

Increasing Young Latina Participation in Sports

**Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture
Division of General Internal Medicine
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA**

**Prepared for the
LA84 Foundation**



**© LA84 Foundation
2012**

LA84 Foundation
2141 W. Adams Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90018
www.LA84Foundation.org

CONTACT:

Wayne Wilson
Vice President, Education Services
wwilson@la84foundation.org
(323) 730-4640

Increasing Young Latina Participation in Sports

**Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture
Division of General Internal Medicine
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA**

**Prepared for the
LA84 Foundation**

The LA84 Foundation supports youth sports in Southern California, including programs in East Los Angeles. One of the Foundation's goals in recent years has been to increase the enrollment of young Latinas, ages 7 to 14.

The Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture (CESLAC) has researched various aspects of adolescent development in Latino youth for twenty-four years. At the Foundation's request CESLAC undertook a study in East Los Angeles to learn about perceptions of sport, girls' role in sports and ways to encourage higher participation rates among Latina girls. As part of the project, CESLAC conducted focus groups among Latino residents of East Los Angeles that included groups girls ages 7 to 14, parents and youth sport administrators at parks and recreation centers.

Top-Line Summary

1. Young girls, ages 7-14, are not the primary decision makers about sports participation.

Young girls may attempt to influence their parents' decisions, but ultimately they are not the primary decision makers about sports participation.

2. Mothers are the primary decision makers.

Mothers are the primary decision makers for most daily aspects of their children's lives: health care, nutrition, clothing, and education. They are the ones who weigh the impact of sports participation on the family budget, the girls' lives, and their own time.

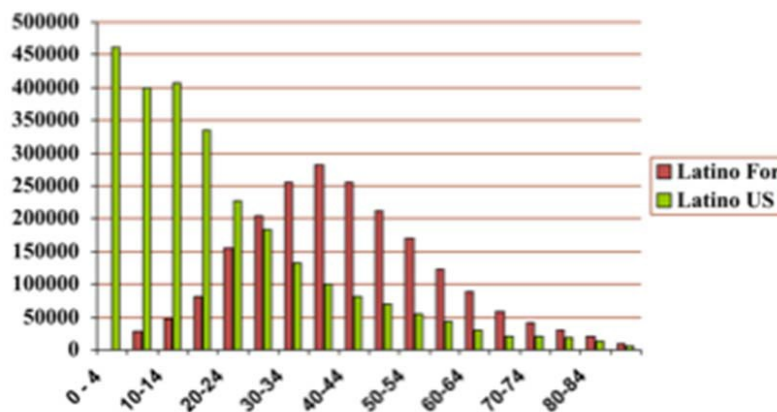
3. Nearly three-quarters of the Latina mothers in Los Angeles are immigrants.

The profile of Latina immigrant mothers is very different from the profile of United States-born Latina mothers in education, income, and sports-related experience.

4. Currently participating mothers tend to come from the one quarter who are U.S.-born.

First-hand experience while recruiting focus-group participants tends to corroborate observations shared by immigrant mothers, U.S.-born mothers, and recreation center staff and administrators, that most Latina mothers participating are English-speaking, second-generation mothers.

Figure 1
Latino Age Group by Nativity, Los Angeles County, 2005-2008



Source: US Census ACS 2005-2008

5. In the countries of origin, girls playing sports was not the norm.

Most immigrants from Mexico come from rural areas, where opportunities for team sports for all children are extremely limited. Even in urban areas, Mexico and the Central American countries do not have a full Title IX equivalent.

6. Immigrant mothers realize that the U.S. is different from the country of origin, and want to provide opportunities for their U.S.-born children that they themselves did not have.

Immigrant mothers generally immigrated to the United States as young adults, often in order to provide more opportunities for their children, who were subsequently born in the U.S.

7. Immigrant mothers have desires and goals for their girls' development.

Nearly all mothers mentioned having the following dreams for their daughters' development: to have them achieve good grades, graduate from a university, embark on a career or profession, and be healthy.

8. The benefits of sports participation need to be communicated to the immigrant mothers.

The role that team sports can play in helping the daughters acquire personal characteristics that will help them achieve their mothers' dreams needs to be communicated. When an opportunity for sports participation is presented in a vacuum, it has to compete with other demands on a family's limited time and financial resources. Unless the connection between sports and success is clear, sports participation will be given lower priority.

9. The benefits of sports participation needs to be reinforced in U.S.-born mothers.

U.S.-born mothers usually have personal acquaintance with team sports through their own school experiences. Describing those experiences as "enjoyable," they support their daughters' participation, but are not clear on the range of benefits for the daughters resulting from it.

10. The communication will have to be on multiple levels.

Immigrant mothers respond best to in-person outreach. When these are presented as contributing to their daughters' development, mothers will attend classes to gain knowledge to make them better parents. Flyers alone will not provide sufficient information for them to come to the positive decision point.

U.S.-born mothers do respond to flyers, although they have concerns about the completeness of the information in them, particularly regarding their own participation.

11. The structure of sports programs needs to be made clear to the parents.

Sports programs come in many different forms, from many different organizations and institutions, with different costs and commitments and different goals for participants. This variety can be bewildering for those who do not know how to navigate their way through the possible options.

12. The issues of cost, transportation, and time must be addressed in the communication.

Mothers are sometimes taken aback by the amount of time, money, and participation expected of them when their children play sports. If they have come to the point of making sports a priority, they are willing to come more than halfway in meeting these issues, but would appreciate some gesture being made to share the burden.

13. Policies about matching girls and sports will need to take into account parental perceptions of girl-appropriate sports.

Mirroring the formal debate about gender and sports, Latina mothers have initial preconceptions about the types of sports that are “appropriate” for girls. These are educable perceptions but need to be addressed over time to broaden the field of options for their daughters.

14. There are program structural issues that are beyond the influence of mothers.

The varying levels of activity, even within one system, can provide varying participation experiences from park to park. Programs may or may not cooperate with one another. Budget cuts have had a negative impact on many programs. These are beyond the ability of mothers to control, but may be the focus of inter-institutional activity.

Framework for Action

CESLAC’s approach to understanding the role of sport in East Los Angeles and providing recommendations for increasing girls’ participation was based on the Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Behaviors (KASB) model, a framework that has been valuable in previous CESLAC projects.

The KASB model was developed in the fields of patient education and health education. It posits that Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Behaviors are the four

elements a person needs to make a change in daily habits, such as diet or exercise. The Behavior element focuses both on the current behavior (e.g., excessive caloric intake), and the new one that would be better for a person's health (e.g., reduce caloric intake). Knowledge is the information about the desired Behavior (e.g., effects of obesity on one's body), providing the rationale for the change. Attitude is the person's feeling about the old Behavior (e.g., I eat when I am stressed) and the new Behavior, and desirability of moving from one to the other. Skills are the techniques and practices needed to move from one to the other (e.g., learning to weigh oneself, learning to read a nutritional label, etc.).

