating consensus. The project is part of a nation wide approach to the prevention of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases that was developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The results of the community survey in Brawley California were analyzed and compiled by Public/Private Ventures in Philadelphia. A full report of the community survey is available through P/PV or through Clínicas de Salud Del Pueblo.



Teen Pregnancy ♦ An Urgent Issue for Latino communities

California ranks first in adolescent pregnancies in the nation.² Two of every three babies born to teens in California are born to Latinas.³ The causes and impacts of teen pregnancies in the lives of California's youth is an urgent issue for Latino communities in the state. Statistics show that Imperial County has a higher rate of teen pregnancy than the state as a whole. In 2003 for example 14.6% of all live births in the county were by teen mothers ages 15-19 as opposed to 9.5% of births statewide.

The rate of live births to teens in Brawley indicates a rate even higher than Imperial County as a whole; 17% of all live births were to mothers under 20 years old.⁴ According to the community survey implemented in Brawley both teens and adults consider teen pregnancy to be a pressing issue for the community.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Live Births to teen mothers in Imperial County			
Year	Number of Live births to Teen Mothers (Ages 15-19)	Live births to teen mothers – percentage of All Live Births	Live births to teen mothers – percentage of All Live Births
	Imperial County	Imperial County	State of California
1997	381	16.0	11.4
1998	389	16.0	11.2
1999	383	15.5	10.9
2000	432	16.8	10.4
2001	411	15.8	10.0
2002	389	14.6	9.5

² California Research Bureau. "Adolescent Childbearing in California." Berglas, Brindis and Cohen, June 2003 <http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/03/07/03-007.pdf>

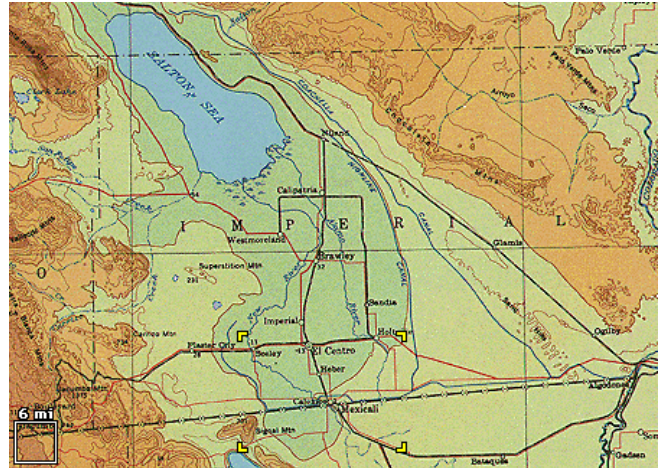
³ Public Policy Institute of California

⁴ Source: State of California, Department of Health Services, Birth Records

Demographic Information

This section provides a demographic profile of Imperial County and of the city of Brawley.

Imperial County is located in the southeast corner of the state of California and extends over 4,597 square miles with the Salton Sea and Riverside County to the north, San Diego County to the west, Arizona to the east and Mexico to the south. The Imperial Valley is largely dependent on agriculture and has been described by some as a 100-mile long “trench” below sea level that contains over 500,000 acres of farmland.⁵ The Imperial Valley is a largely agricultural and sparsely populated area plagued by high unemployment and low household incomes.⁶



Brawley is located 210 miles southeast of Los Angeles, 126 miles east of San Diego, 230 miles west of Phoenix, 260 miles south of Las Vegas, and 30 miles north of Mexicali, Mexico. Within the northern region of the city of Brawley there is a community called Campo Nuevo. Campo Nuevo is a primarily agricultural community comprised of newly arrived and second-generation Latino families. Hablando Claro staff identified 454 housing units, both private and public owned, in the Campo Nuevo area.

POPULATION PROFILES

Imperial County: According to the Census 2000, Imperial County is the 9th largest county in California with approximately 142,000 people. Seventy-seven percent of the population lives in the incorporated cities of Brawley, Calexico, Calipatria, El Centro, Holtville, Imperial and Westmorland. The remaining 23% live in unincorporated rural areas. The largest municipality is El Centro (with 37,835 residents) followed by Calexico (with 27,109 residents). Approximately 72% of Imperial County residents are of Hispanic/Latino origin (compared to 32.4% for California). In the border city of Calexico, 95% of the population is Latino.

