

Child Trends News Service External Review Third/Final Report

Child Trends

August 2018



G R O U P i & i

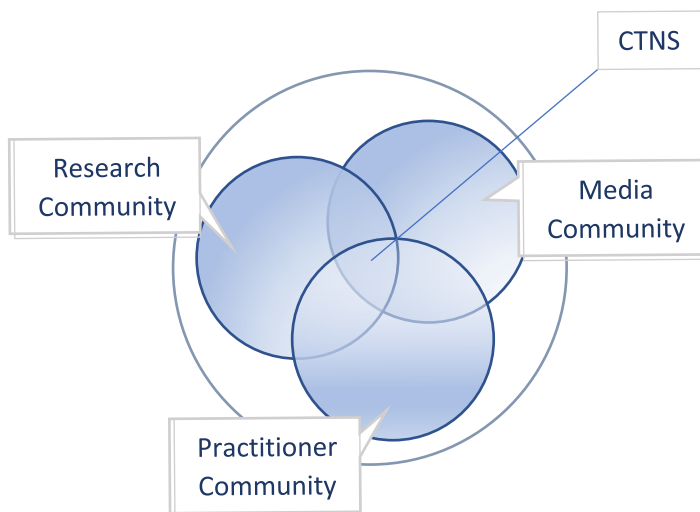
Child Trends News Service | External Review
Third (Final) Report | Group i&i Consultancy

August 27, 2018

Context & Overview

In September 2016, Child Trends embarked upon an *Innovations in Development* proof-of-concept research study funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), under the Advancing Informal STEM Learning program. The study pursued a number of ambitious objectives, combining communication-science research with the development of a national child-development research news service, the latter implemented by Child Trends in close collaboration with the Ivanhoe Broadcast News syndication. The study examined the feasibility of translating via TV news “actionable social and behavioral science research” into practical information for parents and caregivers. Special attention was given to underserved population sectors, particularly Hispanic/Latinos, while building an infrastructure for producing the news service, initially referred to as Child Trends News Service (CTNS), and preliminary data was gathered about its effectiveness.

Operating at the nexus of research, media, and parenting practice, CTNS sought to craft messages based on sound social science research and deliver them to parents via news segments aired in urban and underserved media markets. The intention was to promote the adoption of evidence-based parenting practices that improve child development outcomes while raising awareness and appreciation for social science research.



Beyond advancing parenting knowledge, these evidence-based messages are ultimately aimed at influencing parent’s attitudes and behaviors.

Four strategic goals were set by the funded study. They seek to establish broad collaborations across academic and research disciplines, communicate research, examine how the public interacts with child research news, and reach out to stakeholders among researchers, practitioners, and organizations serving at-risk Latino families. Collectively, these goals formulate the aim of the newly launched Child Trends News Service.

CTNS Stated Goals (as presented in the initial grant proposal)

Goal 1: COLLABORATION. Build and effectively manage interdisciplinary collaborations that contribute knowledge and “know-how” to the effectiveness of the various components of this project: news professionals, the social science child research field, the STEM communications and informal science learning field; Latino studies experts; and practitioners serving at-risk Latino families.

Goal 2: COMMUNICATION. Leverage mass media news outlets to effectively communicate developments in social science research on child well-being to Latino audiences.

Goal 3: RESEARCH. Advance the field of informal STEM learning by exploring how the public interacts with actionable social science child research, using their awareness of and appreciation for research to make behavioral decisions that influence their children’s lives.

Goal 4: OUTREACH. Expand the reach and application of the news products through strategic collaborations with provider organizations serving at-risk Latino families, the child research and STEM fields, and policy organizations working on Latino family issues.

Review Approach & Methodology

Group i&i was engaged by Child Trends as a sub-awardee to conduct the external review for this study, consistent with a plan included in the funded grant application. The purpose of the review, administered in close collaboration with the Child Trends Team and its project partners, was to provide evaluative feedback specific to: (1) implementation metrics, including the structure, process, and quality of news segment production; (2) research model design, data gathering, and pre- and post-production results; (3) market reach and reaction to the dissemination of the video segments to local television stations; and (4) the extent to which the study achieved its four stated goals specific to collaboration, communication, research, and outreach as detailed above.

The external review also included an analysis of early project outcomes and any resulting cumulative effect. In Year 3, the External Review Team was comprised of Toufic Hakim, PhD; Kathy Weiner, MPA; and Eve Wenger, MBA. The team was supported by Ilpa Patel, MPA, and Sue Perry. Radha Jagannathan, PhD, also contributed to the Team’s work during the first two years of the project.