When CESLAC began its community college-to-medical school pipeline program, MEDPEP (Medical Professional Education Program) the KASB model was used to target program efforts to achieve the goal of increasing Latino enrollments in graduate health professional schools.

When the program was begun in 1992, CESLAC staff interviewed community college administrators from Cerritos College to Porterville College in Tulare County. Universally, the administrators laid the blame for poor Latino student performance on the parents, citing case after case in which parents had interfered with students' studies. Staff then conducted focus groups with rural and urban parents, and discovered that the parents claimed the one thing they wanted in the world was their children's academic success and advancement.

From a KASB perspective, the parents certainly possessed the Attitude necessary for their children's success. Further probing, however, revealed they had very little knowledge about their role in their children's academic experience and did not have Skills to turn their Attitude (i.e., their desire for their children's success) into practical action. What emerged from the focus group discussions was that parents did not realize that their expectations for adolescent involvement in family activities (e.g., family birthdays, weddings, quinceañeras, etc.) and responsibilities (e.g., working to help support the family or taking care of younger children) were undercutting the more important goal of their children's academic success. MEDPEP developed a parental component to its program to help Latino parents acquire the Knowledge and Skills that built upon their Attitudes.

Involving Latina girls in sports is similar to the situation MEDPEP encountered. In the focus groups, parents constantly shared the goals they had for the young girls: good grades, admission to a good university, and a professional career. Clearly, the parents shared an Attitude of raising their girls to be successful women. But they lacked Knowledge and Skills of how team sports could help their girls achieve such success.

The principles of adult education are different from those of child education.

While children tolerate being lectured to, adults prefer to acquire knowledge on their own, so that they “own” it. The focus group method encourages participants to discuss an issue not only with the moderator, but also with one another; and via their discussion among themselves, they explore different facets of an issue. Through their participation in the focus groups, Latina parents began to discover how participation in team sports could actually help their girls gain personal qualities needed to achieve the larger goal of academic and professional success.

Recommended Implementation

Based on this pilot project, this report suggests that the LA84 Foundation build upon the Attitude that Latina mothers already possess: the desire for their daughters to achieve academic and professional success. Once they understand how team sports will help their girls achieve, then they will become receptive to increasing their Knowledge and Skills about girls’ participation in team sports and will more easily make the decision to modify their own Behavior to support their daughters’ participation.

Develop a 30-45 minute in-person learning experience for parents that allows them to explore:

- How sports team participation facilitates the growth of personal characteristics that will help their girls achieve professional success (Attitude);
- What the structure of sports programs in the area is, and how they can participate (Knowledge);
- How to provide opportunities for incorporating sports participation into the lives of girls, the parents, and the other children in the family (Skills).

Recruit by in-person invitation at:

- Housing projects (Estrada, Pico Aliso, etc.),
- Churches),
- Before school (parental drop-off),
- Park picnic areas.
- Flyers would be used as part of the recruitment campaign rather than as a stand-alone activity.

Program Administration: Apart from the parent component, there are some structural issues mentioned by staff that, in the best of cases, could be addressed so as to prepare recreation centers to offer the best experience to a new wave of clients. These are detailed in the last section of this report, as they are beyond the parents’ control.

Detailed Report

1. Young girls, ages 7-14, are not the primary decision makers about sports participation.

Young girls may attempt to influence their parents' decisions, but ultimately they are not the primary decision makers about sports participation.

Moderator: If the girl wants to play, is that enough to motivate the mom to enroll her? Or does there also have to be motivation on the part of the mom? (Si la niña quiere, ¿es suficiente para motivar a la mamá que la ingrese? ¿O también tiene que ser por parte de la mamá?)

Mom: I believe that even though the girl wants to, the mother won't let her. (Yo creo que, aunque la niña quiere, la mamá no la va a dejar.)

2. Mothers are the primary decision makers.

Mothers are the primary decision makers for most daily aspects of their children's lives: health care, nutrition, clothing, and education. They are the ones who weigh the impact of sports participation on the family budget, the girls' lives, and their own time.

Mom: I am the one to take my children, like right now, to school. Later I go and pick them up. I am the one who goes to parent meetings that take place while my children are in school. (Yo, para llevar a mi niños, como ahorita, para llevarlos a la escuela, luego llego y voy a recogerlos. Me voy a juntas, a programas que hay mientras mis niños están en la escuela.)

This role can be observed every morning at most elementary schools with high Latino enrollments, as crowds of Latina mothers walk their children to school.

Mom: And when she [daughter] goes, I go with her. I am always with her, for however long she stays. Then my husband says, "You leave me alone." [I tell him] "You can take care of yourself, and she can't." (Y yo, cuando ella va, yo voy con ella. Yo siempre estoy con ella, se quede lo que se quede. Entonces me dice mi esposo, "Me dejas a mí solo." "Tu te puedes cuidar y ella no.")

The role of Latina mothers was also noticed by a non-Latino program administrator. In his experience, he had to get to the mothers to get the girls; getting to the fathers did not result in getting the girls enrolled.

Coach: I think one of keys to get into getting the girls involved, is getting the moms involved. When you only get the dads, you don't get the girls. Once you get in the moms, I have so many girls now.

One girl in the 7-10 age group emphasized the importance of the mother in the decision to engage in sports. She was given a stuffed toy walrus and asked to imagine what sport that animal would play.

Girl: [The walrus] would play softball. The mom would go to every game. She would always help the team and help the coach.

3. Nearly three-quarters of the Latina mothers in Los Angeles are immigrants.

The profile of Latina immigrant mothers is very different from the profile of U.S.-born Latina mothers in education, income, and sports-related experience.

See Figure 1 for a cross-section of the Latino population by age group and nativity (U.S.-born and foreign-born). Latinas from ages 25-44, the age of mothers of girls in the 7-14 range, are 72% foreign-born.

Compared to U.S.-born mothers, Latina immigrant moms have far less education and far lower income. While many immigrants manage to learn some English, they often prefer to use Spanish when dealing with important topics, such as health and their children.

Therefore, language is a potential stumbling block. An English-speaking mom pointed out that while the majority of her community spoke Spanish, the flyers were only in English.

Mom: [The flyer] is just, "Come out, join." ...It's in English, which is, you know, kind of limiting 'cause a lot of the community is Spanish-speaking; so the flyers are usually in English, which I think it might be a bit of a barrier.

A Spanish-speaking mom pointed out that sports should be available to both Spanish and English speakers.

Mom: [Sports] aren't just for those who speak English, but also for those who speak Spanish. (No solo es para los que hablan inglés, sino

también para lo que hablan español.)