With some of the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the state, Imperial County ranks among the poorest in California. According to the Census 2000, approximately 23% of the total population lives below the national poverty level and 43.8% of children under seventeen live in poverty. In 1999, the median household income in Imperial County was \$31,870 compared to \$47,493 for the state. Unemployment rates are exceptionally high and frequently range between 20% and 30%. Agriculture and government are the primary employers in Imperial

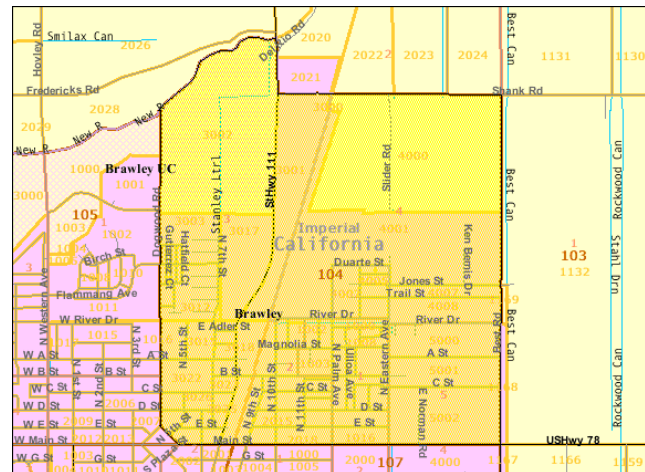
⁵ Martin, P. (2003) "Impact on Farm workers of Proposed Water Transfer from Imperial County: A Memorandum to the Latino Legislative Caucus of the California State Senate." UC Comparative Immigration and Integration Program, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis.

⁶ Source of map: 1M USGS map Los Angeles (International Map of the World, 1947)
<http://geochange.er.usgs.gov/sw/changes/anthropogenic/imperial/>

County. In March 2002, approximately 25% of the labor force was engaged in agriculture, and 32% was employed in government positions. The remaining 43% was service and manufacturing.

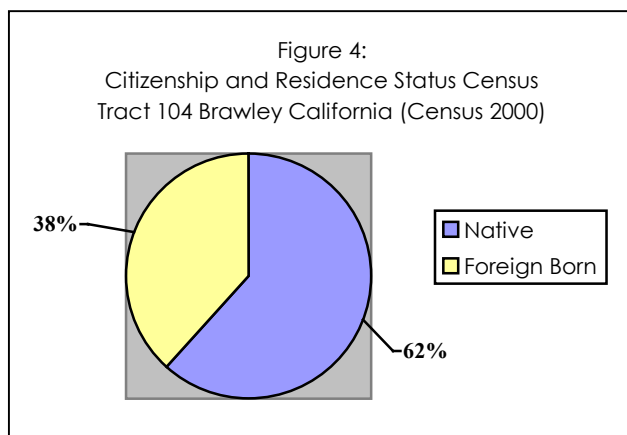
Brawley: According to Census 2000, the city had a total population of 22,052. For the purposes of this demographic profile we focus our analysis on census tract 104 (Figure 3), one of four census tracts that comprises the city of Brawley and that includes Campo Nuevo. Males comprise 49.4% of the population with females comprising the remaining 50.6%. Ninety-one (91%) of the population in this region is identified as being Latino, with 81.5% of Latinos stating that they are of Mexican origin. A majority (64%) of households have children under 18 years old.⁷

Figure 3: Census Tract 104, Brawley California



Significant economic disparities for this community are evident while examining median non-family and median family income compared to the state of California as a whole. Median non-family income was \$11,495 in the region as opposed to \$32,024 for the state. Similarly, median family income in the census area was \$22,364 as compared to \$53,025 for the state. One third of families (33%) live below the poverty line in this area and among the population 16 years and over the unemployment level is 11%.⁸

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the population in the region are foreign born (Figure 4). Of the foreign born population in census tract 104, 36.6% report to be naturalized citizens while 63.4% are not citizens. This indicates that 24% of residents in this census region of Brawley are not citizens of the United States.



A majority of households (85%) reported that they speak a language other than English at home. Of those persons above five years of age who identified Spanish as the language spoken at home in this census tract (5,021) 30.1% were reported to speak English "not well" or "not well at all."

