



## RESEARCH SUMMARY—WHAT LATINA GIRLS SAY

*Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership* brings the voice of girls ages 8 to 17 to the forefront on a broad spectrum of issues related to leadership: how they define it, their experiences, and their aspirations. (Boys were also included for comparison purposes.)

What follows is what Latina girls are clearly saying: We need to “change it up” in how we define and think about leadership.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

## INSIGHT #1

### GIRLS ARE REDEFINING LEADERSHIP IN MEANINGFUL TERMS

**For Latina girls, preferred definitions of leadership imply personal principles, ethical behavior, and the ability to effect social change.**

- Being a leader is important to 66% of Latina, 70% of African American, and 56% of Asian American girls compared to 49% of Caucasian girls.
- Nearly 90% of Latina girls want to be the kind of leader who stands up for her beliefs and values, brings people together to get things done, and tries to change the world for the better.

**Latino youth are driven to leadership for different reasons. Latina girls are more likely to be driven by altruistic motives, whereas Latino boys are more likely to be driven by power and money.**

- Latina girls cite wanting to help other people (44% vs. 34%), be a role model for others (34% vs. 26%), share knowledge and skills with others (32% vs. 28%), and change the world for the better (29% vs. 24%) more than Latino boys as reasons why they might want to be a leader.
- Even though Latina girls believe that being a leader will help them to help others, they also believe it will help them to be successful in life (35% vs. 31%) and develop useful skills and qualities (32% vs. 30%) more so than Latino boys.
- Latino boys, however, more so than Latina girls, say that being a leader will help them make more money (24% vs. 16%) and have more power (16% vs. 10%).

## INSIGHT #2

### SELF-CONFIDENCE + SKILLS = NEW GIRL LEADERS

**Latinas report high self-regard on a number of leadership skills and qualities and are likely to aspire to leadership.**

- The desire to be a leader is higher among Latina (50%), Asian American (59%), and African American girls (53%) compared to Caucasian girls (34%).
- Nine out of ten (90%) Latina girls agree that no matter who they are, girls can learn to be good leaders, and 79% agree that girls can be leaders whether or not they are in positions of authority.

**At the same time, the greatest single barrier to leadership seems to be low self-regard about certain skills and qualities.**

- For the small percentage of Latino youth who are not interested in leadership, Latina girls cite fear of speaking in front of others (43%) more so than African American girls (32%) yet less so than Caucasian girls (47%); shyness (29%) less so than African American (32%) and Caucasian girls (46%); and fear of failure (29%) more so than African American girls (14%) yet less so than Caucasian girls (34%).
- Latino boys cite having too much stress in their life already (29%) more so than African American (6%) and Caucasian boys (14%); not wanting to tell others what to do (24%) more so than African American boys (22%) yet less so than Caucasian boys (28%); and shyness (24%) less so than African American (28%) and Caucasian boys (25%).

## INSIGHT #3

### OPPORTUNITIES + EXPERIENCES + SUPPORT = NEW GIRL LEADERS

**Families, particularly mothers, are a major positive influence on Latina girls' leadership aspirations. So are their fathers, relatives, teachers, and friends. Classmates and peers, on the other hand, tend to play more of a negative role.**

- Three-quarters (75%) of Latina girls say their mothers encourage them to be leaders, followed by teachers (54%), fathers (50%), friends (48%), and siblings and older relatives (31%). However, a little over one-third (36%) of Latina girls report having been discouraged or put down, usually by peers and classmates (51%), when they were trying to lead.
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Latina girls have had an opportunity to be a leader, largely at school (77%), home (29%), and on sports teams (24%). The large majority (92%) says their most recent experience being a leader was a positive one.

**Yet, Latina girls relate that environments in which they can develop leadership skills are scarce and do not empower them to effect change.**

- Fewer than three out of ten (27%) Latina girls feel empowered to effect change at school, followed by at home (17%) and in the neighborhoods (16%). After-school environments and peer groups are rated significantly lower at 9%.

## INSIGHT #4

### GIRLS HAVE A RANGE OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITIES

The proportion of youth with high leadership motivations and self-perceptions is greater among African American and Latino youth and Asian American girls than among Caucasian youth, as seen in the following leadership identity categories. (The subsample of Asian American girls is too small to make the results conclusive.)

- **LEADERSHIP VANGUARD: 47% Latina, 49% African American, 31% Caucasian, 50% Asian American girls.** These youth already think of themselves as leaders and actively desire to be leaders. They have the highest self-confidence, higher focus on academic, personal, and career success, and high social change values.
- **AMBIVALENT LEADERS: 24% Latina, 25% African American, 26% Caucasian, 16% Asian American girls.** These youth think of themselves as leaders and would not mind being leaders, although leadership is not expressly a goal for them. They share most of the attributes and behaviors of Vanguard leaders only to a lesser degree.
- **HOPEFULS: 3% Latina, 4% African American, 4% Caucasian, 9% Asian American girls.** These youth want to be leaders but do not think of themselves as leaders. They are not as confident as the Vanguard leaders, or even the Ambivalent leaders.
- **UNMOTIVATED: 20% Latina, 15% African American, 22% Caucasian, 22% Asian American girls.** These youth would not mind being leaders but do not think of themselves as leaders. They have relatively low self-confidence and are unmotivated in pursuing leadership opportunities.
- **REJECTERS: 5% Latina, 5% African American, 10% Caucasian, 3% Asian American girls.** These youth do not want to be leaders and do not think of themselves as leaders. This group has the lowest self-confidence, feels powerless to change the world, and is more likely to believe that leadership cannot be learned.

## METHODOLOGY

The study combined qualitative and quantitative research from the Girl Scout Research Institute and Fluent, a New York-based research firm. In January of 2007, researchers conducted focus groups and ethnographies with 165 girls, boys, and mothers in four regions across the country. Upon completion of the qualitative research, a nationwide online survey was administered to a national stratified sample of 2,475 girls and 1,514 boys between the ages of 8 and 17 years. The online survey was fielded from June 22, 2007 to June 29, 2007. The margin of error did not exceed 1.5%. The sample was weighted to reflect the U.S. Census representation of racial/ethnic groups among the target-age population.

In addition, due to the underrepresentation of African American and Latina households with lower income in online panels, supplementary mall-intercept interviews were conducted. A total of 649 African American and Latino preteen and teen youth were interviewed at 15 locations across the country in urban, suburban, and rural localities. The data from this sample were used to provide additional insight into correlations between race and various aspects of attitudes toward leadership and leadership aspirations.

**GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA (GSUSA)** is the preeminent organization for and leading authority on girls, with 3.6 million girl and adult members. Now in its 96th year, Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

**GIRL SCOUT RESEARCH INSTITUTE (GSRI)**, formed in 2000, is a center for research and public policy information on the healthy development of girls. Through conducting groundbreaking research, the main goal of the GSRI is to elevate the voices of girls on key issues that affect their lives—such as their emotional and physical health and safety. The GSRI originates national projects and initiatives, synthesizes existing research, and conducts outcomes evaluation to support the development of Girl Scout programs and to provide information to educational institutions, not-for-profits, government agencies, public policy organizations, parents seeking ways to support their daughters, and girls themselves. The GSRI includes staff and advisors who have expertise in child development and also includes advisors from academia, industry, government, and not-for-profit organizations.

**GSUSA'S PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY OFFICE**, located in Washington, D.C., educates representatives of the legislative and executive branches of federal, state, and local government and advocates for public policy issues important to girls and Girl Scouting.

Source: *Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership* (2008)