There is a great deal of variation in Spanish-language effort. Some programs were reported to have no in-language activity, while others were reported as having it. This variation made access a spotty issue for the mothers.

4. Currently participating mothers tend to come from the quarter that are U.S.-born.

First-hand experience while recruiting focus-group participants tends to corroborate observations shared by immigrant mothers, U.S.-born mothers, and recreation center staff and administrators, that most Latina mothers participating are English-speaking, second-generation mothers.

Figure 1 shows that just slightly over one quarter (28%) of Latinas ages 25-44 are U.S.-born.

Mom: I don't know. Most of the families at park that you talked to, that we talk to, are English-speaking families, but majority of people in the community are Spanish-speaking. So, I mean, you can draw your own conclusion there. You know most of the people that come are English[-speaking].

The program staff frequently mentioned that most of the participating mothers were English-speaking.

Coach: That is something that I do notice at [name of program]. A lot of the moms that participate, [who] get their daughters in the sport, are more like second-generation. They know how to speak English. Very few times is, actually—I say this with my one experience, like immigrant moms that don't know how to speak English.

5. In the countries of origin, girls playing sports was not the norm.

Most immigrants from Mexico come from rural areas, where opportunities for team sports for all children are extremely limited. Even in urban areas, Mexico and the Central American countries do not have a full Title IX equivalent.

In, addition, a commonly reported attitude was that girls should be kept in the house and not allowed outside to play as boys were.

Mom: Take us, for example. In my case [in Mexico], there were eight daughters with my mom, and my mother never let us ride a bicycle. "The bicycle is for men," and I never learned to ride. (Por ejemplo

nosotros. Yo, en mi caso, fuimos ocho mujeres con mi mamá, y mi mamá nunca nos dejó jugar con la bicicleta. “La bicicleta es de los hombres,” y yo no lo aprendí jamás.)

Even in urban areas, Mexico and the Central American countries do not have a full Title IX equivalent, much less funding for extensive formal sports programs.

Mom: I think that, yes, the culture [is to blame], because I was brought up in Mexico, and we were so poor that we didn't have the chance to belong to a team. Besides that, we were always kept in the house. My parents had a different outlook, a different way of looking at life. (Yo pienso que sí, que la cultura, porque yo fui criada en México, y éramos tan pobres que nosotros no teníamos la oportunidad de pertenecer a un equipo. Además, siempre estábamos en la casa. Mis papás estaban con otra mentalidad, otra forma de ver la vida.)

Recreation center staff noticed that immigrant mothers were less familiar with the concept of team sports for their daughters

Coach: It means, sometime, a lot of Latino families...if you grow up [in] another country and you come here, you don't grow up with the sports culture, because it is different. So when you come here, you don't really understand the culture of sport, and everything that is involved, in the practice and the training; and sometimes it's easy if you are disconnected from that.

6. Immigrant mothers realize that the U.S. is different from the country of origin, and want to provide opportunities for the U.S.-born children that they themselves did not have.

Immigrant mothers generally immigrated to the United States as young adults, often in order to provide more opportunities for their children, who were subsequently born in the U.S. They are aware that things are different in the U.S., and they want their daughters to take full advantage of new opportunities that the moms did not have in Mexico.

Mom: So, now I have come to the United States. Well, I have a daughter that I brought from Mexico, so I have told her, “We haven't come here so that we would be the same as we were there. Instead, I have brought you here so that you would be able to do what you want; and whatever opportunity may come to you or cross your path, you should take advantage of it, to get ahead, not to wind up like me.” Instead, she has to get ahead. (Entonces ahora que yo me vine a los Estados Unidos. Pues yo tengo una hija de allá de

México, entonces yo le he dicho a ella, “Nosotros no hemos venido aquí para que estemos igual que allá. Sino que te he traído aquí para que tú aproveches lo que quieres hacer; y cualquier oportunidad que a ti se te venga o se te atraviese tu debes tomarla, para sobresalir, y no estar como yo.” Sino que ella tiene que superarse.)

7. Immigrant mothers have desires and goals for their girls’ development.

Nearly all mothers mentioned having the following dreams for their daughters’ development: to have them achieve good grades, graduate from a university, embark on a career or profession, and be healthy.

These desires for educational and professional success were openly expressed by the moms in the focus groups.

Mom: I [want] my daughter to get good grades, and for her to behave herself well in school, because her grades will help her to go to a good college. (Yo [quiero] que mi hija tenga buenas calificaciones, y que se porte bien en la escuela porque sus calificaciones le van a ayudar a irse a un buen colegio.)

Their expectation is that their girls will be far more successful in life than they, the mothers, have been.

Mom: Well, like all mothers want, I want them to go to the university, to have a career, so that they don’t have to go through what we are going through. ...That’s what they [mothers] want. (Pues, yo como todas las madres quieren que vayan hasta la universidad, que saquen una carrera chiquita, para que no pasen lo mismo que uno está pasando. ...Que es lo que ellas quieren.)

The fact that a mom did not get a college education or achieve a profession was not seen as a deterrent to her daughter’s success.

Mom: That she have a career, that she be good, that...she behave well in everything, and that she get ahead. Even if I didn’t get ahead, that she still have a career. (Que tenga una carrera, que sea buena que...porte bien en todo y que salga adelante. Ya que, si uno no salió adelante, que ella sí que tenga una carrera.)

8. The benefits of sports participation need to be communicated to the immigrant mothers.

The role that team sports can play in helping the daughters acquire personal characteristics that will help them achieve their mothers' dreams needs to be communicated. When an opportunity for sports participation is presented in a vacuum, it has to compete with other demands on a family's limited time and financial resources. Unless the connection between sports and success is clear, sports participation will be given lower priority.

Given their desire for their daughters to go to a university, some moms initially prefer schoolwork to sports.

Mom: Education is more important to me than sports. I would rather that she read than run. For me, education is number one. (A mí me importa más la educación que el deporte. Yo prefiero que lea a que corra. Para mí, la educación es numero uno.)

Health and Physical Activity.

The health of their daughters and other children is very important for immigrant Latina mothers. They brought into the focus groups an understanding of a relationship between physical activity and health. They expressed concern about their daughters' inactivity and its possible negative consequences to their daughters' health

Mom: [Girls should engage in physical activity] so that they are not watching so much television, so that they aren't on the computer all day, so that they get some exercise, because it's also good for their daughters' health. (Para que no miren tanta televisión, para que no estén todo el día en la computadora, para que hagan ejercicio, porque es también para la salud de sus hijas.)

One mother shared the example of her youngest daughter, who was overweight. Unable to deny her daughter food (which was how she perceived putting the child on a diet), she thought about enrolling her in sports.