As a whole, employment in agriculture comprises the largest source of employment for the region at 17.3%. Among Latinos over 16 years of age, agriculture is a major source of employment at 19% with 30% of males being employed in agriculture. Agriculture is

⁷ Census 2000

⁸ Census 2000-based on 1999 income

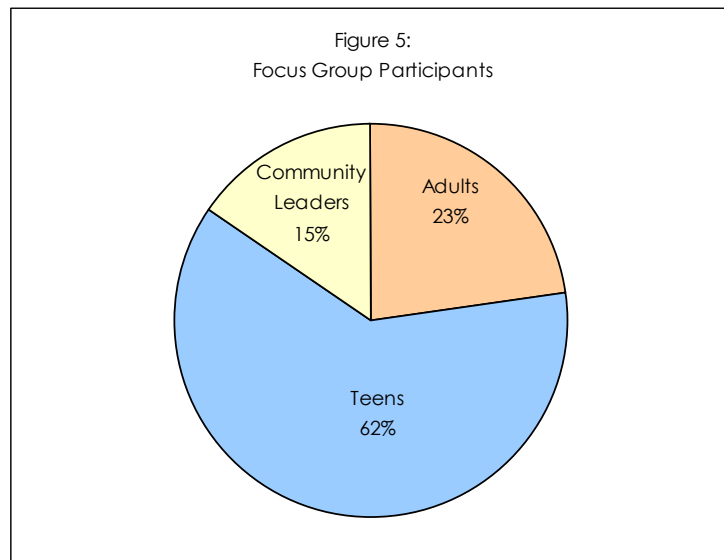
second only to education and social services as a source of employment for females in the region.

Hablando Claro Focus Groups

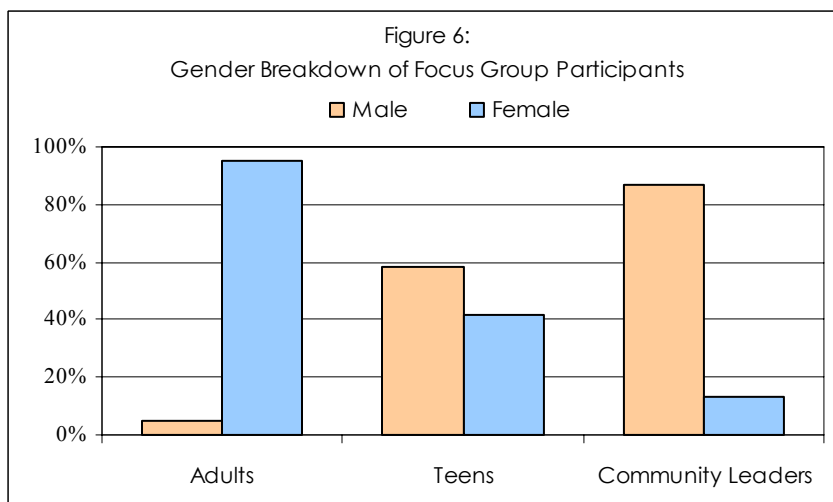
Purpose: The primary purpose of the focus groups was to assess community beliefs about the causes and consequences of teen pregnancy as well as issues related to communication between parents and adolescents. The focus groups were intended to gain additional insight into the results of the community survey conducted in the community in October 2005. In total, 200 adults and 100 adolescents were interviewed by Hablando Claro community volunteers and project staff.

Focus Group Demographics:

In all, nine focus groups were conducted. The focus groups aimed to get a broad cross representation of community members and local agencies from the region of North Broward and Campo Nuevo. The majority of the participants in the focus groups were teens (62%) followed by adults at 23% and community leaders at 15% (Figure 5).



The average age of the 44 teens that participated in the focus groups was 15 years old; of the 22 adults that participated the average age was 39; and among the 15 community leaders the average age was 44.

