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on behalf of the A Crecer Study Team

Community Alliance for Safety and Peace
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Research Partners

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Study Aims

The main goal of A *Crecer* is to better understand the factors that affect teen success and challenges during the transition from 8th grade to the early high school years.

- Determine what social and structural factors influence youth development.

- Identify promising directions to promote positive health outcomes and prevent risk among Salinas youth.
Outcomes

1. **EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**
   - School connectedness & academic performance

2. **FUTURE ORIENTATION**
   - Future expectations and hope

3. **RESILIENCE**
   - Adapting well when faced with adversity, trauma or significant sources of stress

4. **YOUTH VIOLENCE**
   - (Cyber) bullying, non-violent problem solving strategies, gang affiliation/exposure

5. **SEXUAL HEALTH**
   - Relationships and behavior, contraceptive use, health care access
Join the A Crece study to share your voice and help us learn about what it’s like to be a teen in Salinas. We need your input to build better programs for youth to make Salinas a safer and healthier place for teens.

**What happens if you join?**
- You will have one-on-one interviews once every six months for the next two years.
- Interviews will be private and confidential and can be done in English or Spanish. Each interview takes about an hour.
- You will be paid $20 each visit and get a pocket guide to teen resources in Salinas.

**Who’s leading the study?**
This study is conducted by researchers from RTI International in San Francisco and UC Berkeley, in partnership with the Monterey County Health Department and Natividad Medical Center.

**Join!**
MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

**LEARN MORE AT:**
A-CRECER.ORG

**Para aprender más visita:**
A-CRECER.ORG

**¡Participa!**
¡HÁZ ESCUCHAR TU VOZ!

**¿Quién está detrás del estudio?**
El estudio está bajo el cargo de RTI Internacional en San Francisco y UC Berkeley, en colaboración con el Departamento de Salud del Condado de Monterey y el Centro de Salud Natividad.

**¿Qué pasa si participas?**
- Tendrás una entrevista individual cada seis meses por los siguientes dos años.
- Las entrevistas serán privadas y confidenciales y pueden ser en Inglés o Español. Cada entrevista dura aproximadamente una hora.
- Te pagaremos $20 por cada entrevista y recibirás una guía de recursos para jóvenes en Salinas.

**El proyecto esta financiado por los Institutos Nacionales de Salud.**
Study Team
Study Overview

- **Enrolled**
  - 8th grade: Enrollment
  - 6 month: 92% completed
  - 9th grade: 12 month
  - 10th grade: 18 month
  - 24 month

- **In-depth Interviews**
  - N=40 youth

- **Mother interviews**
  - N=20
Background Characteristics at Enrollment

**Gender**

- Female: 47%
- Male: 53%

**Age**

- 12: 23
- 13: 420
- 14: 154
- 15: 2

Total number of participants: 599
Background Characteristics at Enrollment

• Nearly all identified as Latino: 95%

• Immigrant Generation:
  • 1\textsuperscript{st}: Born outside the U.S. - 12%
  • 2\textsuperscript{nd}: U.S. born with immigrant parents - 72%
  • 3\textsuperscript{rd} or higher: Both parents and youth U.S.-born - 16%

• Parent works in agriculture: 49%
School Connectedness at 1-year (9th grade)

* A Crecer participants reported **strong connections to their school**.
* This was sustained in the transition between middle school and high school.

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**I feel like I am part of this school**

- **Strongly Agree**: 11%
- **Agree**: 59%
- **Disagree**: 21%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 9%

**I care what my teachers think of me**

- **Strongly Agree**: 0%
- **Agree**: 89%
- **Disagree**: 11%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 0%

**Doing well in school is important to me**

- **Strongly Agree**: 100%
- **Agree**: 0%
- **Disagree**: 0%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 0%
School Connectedness remains high over time but shows signs of lessening

*Example: “I care what my teachers think of me.”*
School Challenges in High School

• 1 in 3 youth reported *at least once a week* they had trouble getting their homework completed.
  • 14% daily or almost every day in 9th grade; slightly higher (19%) in 10th grade.