The first review report (May 2017) presented a customized Review Framework adapted from the Wilder Collaboration Inventory, which focused on Capacity, Community, and Evidence, while directly addressing the mission and goals of the Child Trends News Service within the specific context of the NSF grant project. A second report in February 2018 presented the

reviewers' high-level assessment of: (1) interactions among researchers, practitioners, and news professionals; (2) the production and dissemination of video segments through TV broadcasting; and (3) the qualitative and quantitative research process and results.

This third and final report reflects on the entire three-year grant period. It offers the External Review Team's overall assessment and observations about the accomplishments and challenges experienced by the Child Trends Team while implementing the proof-of-concept study. It further presents several open questions and opportunities for future consideration. This report may be considered as independent and self-contained; however, we present it as a companion to the two earlier reports by Group i&i, referenced above.

While attuned to CTNS's four stated goals throughout its engagement, the External Review Team adopted for its review a three-element conceptual framework that examined operational capacity, scope of community engagement, and quality of empirical evidence. A section of this report will present analysis consistent with these elements.

Review Framework

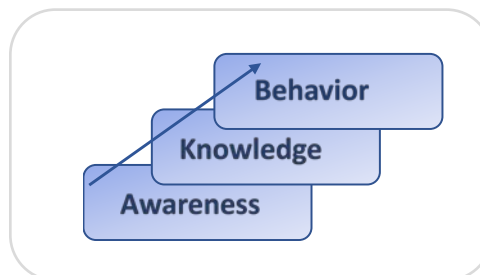
Operational Capacity: Organizational Leadership – Structure/Process – Performance

Scope of Community Engagement: Environment – Inclusion – Public Benefit

Quality of Empirical Evidence: Research Design – Results – Scalability

Additionally, considering that this study was at the core a communication-science effort, the reviewers sought answers to broader questions about the extent to which, and how effectively, CTNS operated at the intersection of research, practice, and the media. More specifically, three questions were examined:

- A. How to build an effective research-media interface?
- B. How to convey complex, evidence-based research concepts to the public in lay language, in a manner that would positively influence parents' knowledge and attitudes?
- C. Could the Child Trends approach, using news segments informed by evidence-based child development research as a vehicle for increasing awareness and knowledge, as the first steps in the step-ladder paradigm for influencing parenting attitudes and behavior over the long term (see diagram below), among Latino and other parents in underserved markets, under certain specific conditions yet to be explored?



Data-Gathering Activities

The findings presented in this report were informed by the Review Team’s observations and interactions with those directly engaged in the proof-of-concept study, among other individuals as deemed appropriate. Since our last report issued in February 2018, information was gathered from the following sources using the methods indicated:

- ✦ Numerous conversations via video with Child Trends leadership, staff, and partner to the project, Ivanhoe Broadcast News
- ✦ A series of in-person discussions on June 11, 2018, involving representatives of Ivanhoe, Child Trends staff, and the NSF Program Officer
- ✦ On-site participation in a meeting of the CTNS Advisory Panel, also attended virtually by two members of the Review Team, on June 11, 2018
- ✦ Individual interviews via video with three featured researchers, three news directors, and the two key liaisons for the joint production team
- ✦ A video meeting with Kristin Anderson Moore, Senior Scholar and Past President, on August 20, 2018
- ✦ Ongoing observation of the project and the work of its lead team, including review of uploaded sample video segments, meeting and research-related notes, and other documents shared by Child Trends staff
- ✦ Review of the research report produced by Child Trends, released August 20, 2018
- ✦ Many internal deliberations with Review Team members to examine and analyze data and results
- ✦ Ongoing attention to the external community and societal environment.

[Note: Within pages of this report, we will refer to the Child Trends News Service as “CTNS,” the “Study” or the “Project.”]

General Observations

Child Trends achieved laudable results towards reaching each of the project’s four goals.

In its first two years, the Child Trends News Service firmly established the sought-after proof of concept. The study identified child development research worth sharing, and mobilized researchers willing to share it and news stations willing to broadcast news segments produced.

CTNS demonstrated that it could build the operational system to create, produce and disseminate news segments in the area of child development, generating significant interest among TV news directors in large urban markets for news feeds that provide parent audiences with research-informed parenting advice. Furthermore, it also showed that a broad collaborative could be initiated and sustained to translate social research into news and information for public consumption. Child Trends’ preliminary research further indicated that such news segments would raise awareness and parents would find parenting topics of value.

Throughout their engagement with CTNS, the external reviewers observed a natural, healthy tension present at the nexus of research and media communications. This tension appeared to have a multifaceted root cause: (1) there was a need to maintain both production volume of news segments and production frequency within a cultural environment at Child Trends generally accustomed to a slower, methodical pace of research; (2) in every news segment offering research-based news and practical tips, competing needs to preserve research rigor and to ensure news accessibility had to be recognized, resolved, and met; and (3) there may be a slight misalignment in perspectives, considering it is common for researchers to perceive research as both an academic enterprise—pushing the boundaries of knowledge being one of its intrinsic values—as well as a vehicle for promoting the public good, whereas news professionals focusing on meeting news-consumer needs may assign a much greater weight to the latter. The challenge for the Child Trends Team was to manage these issues by establishing and maintaining a steady, dynamic equilibrium among them.