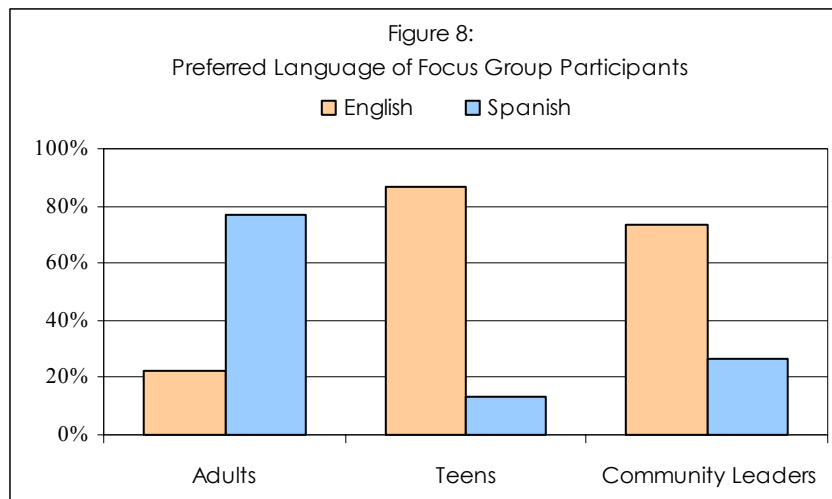


The majority of the parents/adults that participated in the focus groups were females, while the majority of community leaders were males. Among teens, males were more largely represented than females. The difference, however, between males and females participating in the teen focus groups is not as large as the adult and

community leader focus groups (Figure 6).

A large majority of the adult participants in the focus groups have children while none of the teens participating in the focus groups reported having children.

A majority of the adults in the focus groups reported that they prefer Spanish over English, while teens preferred English. Community leaders reported that they prefer speaking in English rather than Spanish (Figure 8).



Methodology:

All participants were recruited by Hablando Claro staff and were informed of their rights as participants in a research study. Participants ages 18 and older signed informed consent form. Teens under the age of 18 signed assent forms and were allowed to participate only after their parents had signed a written informed consent form. NLRC staff conducted three of the focus groups and Hablando Claro staff conducted the remaining six focus groups. When possible the focus groups were tape-recorded and hand written notes were taken by staff simultaneously. Participants received a small incentive item for their participation. Overall, participants were enthusiastic about the potential of a project such as Hablando Claro in engaging both parents and teens in an honest dialogue about sexuality.

Focus Group Questions: Focus group questions were formed after careful analysis of the community survey results. Project staff worked with NLRC researchers in determining the areas requiring further clarification from the community.

Major Findings

The following section summarizes the major findings of all the focus groups. This set of findings illustrates a set of the complex conditions impacting communication between adults and teens in regards to sex, teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Most of the participants felt that teen pregnancy was an important issue for the community. Parents felt that teens engage in risky behavior leading to pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases despite the fact that teens know very well the risks. Teens felt that most teens don't know the risks of sex and that they engage in risky behavior because of peer pressure to do so.

"It's not because they are not aware that they may get pregnant, they take chances because they feel that it might not happen to them" –adult participant

Lack of Clear Communication

Among the most interesting findings of the community survey was that while most parents (60-80%) said they feel VERY comfortable talking to teens about sex, birth control, STDs and pregnancy, fewer teens (20-50%) felt VERY comfortable talking to teens about these topics. Correspondingly, most parents (80%) said they have talked to their teens about sex, but less than half of the teens (45.5%) said they have talked to their parents. These findings led the team to ask a series of questions surrounding the type of communication that parents and teens are having regarding sex and sexuality. In the focus groups we focused on getting additional details regarding the type of communication. A few examples of questions asked were "If you have talked about sex, what topics did you discuss," and "Who spoke the most, did each of you have the chance to speak?" and finally, "what are the most difficult topics to discuss?"

They (parents) just tell you DON'T DO IT, and for them, that's a conversation about sex. –Teen participant

While the answers varied throughout the groups it was clearly evident that both teens and parents had very different definitions regarding clear communication about sex and its consequences. Many parents admitted to feeling uncomfortable about communicating with their teens about sex. Both adults and teens stated that mother

instead of father is usually the parent who discusses the issue with teens. "My husband gets so embarrassed in talking about sex with them, he turns, red, green and blue and doesn't know what to do!" Most parents who did state they speak openly about sex with their teens described conversations where they warned their children of the bad consequences of having sex, and that often times they use moral judgments to encourage them not to engage in sex before marriage. These parents considered this type of conversation as "communication" about the issue. Other parents who felt that they had clear communication without judgment felt lucky that their children were comfortable coming to them with any questions they have about sex. Those parents who seemed to have this type of open communication also had open and non-judgmental communication with their teens and younger children in other areas as well.