• Getting in trouble at school *during the past month* (e.g., principal referral or detention for fighting):
  • 24% at least once (9th grade); 20% at least once (10th grade)

• Failed a semester course in 9th grade:
  - 43% Yes
  - 57% No
Outcomes

1. Educational Engagement
   School connectedness & academic performance

2. Future Orientation
   Future expectations and hope

3. Resilience
   Adapting well when faced with adversity, trauma or significant sources of stress

4. Youth Violence
   (Cyber) bullying, non-violent problem solving strategies, gang affiliation/exposure

5. Sexual Health
   Relationships and behavior, contraceptive use, health care access
Educational Expectations Over Time

Question: How far do you think you will go in school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>8th Grade</th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th>10th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school degree after college</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent
Future Aspirations: key observation #1

• Community and school programs play an important role in helping youth obtain vital information to achieve their goals – to move from an abstract goal to understanding concrete steps to get there.

• These opportunities for support were clearly lacking for some youth.
Interviewer: When achieving your goals, what are your biggest worries?

Participant: Failing a class. I’ve never failed a class.

Interviewer: Never failed a class, ok. Why are you worried about failing a class?

Participant: Because then I won’t, because UC Berkeley only allows a 3.25% GPA and up, they don’t allow, well, they’ll allow like a 3.0 but that’s if you do a lot for your community....if you fail a class it’s going to bring you down.

Interviewer: Where did you get all this information?

Participant: Well, I’m in AVID so we do a lot of college projects, and I’ve been doing Berkeley for two years already. I did one in 7th grade and now I’m doing one in 8th.

Male 8th grader, age 14
Future Aspirations: key observation #2

• Many youth were keenly attuned to the financial realities of their families’ lives and the potential that economic hardships could interfere with their ability to achieve their goals.

*Interviewer: When you think about achieving your goals, what would you say are your biggest worries that might get in your way?*

*Participant: Bills.*

*Interviewer: What kinds of bills?*

*Participant: Like the rent, the water bill, electricity bill. Also, money for gas. Also food.*

Female rising 9th grader, age 14
Resilience – Personal Resources in Daily Life

“I have people I look up to”

Bar chart showing the percentage of 8th grade and 10th grade students who feel they have people they look up to, categorized by how much they feel that way: Not at all, A little, Somewhat, Quite a bit, A lot.

- Not at all: 4th grade, A little: 13th grade, Somewhat: 27th grade, Quite a bit: 32nd grade, A lot: 39th grade for 8th grade.
- Not at all: 3rd grade, A little: 13th grade, Somewhat: 14th grade, Quite a bit: 29th grade, A lot: 39th grade for 10th grade.
Resilience – Personal Resources in Daily Life

“I know where to go in my community to get help”

- Not at all: 6 (8th grade) 4 (10th grade)
- A little: 10 (8th grade) 8 (10th grade)
- Somewhat: 19 (8th grade) 22 (10th grade)
- Quite a bit: 25 (8th grade) 31 (10th grade)
- A lot: 40 (8th grade) 35 (10th grade)
Strong Evidence of Engagement in Salinas and Contributions to Family

- **Participated in Neighborhood Improvement Actions**
  - Yes: 48%
  - No: 52%

- **Earned Money to Support Family**
  - Yes: 28%
  - No: 72%

10th grade data
Family

• Strong bonding relationships.

8 in 10 youth report close families and strong communication.

“I admire my dad, who spends his time working, but at the same time has the time to spend with his family, and he’s given me a lot of advice....He works hard to buy things that I want and just keeps me happy.” – 8th grade male

Family connectedness remained consistently high over time.
Adult role models provide bridging to opportunities

- Many teens expressed that parents were not able to provide bridging and linking resources to higher education and career paths.