Mom: The doctor told me that my daughter, the youngest one...was very chubby. So they told me it seemed like the thing to do to put her on a diet. But because I just can't bring myself to take food away from her, the only option I had was to enroll her to play. And it's had results, because she has definitely lost a lot of weight. (Mi niña, la más pequeña, me dijo el doctor que... está muy gordita. Entonces me dijeron que viera como le hacía para que le pusiera dieta. Y como quitarle la comida no puedo, entonces ya la única opción que tenía es meterla así para jugar. Y sí ha dado resultado, y sí, porque sí ha

bajado mucho.)

Mental health was often mentioned. Mothers said that the daily grind of school and homework could lead to stress, and that physical activity was one way of relieving this stress.

Mom 1: [With physical activity,] they're more awake, [like] they are going to get rid of all the stress they have all day at school. They play sports, they are going to get rid of all of that, and they won't be in the house watching television. (Se despiertan más, [como] van a perder todo el estrés que tienen todo el día en la escuela. Juegan los deportes, van a perder todo eso, y a no estar en la casa mirando televisión.)

Mom 2: It gives them health, health for their well-being. (Les da salud, salud para el bien de ellas.)

Mom 3: For their health, so that they can be well, so that they can de-stress themselves. (Para la salud, para que estén bien, para que se destresen.)

The Sports Team and Personal Development.

The concept of a team is familiar to the respondents. Girls in the 11-14 age group were readily able to list a number of the specific qualities of a team:

Moderator: How about if I say team”?

Girl 1: Cooperate.

Girl 2: Uhm, [giggle] work together.

Girl 3: Hardworking, dedicated.

Girl 4: Teamwork.

Girl 5: Working together.

Girl 6: Sportsmanship.

Moderator: Okay, tell me about sportsmanship.

Girl 6: Getting along with everyone; and no matter what happens [to] you, [it] doesn't matter if you win or lose, as long as you had fun. That's all that matters.

The concept of a team is also known to the mothers, but often they had not made the connection between participation in a team sport and their daughters' individual development.

Mom: It's that you have to have discipline, you have to arrive on time, you can't arrive late, you can't just show up when you feel like it. (Es que tienes que tener disciplina, que tienes que llegar a una hora exacta, que no tienes que llegar tarde, no tienes que llegar a la hora que se te dé la gana.)

Latina mothers usually want their children, especially the girls, to grow up to be *educado*. This does not refer so much to academic achievement as it does to gaining interpersonal skills, to knowing how to behave towards others. Probably the most important element of being *educado* is to show respect for others. A child who is *educado* reflects well on the mother. During the focus groups, mothers began to realize that participation in a sports team can help their daughters gain experiences that can lead to being *educadas*, such as learning to socialize. These issues came up in one focus group the following way:

Moderator: What do we learn from playing a sport? What does a child learn when she learns to play a sport? (¿Qué aprendemos participando en algún deporte? ¿Que cosas aprende un niño cuando aprende un deporte?)

Mom 1: Discipline, to be a team with other children, to socialize. (Disciplina, asociarse con más niños, socializar.)

Mom 2: Respect. (Respeto.)

Mom 3: To make friends. To make friends by yourself, new friends. (Hacer amistades. Para uno mismo hacer amistades, nuevas amistades.)

In Spanish, the word *competir* has a more aggressive, divisive implication than the English cognate *compete*, closer to the sense of "fighting." While mothers want their daughters to get ahead—for which end they will have to compete (in the English-language sense)—they do not want their daughters to *faltar respeto* (lack respect) by stooping to the level of fighting. As seen in the comments from the focus group below, mothers began to understand that sports participation can help their daughters learn how to compete (in the English-language sense), to

have the desire to win, but without losing respect for others.

Moderator: I am thinking that men are taught to want to win, but do we cultivate that same attitude in the minds of girls? (Me imagino que sí le platica a los hombres hay que querer ganar, pero ¿en la mente de las niñas se inculca esa misma actitud?)

Mom 1: Yes. (Sí.)

Mom 2: Yes. (Sí.)

Mom 3: I tell my daughter, “You have to study and become someone in this life”... because they have to learn to be better than the others. (Yo a mi hija le digo, “Tienes que estudiar y ser alguien en la vida”...porque aprendan a ser más mejor que otras.)

During the focus groups, parents did make the connection between team sports and the sense of competitiveness that would better prepare their daughters to get ahead in life.

Mom 1: No, I hadn’t thought about it before the way I think about it now, after all that you have been telling me, because I thought that sports, it was just so that—so that you feel good, so that you de-stress yourself, but not related to having a career. (No, no lo pensaba antes igual de ahorita que me está diciendo esto, porque yo pienso que el deporte, éso es para—para que te sientas bien, para que te des-estreses, pero no relacionado como para tener una carrera.)

Moderator: And now how do you see it? (Y ahora, ¿cómo lo ve?)

Mom 1: Yes, it’s for that. (Sí, es para éso.)

Mom 2: [Another mom, agreeing] Yes, it’s for that. (Sí, es para éso.)

In sports, as in life, not every effort is rewarded with victory. Learning how to lose gracefully, and using that loss to prepare for another challenge, is another important lesson in team sports.

Mom: I believe that also [they learn] persistence. If the girl is persistent, she wants to participate more. Just as I tell my children. In sports, you win or you lose. You have to know how to lose and also how to win...so that they shouldn’t feel bad when they’ve lost, but they should keep on doing something. (Yo creo ahí también que la persistencia. Si la niña tiene persistencia, quiere más participar. Así

como les digo a mis hijos. En el juego se gana o se pierde. Hay que saber perder y si gana, también...que no se sientan mal de que perdieron, pero que se mantengan haciendo algo.)

9. The benefits of sports participation needs to be reinforced in U.S.-born mothers.

U.S.-born mothers usually have personal acquaintance with team sports through their own school experiences. Describing those experiences as “enjoyable,” they support their daughters’ participation, but are not clear on the range of benefits for the daughters resulting from it.

During the focus group, the notion that daughters would learn how to take responsibility for commitments to others came up, an important part of teamwork.

Mom: [I] personally think that, uh, it gives them a good sense—the girls anyhow—of responsibility. You know, sometimes things get tough, and she wants...one time in baseball, she didn’t want to play because she wasn’t the best on the team. You know, she was just starting. And I told her, “You know, you made a commitment. You have to stick to it.” So it teaches them that whole commitment and responsibility.

The idea of learning to take personal responsibility also came up in the focus group.

Mom: You need to keep in charge. I always tell [my daughter], “That’s your uniform. You have to make sure it has its spot, you know where it is, you know, keep your shoes clean,” and all the things she needs to do. Her uniform has to be in order; so it teaches them, and they have to have good grades in order to [participate]. That is what I like about it.

When asked to share their observations about the effects of sports on their girls, one mother stressed the positive effects on academic performance.