Teen participants in the focus groups expressed their frustration with parents who define communication about sex as a lecture or a warning about not 'doing it.'" In one focus group a teen stated, "They (parents) just tell you, DON'T DO IT, and for them, that's a conversation about sex." This sentiment was repeated by several teens that felt that parents are mostly judgmental and close-minded about having a conversation on an equal level about sex. One teen said that parents overall don't understand the pressure that teens are under and that few parents

are interested in the talking to them about it. "Parents are crazy. They don't want to listen to our problems." Many teens felt that parents only want to talk so they can find out what they are up to and that they always end up getting angry at their actions instead of listening to their problems. "Parents don't understand us, they get angry, yell and act crazy. They don't know what to do." These types of reactions, most participants felt, is the reason why teens don't feel comfortable communicating openly and honestly when it comes to issues surrounding, sex, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Authority

In the focus groups we concentrated a series of questions for both adults and teens regarding the power relationship between parents and teens. In most focus groups both parents and teens discussed how difficult it is to communicate clearly about sex when there exists a very important power relationship between the two groups. For teens, parents are always seen as an authority figure. Their authoritative role over the majority of the teen's lives impedes open communication about sex and sexuality. One parent told a story of how she regularly checks her son's backpack to make sure that he's not carrying anything inappropriate in his bag. Her son complains about her searching her bag and she tells him that she has every right to make sure that he is behaving himself. Similar displays of authority by many parents appear to hinder any sort of open and clear communication between adults and teens.

Teens considered their parents interest in talking to them about sex as yet another way to control their activities. Teens felt that parents have a hidden agenda in having these conversations; feeling that parents only looked for the information so that they could later judge them. Interestingly, teenage boys reported that talking to their parents about sex was "disrespecting" them. Teens felt that because they were expected to not engage in sex until marriage that their curiosity about sexuality would only be seen as immoral from their parent's perspective.

Many teens also view that the lack of parental supervision also contributes to early sexual activity in teenagers. Due to demanding work schedules parents are not at home, and therefore not able to communicate their values or set boundaries for their children. Teens stated that this lack of supervision and the fact that "there's nothing else to do", makes the decision to have a sexual relationship easy.

Responsibility

In the community survey it was found that while parents state that they make final decisions regarding whom their teen can or can't date, if their teen was to become pregnant or cause a pregnancy they stated that the teen would be alone in deciding what to do about the pregnancy. This finding was somewhat validated in the focus groups, parents overall state that they do maintain control over with whom their teens go out with, especially their daughters, yet if their child was to become pregnant, or cause a pregnancy it is seen as the responsibility of the teen to handle the situation. Once pregnancy occurs, it seems, teens are considered to be "adult" enough to be able to make decisions regarding their future as parents.

Parents are very nosy and intrusive, but if there is a pregnancy they let the teen decide what to do-teen participant

Another issue in regards to responsibility was the use of contraception and the tendency of parents to be more open to helping their son's acquire birth control than in helping their daughters find a form of contraception. Parents especially reported that it is usually considered to be more acceptable for boys to be sexually active than it is for girls.

Lack of Models

It's easy to have children, very easy; it's not difficult to support them, through work, by feeding them, and by sending them to school. What is difficult is to educate them. If you don't educate them correctly they'll end on the street or in jail
-Parent Participant

Parents of teens in the focus groups repeatedly stated that they lacked the models by which to speak to their children about issues surrounding sexuality and sexual health. For a majority of the parents the topic was taboo within their home when they were growing up and they were taught that parents and teens just "do not talk" about these issues. A conservative religious background often informed these taboos. Many parents simply do not have the experience of having communicated clearly with their own parents and therefore do not have a model to use for

communicating with their teens now. Father's especially have trouble talking to teens about sex openly. Parents in the focus groups expressed their need for more information and tools on how to improve communication regarding sex with their teens.

Recommendations

This table provides a set of recommendations in addressing the key findings discovered through the focus groups.

Findings	Recommendations
Clear communication	When developing strategies by which to improve communication between teens and adults it will be key to work with both groups in finding consensus on what is clear and honest communication.
Authority	Parents and teens should explore how parental authority plays an important role in improving communication between teens and adults.
Responsibility	We recommend that Hablando Claro engage the community in examining responsibility of both parents and teens when it comes to decisions about sexuality as well as when a pregnancy does occur. The community will also have to acknowledge their conflicting opinions about what sexual behavior is acceptable by male and female teenagers.
Lack of Models	The effectiveness of any project aiming to impact teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases among youth in Brawley and Campo Nuevo will have to take into consideration the important socioeconomic and cultural and linguistic background of the community. New models of how to best communicate about sensitive issues surrounding teen sexuality will need to be developed for this specific community. The project has great potential in helping create a much needed model by which to approach communication between parents and teens within Latino immigrant and rural agricultural communities.