“The only reason [my brother] started being smarter is because of his peers, his teachers. He had friends that were gang members, [who] even told him that he shouldn’t be in this, he’s smarter than that...and he’s doin’ good now. He’s commuting to college.” – 8th grade male
Depression: Percent with current depression is consistent over time

Depression varied by sex over time:
At 2-years, 20% of females vs. 11% of males
Outcomes

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5. **Sexual Health**
   Relationships and behavior, contraceptive use, health care access
Cyberbullying

Sample items:
- People posted mean or rude things about me on the Internet.
- I have been embarrassed or humiliated online.
- I have been bullied (repeated name calling or harassment) online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experienced Cyberbullying</th>
<th>Perpetrated Cyberbullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>(not assessed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No differences comparing females and males.
Gang membership is low

- 8th grade: 98% Yes, 2% No
- 9th grade: 97% Yes, 3% No
- 10th grade: 97% Yes, 3% No
Gang exposure through friends is more common

- **8th grade**: 79% Yes, 21% No
- **9th grade**: 80% Yes, 20% No
- **10th grade**: 78% Yes, 22% No

No differences comparing females and males.
Illustration of positive sibling influence on gang involvement:

People my age usually hang out with wanna-be gangsters, or just people that want to do drugs or something, just to be cool. And in my opinion, I think that’s bad because then they’re going off the wrong path and then they could like – like how my sister said once:

“why do you want to be a gangster? You’re just dying for a color...just do good in school and then you could be even more rich, and you could travel a lot. And you could have a big house and everything.”

And the other people, they end up being homeless or dead in the streets or getting shot.

Male participant, age 14 – 9th grade
Gang-affiliated partners: overall percent

- **8th grade**: 19% Yes, 81% No
- **9th grade**: 14% Yes, 86% No
- **10th grade**: 12% Yes, 88% No

More common for females than for males.

No difference.
Dating Relationships

• Recent relationship experience was common (51%) among 8\textsuperscript{th} graders and over time, more initiated relationships.

• Many described their relationships as providing important emotional support and guidance in problem-solving.

"How often have you turned to your partner for support with personal problems?"

- 45% Often
- 29% Somewhat
- 25% A little

8\textsuperscript{th} grade data

A little  Somewhat  Often
Sexual activity by age and sex

![Graph showing the proportion of sexually active individuals by age and sex, with early initiation before age 15. The graph includes data for males and females, with numbers at risk decreasing as age increases. The number of males at risk ranges from 283 to 3, and for females from 316 to 0.](image)

### Number at risk

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>255</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Influence of neighborhood environment on early sexual initiation (< age 15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protective and risk factors</th>
<th>Relative Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social cohesion</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>School connectedness</td>
<td>0.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiences of discrimination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>ref</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (1-2 occurrences)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (3+ occurrences)</td>
<td>2.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood disorder events (range 0-11)</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang exposure in social networks</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relative risks estimated using Poisson regression models with robust standard errors for each measure. All models adjusted for pubertal developmental stage and recruitment school. N=558
Sexual health behaviors at 10th grade

• Nearly half (47%) of those who reported having had sex, had unprotected sex, at least some of the time.

• Use of sexual health services low.
  • 1 in 3 sexually active youth indicated they had wanted to access services but had not due to a range of barriers.
  • Embarrassment and privacy concerns were key barriers to use.
Summary: Key Messages

• High educational goals expressed in 8th grade persist into high school.
  • Some youth struggled academically in high school and have lower connection to school.

• Family connectedness is an important source of support.

• Gang participation remains low; however, gang affiliation through close friends and partners is more common.

• Dating relationships are common for early adolescents. Efforts to support youth in building strong, healthy relationships is critical.

• Findings highlight that 8th and 9th grades remain a key time to address health and well-being for youth.
Acknowledgements

• Salinas Union High School District partnership in supporting recruitment of 8th graders into the study.
• Community Advisory Board members.
• Community organizations that welcomed us for conducting study visits.
• Youth advisors.