Moderator: Can you help me,? If you were to create a flyer to get more moms to get their daughters involved, what do you think it should say? What do you think is the one thing?

Mom: I think that sharing the benefits of participating on a team, you know, learning to work with somebody, being active, healthy lifestyles, just kind of showing do you want to have—help your daughter be part of a team, happy, healthier, better in school, you know. Studies show

that children that participate in sports, wherever the study show, I know that I hear that statistics show, children that do sport have better grades in school, have better relationships. They learn social skills. Putting that on a type of flyer, it would be good, just to see that there are benefits out there.

English-speaking mothers more openly expressed the desire to see their girls compete.

Mom: I think, for me, it's academic success, college readiness. I really enforce that with my daughter. It is not enough just to be okay. I really, strongly, I want her to get to the top because I know how much easier her life will be. She will get scholarships that way.

Even though second-generation mothers have higher education and income levels than first-generation immigrants, they are not well represented in the professions. They too want their daughters to achieve more than they themselves have in life.

Mom: I keep telling [daughter] she has to go to school, she has to have her career; you don't want to end up in a job, you want have a career that you don't mind getting up and going to go to every day.

10. The communication will have to be on multiple levels.

Immigrant mothers respond best to in-person outreach. When these are presented as contributing to their daughters' development, mothers will attend classes to gain knowledge to make them better parents. Flyers alone will not provide sufficient information for them to come to the positive decision point.

U.S.-born mothers do respond to flyers, although they have concerns about the completeness of the information in them, particularly regarding their own participation.

In a number of studies, we have observed that immigrant mothers respond best to in- person outreach. This is also seen in immigrant-oriented businesses, such as La Curacao or Vallarta markets, where personal interaction with sales staff is part of the shopping experience. Recreation center staff also mentioned that in-person contact is very effective.

Coach What I did was, I started going to all kinds of things, talking to the parents, and I knew it wasn't getting anywhere. So I started talking

to the women. And I am a big flirt. So I was just flirting with them:
“Why you don’t put your daughter in sports?”

Mothers in the focus groups confirmed this.

Moderator: Okay, so which is more effective than a flyer, a personal contact, or...? (Okay, entonces ¿Qué es más efectivo que el volante, un contacto personal, o...?)

Mom: Personal contact, and, I think, the news. A lot of people watch the news. (Contacto personal, y yo pienso el noticiero. Hay mucha gente que mira las noticias.)

Mothers in the focus group explained that flyers alone generally did not convince them to do something.

Mom 1: As I told you, I didn’t come because of a flyer. (Como yo le digo, yo no llegué por volante.)

Mom 2: [Flyers] come, but people don’t do anything except pick them up and throw them in the garbage, and they don’t look at what is in the garbage. ([Volantes] sí llegan, pero la gente nada más los agarran y los echan a la basura, ni los miran que contiene la basura.)

While it is a familiar concept in many parts of Los Angeles, the recreation center was not a well-known concept among the population comprising the focus groups. Without meaning to, one focus group of girls aged 11-14 revealed an almost complete lack of knowledge about what a recreation center was.

Moderator: Any of you hang out at a rec center?

Girl 1: What is that?

Girl 2: What?

Girl 3: Uh...

Moderator: Oh, okay.

Girl 4: What?

Girl 5: What is it?

Moderator: Recreation center.

- Girl 6: What's that? [Giggles in the background.]
- Girl 7: Yeah, where they have golf and all that. Moderator: Sorry.
- Girl 8: Isn't it where they have a lot of games?
- Moderator: [Chattering in the background.] So, have you been to one?
- Girl 9: Can you explain it?
- Girl 10: Like an arcade type of thing?
- Girl 11: Like it's in a room?
- Girl 12: I just don't get it!

Immigrant mothers also apparently had very little interaction with recreation centers, as seen in the following conversation.

Moderator; So, let me ask you, have the parks ever once made the effort, at all, to invite you personally to come to the park and participate? Have they invited you via a flyer in Spanish? Do you know the park director? (Entonces, déjenme preguntarles, ¿los parques alguna vez han hecho una vez el esfuerzo de invitarle personalmente a ustedes que vengan al parque y que participen? ¿Los han invitado con volante en español? ¿Usted conoce al director del parque?)

Mom 1: No.

Mom 2: No.

Mom 3: No.

Yet, mothers also recognized that they had not taken the initiative on their own to find out much about recreation centers

Mom 1: Because I, as a mom, have never gone to see what there is. (Porque uno, como mamá, nunca ha ido a ver lo que hay)

Mom 2: We have never gone there, to the office, to ask who is the director is, who runs the park in this area. We have never done that. (Nunca hemos ido allí a la oficina a preguntar quién es el director, quién dirige el parque de aquí en la zona. Nunca hemos hecho eso.)

Parent Education About the Benefits of Sports.

How can mothers learn about recreation centers and sports programs? Parent meetings are a part of the world of immigrant mothers. They recounted some basic concepts about physiology they had learned in parent meetings, thereby demonstrating growth in the Knowledge component as a result of attending parent preparation meetings.

Mom: Because they told us in the meetings where—that sometimes children get stressed. (Porque nos dicen a nosotros en la juntas donde—que a veces agarran estrés los niños.)

Moderator They told you in the meetings? (Les dijeron en las juntas?)

Mom: They told us in the meetings that they are stressed because every day, every day they are thinking, they are at school all day, and they come [home] to do homework. And they say that even if they come do homework, if they are given three hours or so to jump and play, they lose it, that thought [stress]. (Nos dijeron en las juntas que se tienen estrés porque todos los días, y todos los días están pensando, que están en la escuela y por todo el día, y vienen [a casa] hacer la tarea. Y dicen que aunque vengan hacer la tarea y las deja uno unas tres horas brincar o jugar, pierden éso, el pensamiento.)

Some mothers recounted details they had learned in parents' meetings, related to physical activity and their children's health.

Moderator Have you heard this, that the act of doing this, exercise or participating in sports, also helps the intelligence? (¿Han oído éso, el hecho hacer éso, ejercicio o andar en deporte, también ayuda a la inteligencia?)

Mom 1: Yes, it even helps the heart. (Sí, ayuda hasta al corazón.)

Mom 2: Yes. (Sí.)

Moderator You've heard this? How did they tell you this? (¿Han oído éso? ¿Cómo les han dicho éso?)

Mom 3: They say that it helps you understand more, that the brain gets the—I don't know—the brain works harder for you, and you are working the brain, and you're not thinking only about television. (Dicen que te ayuda a que captes más, el cerebro capta las—no

sé—el cerebro te trabaja más, y te está trabajando el cerebro y no estás pensando en la pura televisión.)

While flyers alone would not provide this kind of adult learning experience, flyers would be one way to inform parents of meetings to be held. Mothers in one focus group were asked to help design such a flyer.

Moderator What should a flyer have by way of information? (¿Qué es lo que tiene que tener un volante con información?)

Mom 1: Spanish and English. (Español é inglés.)

Moderator But what details would you like it to have? (¿Pero qué detalles les gustaría que tuviera?)

Mom 2: Put the address in clearly, because sometimes they don't put the address in; worse, if it's going to put "Pastoral Project," [and] it doesn't put down the address of the building. (Poner la dirección bien, y a veces no ponen la dirección; peor si va a poner proyecto pastoral que no va a poner el número del edificio.)

U.S.-born mothers do respond to flyers; so for this population, already accustomed to the concepts of girls playing sports and recreation centers, a flyer alone may be sufficient.

Moderator: Can you help me? If you were to create a flyer to get more moms to get their daughters involved, what do you think it should it say? What do you think is the one thing?

Mom: I think that sharing the benefits of participating on [a] team, you know, learning to work with somebody, being active, healthy lifestyles. Just kind of showing, "Do you want to have -- help your daughter be part of a team, happy, healthier, better in school?"

11. The structure of sports programs needs to be made clear to the parents.

Sports programs come in many different forms, from many different organizations and institutions, with different costs and commitments and different goals for participants. This variety can be bewildering for those who do not know how to navigate their way through the possible options.

Mom: I would like to know what sports there are for girls. That's what I would like to know from the parks. (Yo me gustaría saber que

deportes hay para las niñas. Es lo que me gustaría saber de los parques.)

Beyond the variety of sports available, the structure and process of team sports can be bewildering to parents not used to the concept. Some parents described signing their children up for teams that never materialized.

Mom 1: Because, suppose we have the money to register, but it doesn't do any good to make an effort to pay it, if they [the park] are going to be there one time and the next time not. (Porque, póngale que si tengamos para la inscripción, pero de nada sirve, hacer la lucha por pagarla, si ellos van a estar un tiempo y otro ya no.)

Moderator: Okay, but if you saw it [registration] as an investment, should [your children] do it? (Okay, ¿o sea que ustedes lo ven como una inversión, que lo hagan [sus niños]?)

Mom 2: Yes, yes, they should do it. If I am going to pay them, then they should hold the class. If not, well, [the children] should stay at home and play. (Sí, sí, que lo hagan. Si voy a pagarles, que sí que cumplan con el curso. Si no, pues, que se queden jugando en la casa.)

Mom 3: It is a commitment for the girl. It's a contract. (Es un compromiso de la niña. Es un contrato.)

Recreation center staff were aware that levels of program quality varied from park to park and that this could create problems for parents.

Coach: There was nothing at this park, no activity at this park, none. So that means no sports, no classes, and then the classes they had they were fake. When someone showed up, there would be no teacher.

12. The issues of cost, transportation, and time must be addressed in the communication.

Mothers are sometimes taken aback by the amount of time, money, and participation expected of them when their children play sports. If they have come to the point of making sports a priority, they are willing to come more than halfway in meeting these issues, but would appreciate some gesture being made to share the burden.

Even U.S.-born moms, with much higher education and income levels than immigrant mothers, sometimes suffer from "sticker shock."

Mom: I just started my daughter last year in cheerleading. ...My daughter liked it. She learned, and she likes it now. So it was hard, 'cause...it is so expensive. And I didn't pay full price for the uniform; I paid half price because one of the parents had a uniform from last year. ...I think I spent over \$1200 or \$1300, and I was like uhhh! Okay, but my daughter liked it, and my husband says, "She likes it now. We are not going to take her out," and this and that; and the coach is good, and she learned a lot.

Immigrant mothers, with lower incomes than U.S.-born mothers, felt the high costs even more keenly.

Mom: They're going to play if you have the money for them to join the team. But if you don't have it, there is no way for them to join. (Van a jugar si uno tiene dinero para que se metan al equipo. Si uno no tiene, no hay forma de que ellas se metan.)

Immigrant families are likely to have more children than U.S.-born families, and the costs of sports are multiplied by the number of children participating in them.

Mom: One of the obstacles, I think, for me is the money. There were times I wanted to put them in lots of programs, but it is not cheap. I have only two children, but there are parents who have more than two. So that's an obstacle for a person. (Uno de los obstáculos, pienso yo, para mí es el dinero. Yo quisiera a veces meterlas a ellas a muchos programas, pero no es barato. Yo tengo solo dos niños, pero hay padres que tienen más de dos. Entonces ése es un obstáculo para uno.)

There are hidden costs beyond registration fees. These are needed for complete participation, and they can mount up to a level that surprises even the higher-income U.S.-born mothers.

Mom 1: They charge you for registration, and they charge you for the uniform, and the bag and warm ups and a short set. That is what you pay up front. And when competitions start, you need to pay for that. You need [to] register for that, you need to have this, makeup.

Mom 2: They travel to Las Vegas, and you have to pay for room and board.

Mom 3: And pay for your entry fee.

Mom 4: Then you have to pay to go, and that is another \$25 per adult.

When you go watch, it's like a show, it is in a big arena.

Mom 5: You have to pay for your ticket, your husband's ticket, and your son. You have to pay room and board for all three of you, and food, of course.

Immigrant mothers, with lower incomes, feel the hidden costs even more. First there are additional uniform and playing time costs.

Mom: It's the money. Well, the registration and what is necessary only costs \$65. But then the kids want everything else. (Es el recurso. Pues, solo ahí cuesta sesenta y cinco dólares la inscripción y lo que necesita. Y luego que los niños quieren de todo.)

Recreation center staff were aware of the hidden cost of transportation, especially for low income families.

Coach: Traveling, going to game to game. Gas is expensive. That is something that some of the parents don't take into account. And sometimes they will start trying to make ends meet: "Oh, wait, I am taking you a lot, taking you to games, taking you to practices. It is starting to add up."

Then, if a mother takes her younger children to the games that the older daughter is in, ancillary hidden costs of traveling to, and remaining for, the game, arise. Even a "free" program turns out not to be free.

Mom: Many [programs] are free but the buses, and meals, since you are going out, and it's being there all day. All the kids want you to buy them things. "Buy me this, buy me that." And the transportation and the food. (Muchos son gratis, pero los buses, y la comida, pues que sale uno, y es estarse todo el día. Todos los niños que se les antoja comprar. "Cómprame esto, cómprame el otro." Y que el transporte y la comida.)

For low income parents sensitive to costs, another unanticipated cost is that when one child joins a sport, their other children often want to join as well.

Mom: And if one child joins, then the others want to do it too. (Y si uno se mete, también quieren los otros.)

Another area to be addressed is the time commitment that a girl's participation on a sports team requires from the mother.

Mom: Sometimes, I think, people don't, don't register their girls in sports because they also don't have time to take them. They have to work. (A veces, pienso, que las personas no, no apuntan a sus niñas en deportes porque también no tienen tiempo de llevarlas. Tienen que trabajar.)

Children in the 7- to 10-year-old group described how their parents complained about the costs of sports participation.

Girl: My mom gets complaining. My dad [says], "Too much money to buy the jerseys, thirty dollars." So sometimes we don't enter it.

Offering Alternatives.

Costs do not have to be an insurmountable barrier. For one thing, if the mothers think the activity is good for their girls, they will make a number of sacrifices for their *mijitas* (young daughters). Programs also can offer alternatives to get mothers in the habit of keeping their girls in sports. One encouragement to offer is a scholarship or subsidy (*beca* in Spanish), to let the parent know that the program is working with them. One administrator described the positive effects of offering even a small scholarship.

Coach: I do [offer subsidies]. I never got participation until I starting recruiting and giving scholarships. Now I am cheapest baseball in the area, and that is why I now, I am getting good participation; but until I did that, and tried to match everybody else, no. So my area is a little bit poorer than the other, where the rec centers are located. For the city right here, they are charging \$40, they are charging \$45. I am at \$35, with a \$5 scholarship if you have low income. So I am at \$30.

Moderator: So even that \$5 makes a big difference?

Coach: Agree. I'll say 95%, above 90%, are scholarships in my league.

Moderator: But scholarships is only a portion, right? \$5?

Coach: It is \$5 left from \$35, so it's more than 10%. But that is, you cannot knock off too much of \$35, if you are already cheaper than everyone else. But that is a selling point

Moreover, parents can raise funds to help defray the costs of sports teams. The concept of fund-raising is well-known in immigrant circles.

Mom: No, I have not done it. But if they are going use the money to give them [the children] their medals and trophies at the end of the season, okay. Let's have a sale. We are with the children, they are playing, we are selling and everything is fine. I am not ashamed to sell things for my children's sake. I tell them, "You know what? I am selling cookies for my children, for the team." And I do it. (No, yo no lo he hecho. Pero si van a ocupar dinero para darles sus medallas al final del curso, okay. Vamos a hacer una venta. Estamos con los niños, están jugando, nosotros vendiendo, y todo bien. A uno no le da vergüenza vender por sus hijos. Les digo, "¿Sabes qué? Estoy vendiendo galletas para mis niños, para el equipo." Y uno lo hace.)

Parents also seek low-cost alternatives. In the focus groups, mothers could not always define who the sponsors of these low-cost alternatives were, but most likely they were "Home Town Associations" loosely allied with the Mexican consulate in Los Angeles.

Mom: Ours is not [expensive]. Where we take our children, they don't ask for anything—for money or anything. Still, we give them \$20, and they give them their uniforms there. (El de nosotros, no. Adonde llevamos los niños, no piden nada—de fondos ni nada. Nada más, les damos \$20, y allí les dan los trajes.)

13. Policies about matching girls and sports will need to take into account parental perceptions of girl-appropriate sports.

Mirroring the formal debate about gender and sports, Latina mothers have initial preconceptions about the types of sports that are "appropriate" for girls. These are educable perceptions but need to be addressed over time to broaden the field of options for their daughters.

More Attention Paid to Boys' Sports.

Latina mothers are aware that more attention is given to boys'—and hence men's—sports than girls', or women's, sports.

Mom 1: When my son was playing, we got free tickets to see, I think it was UCLA or USC girls' baseball team. They gave the tickets. They practically even ask you, they will drive you so you can see them. You don't hear about the team, the girls' team, on T.V. like you hear about the boys'.

Mom 2: Same with me. With me, soccer, I like to see men play it, but women, no. (A mí igual. A mí el futbol, me gusta verlo en hombres, en mujeres no.)

They also noticed that more parents turn out for boys' sports events in the local park than for girls' events

Mom: And think about the stands, the stands that you see in the baseball park. They are filled, to see who? Boys. Football, parents are filled to see boys. There is more of—a little bit more of participations with parents and boys, now that I think about it.

Perceptions of Girls' Sports and Boys' Sports.

Some mothers were very clear about the divide they perceive between those sports appropriate for girls and those for boys.

Mom: It depends on the sport they play. If it's swimming, that's very good. But baseball, basketball—that is a little rougher for them, if they are feminine, right? (Depende el deporte que hagan. O sea natación, está muy bien. Pero ya béisbol, basquetbol—ya es un poquito más rudo para ellas, si son femeninas, no?)

Mothers mentioned a number of sports, such as swimming, dancing, cheerleading, drill team, tennis, and volleyball, as being particularly suitable for girls.

Mom: They [girls] can have sports. There are swimming, dancers, cheerleading, drill team. There are many things to put girls in. But I believe, my thought is, that those sports like baseball—it's not right for a girl. I mean, it's all right, but no. (Pueden tener deportes. Hay natación, de bailarinas, de cheerleading, de drill team. Hay muchas cosas para colocar a las niñas. Pero yo creo, mi pensamiento es, que todos esos juegos como béisbol— para una niña no va. I mean [sic], está bien, pero no.)

In that same vein, sports that featured “feminine” uniforms, such as tennis or cheerleading, were deemed appropriate.

Mom: If it is a feminine sport, that's all right. Tennis, where they wear little skirts, [in] those they're wearing skirts. They look nice. (Si ése es afeminado, ése está bien. El tenis, ése de por si andan con unas falditas, [en] ésos traen sus falditas. Se miran bien.)

The coaches noticed that Latina mothers like to “feminize” their daughters who play sports by adding touches of pink to their uniforms and gear.

Coach: So, I almost had half girls. It’s really fun, too. The moms buy the girls pink shoes, pink bats, pink helmets. When I saw that, I went out there and start talking to them more, so now we are getting even more [girls].

Girls and Co-Ed Teams

Immigrant mothers, in particular, were cautious about the notion of co-ed teams. In their view, boys play rougher than girls, and this greater aggressiveness caused them concern about their girls playing on the same teams with boys.

Mom 1: [I want her to play] with girls, because boys are rougher. ([Quiero que juege] con niñas, porque los niños son más rudos.)

Moderator: What experience do you have with playing with girls? Is it more difficult? (Ustedes, ¿qué experiencia tienen de jugar con las niñas? ¿No es más difícil?)

Mom 2: It’s more difficult with boys, because they are rougher, very aggressive when playing. (Es más difícil con los niños, porque son más rudos, muy pesados para jugar.)

Mom 3: Very aggressive when playing. (Muy pesados para jugar.)

Mom 4: They are very aggressive. They throw themselves around. They are tougher, they are rougher. (Son muy pesados. Se avientan más. Son más duros, más toscos.)

Some mothers also expressed the concern that boys would be less forgiving of a lower skill level, and this would harm the girls’ self-esteem.

Mom: Because if the girl doesn’t catch the ball, the coach says, “You see, you are a girl, and you’re not catching the ball.” And her self-esteem goes down. And because they are rougher, and the girl is not. That happened to me. (Porque si la niña no cacha la pelota, el coach le dice, “You see, eres niña y no cachas la pelota.” Y les baja el self-esteem. Y como ellos son más rudos, y la niña no. A mí me pasó éso.)

Girls, Puberty and Sports.

The transition to puberty changes many things for the girls. The mothers in the focus groups agreed that young girls can jump and play happily (*saltar y brincar tranquilas*) when they are young. But some mothers felt that strenuous physical exercise was no longer appropriate, once puberty begins.

Mom: Sure, sports for their health is good at that time [when young]. That is the time, because it's still a time when girls can jump and play happily. But once they are growing beyond that age, it becomes a little harder for them, or they're tending to notice boys more. Then they have other thoughts. (Como deporte, como para su salud de ellas, está bien ese tiempo. Ése es el tiempo, porque todavía es un tiempo que las niñas pueden saltar y brincar tranquilas. Pero ya pasando casi de esa edad, ya se les hace un poquito más pesado, o ya ellas tienden a mirar más a muchachos. Tienen ya otros pensamientos.)

Mothers and Their Differential Treatment of Their Sons and Daughters.

When prompted by the moderator, one focus group of mothers began to realize that they themselves had treated their boys differently from their girls, which perhaps had led to having different expectations for the girls. In their analysis, they protected the girls more than the boys and tended to keep the girls in the house while allowing the boys to roam outside.

Mom: Because with girls, you always try to keep them inside. And the boys, they are boys. They have to explore, to know more, to live more. So, no, for this reason, one lets the boys out more, and the girls are always inside. (Porque a las niñas, uno siempre trata de tenerlas adentro. Y los niños, son niños. Ellos tienen que explorar, conocer más, vivir más. Entonces no, por eso los saca uno más a ellos, y las niñas siempre están adentro.)

Even second-generation, English-speaking mothers realized during the focus group that they, and society, treat girls differently from the boys.

Mom: I think it has to do with, as little kid, what is the first toy you give a boy? A bat and a ball, a glove. It is there, in socialization. What do you give a girl? A doll. Exactly. Kitchen things. No one ever brought my daughter a ball, and she begged and begged for a ball, a

basketball. So, finally, she begs us to go and buy her—to Big 5 and buy her a basketball. She was so excited, and I am thinking to myself, “Why is she so excited over a ball?” And I thought, “She never had her own ball.” So, I mean, that was us, that was our fault. We never thought to buy her a ball. Because we never saw her as a basketball player.

Sports: The Teaching Moment.

These attitudes are pointed out in this report to make it clear that Latina mothers, both immigrant and U.S.-born, are engaged in their own thoughts and conversations about gender and sports, which lead to more general thoughts about gender and society. One immigrant mother poignantly pointed out her own experience grappling with this issue in Mexico. Her experience influenced her decisions about her own daughter, who was born in the United States.

Mom: It’s an over-protection. Above all, before, my parents protected me a lot.... They taught girls to knit. But the boy used to go around doing his thing outside, while I had to prick my fingers, learning how to embroider. “I want to go play, Mom.” “No, the thing is, you have to learn this because you are a girl, and you have to do this. And the boy is the one who will go to work.” And I used to say to them, “So what, Mom? I can do the same things he does, and he can do what I do.” “No, for he is a boy.” (Es una sobreprotección. Sobre todo, antes, los padres de uno lo protegían mucho.... Les enseñaban a tejer. Y el niño andaba haciendo sus cosas por ahí, y uno tenía que picarse los dedos para enseñarse a bordar. “Y yo quiero jugar, mamá.” “No, es que te tienes que enseñar a ésto porque tú eres niña, y tú tienes que hacer esto. Y el niño es el que va a trabajar.” Y yo les decía. “Mamá, pero, ¿qué tiene? Yo puedo hacer lo mismo que él hace, y él puede hacer lo que yo hago.” “No, pero él es un hombre.”)

Latina moms do follow a learning curve, and eventually some mothers, particularly those of the second generation, come to see the value of girls’ participating in what traditionally have been considered boys’ sports, such as basketball and baseball.

Coach: The moms, they are a little bit competitive, and they want them [the girls] to play with the boys. And they want—if they are going to play sports, they want real sports. And I am not saying that softball and swimming is not a real sport, but they are traditional girls’ sports, and they said they didn’t want traditional girls’ sports.

14. There are program structural issues that are beyond the influence of mothers

The varying levels of activity, even within one system, can provide varying participation experiences from park to park. Programs may or may not cooperate with one another. Budget cuts have had a negative impact on many programs. These are beyond the ability of mothers to control, but may be the focus of inter-institutional activity.

Coach Cause, believe me, this place was a mess: rats in the office, I mean, filthy everywhere...lack of work production, lack of upkeep, lack of safety in the park. There is bums all over the park when I got there.

Recreation center and other program participants pointed to the importance of local program leadership for the development and sustaining of an active program.

Coach: I think, anywhere you are the director of the site, you are in charge of overseeing operations. If you are not doing, if you are not directing, no one [else] is going to do anything.

Mothers did notice administrative problems at a particular park.

Mom 1: They, um, I think, have a lot of personal problems, you know; and I am thinking, "Come on, I have enough of that at work at home. And at the park I have to do that, too?" So, I don't know.

Moderator: That is interesting. So, um, the personal problems between the, ah....

Mom 2: The administrators, the coaches, and then, of course, some of the parents. It's like, "Come on, people, we're here for the kids. Stop fighting." Mom

Mom 3: Yeah, I think it's a lot of personal agenda, you know.

Conclusion.

Program staff nicely summarized the larger perspective of this project, of increasing the involvement of young girls in sports. In their view, the goal was not simply to increase participation in sports, but to use sports as a means of bettering the community.

Coach: You want to better the community. I am here for that reason. I am not here to collect money, you know. I am here to make the community better. Every place I go, the community is way better when I leave.

A young program staff member who had grown up in the area articulated very clearly the larger effects on a local community's safety of establishing sports programs

Coach: There is a lot more issues that the community wants to see, but I feel that sports can be [an] avenue to address those.... There is a reduction in transients and gang members at the park due to the presence of the parents being there. So I think that it needs to be more of an effort on behalf of everyone to create a joint effort, because this is our community.

Therefore, the effort to increase participation of young Latinos in sports, including Latina girls, may have positive consequences throughout the communities where they live.

Coach: Why do you think we are here and nobody else is? So, yeah, we are involved with the community. We care about the community. That is why we are here!