Specific accomplishments were achieved by the Child Trends Team in its efforts to develop a productive collaborative interface between researchers and the media, and overcome the challenges inherent in translating concepts of evidence-based social science research for public consumption and use. Further, the results of this proof-of-concept study also suggest significant future potential for videos to be an effective vehicle for reaching parents.

CTNS succeeded on two fronts: either resolving these issues directly or, depending on the news segment itself, setting in place an approach that moved the process along. Themes for appropriate research stories were consistently identified; researchers successfully recruited to be interviewed, featured, or consulted; and high-quality news segments produced that met the criteria set by Ivanhoe on behalf of its news directors who would be airing the segments. This process occurred at a very brisk rate of eight videos per month—with variations during the summer.

More explicitly, and as an overview, we make the following observations:

- There were strong collaborations within and across various research and production aspects of the work, both with individual experts within and outside Child Trends and with other organizations, Ivanhoe lead among them. The expressed continued interest by members of the Advisory Panel (AP), their active participation, and AP's expansion for the second phase of CTNS are but one illustration of such a collaborative.
- Through its ongoing outreach efforts, CTNS mobilized the work of researchers and communications professionals in a close-knit engagement by bringing the two sides of the house to the table to work together towards the same goal. It also deepened existing working relations with various organizations, including Abriendo Puertas, which will be more formally engaged in the next phase of CTNS.
- Child development research was communicated to the public through a frequent flow of news segments broadcast on news programs in nearly 250 urban TV markets across the country. CTNS effectively “fed the pipeline” by producing a total of 96 news video segments, in both English and Spanish (July 2017-June 2018).

- Formative research informed the development of news segments, which were continually refined through conversations with members of the AP, featured researchers, and Ivanhoe staff, as deemed appropriate. In addition, and just as importantly, input from Latino parents gathered from focus-group interviews provided valuable feedback about how to improve the translation of child development research into practical parenting suggestions that promise to be both applicable and influential.

Our detailed interpretations of the study’s achievements are presented below, consistent with our adopted review framework, in the areas of operational capacity, scope of community engagement, and quality of empirical evidence, each led by a key question that guided the external review.

Regarding Operational Capacity

Q. To what extent was Child Trends successful in building the organizational infrastructure, assembling a qualified team of professionals, and accessing the resources needed to effectively implement the study?

CTNS succeeded in meeting the many challenges of project ramp-up under a compressed time schedule, and against a societal backdrop that presented obstacles to full parent engagement in certain phases of data-gathering. CTNS was able to successfully adapt to these challenges, establishing a news service that had not formerly existed within Child Trends, building the project team and infrastructure, engaging key partners, and establishing the Advisory Panel.

Another critical accomplishment was the CTNS Team’s ability to identify stories, engage researchers, and front-load the video production process. This assembly system provided Ivanhoe with the number, frequency, and diversity of video offerings needed to recruit television stations willing to air the segments. Over time, the Team met a series of objectives: improved the effectiveness of its work processes; expanded the engagement of researchers, news professionals, and practitioners; created an active social media platform; gradually deepened the involvement and commitment of members of the Advisory Panel; and resolved ongoing challenges as they occurred along the way. Furthermore, formative and post-production research studies were designed and launched, and eight distinct news segments were produced monthly during a 12-month period beginning July 2017—English and Spanish versions of each, in formats accessible for use by news directors in local markets.

As a result of input informed by both the research and feedback from the AP at its 2017 in-person meeting, CTNS incorporated specific enhancements into the video production process. At the same time, Ivanhoe was successful in generating significant interest among news editors and, at the writing of this report, the segments had been broadcast by 238 television stations, 15 of which were located in top Hispanic/Latino media markets. The series was also rebranded as “Positive Parenting,” with the intent to enhance its promotion among TV stations, which reportedly generated greater appeal.

It is important to note that the Child Trends organization appears to have benefited greatly from the CTNS experience. More specifically, the Hispanic Institute has expanded its reach, and Child Trends has been introduced to the concept and practice of communication-science research, which extends beyond its own child development research. This appears to have inspired a new way of thinking about how to communicate with the public with the potential to create a new foundation for a future research program in communication science.

Regarding Scope of Community Engagement

Q. To what extent did CTNS develop productive, collaborative relationships with researchers, media professionals, Advisory Panel members, and community/policy/philanthropic organizations in order to build a network of like-minded individuals who would contribute to and/or participate in the Study?

The project was conducted at a challenging time in the life of science, epitomized by a reduced interest in, and respect for, empirical evidence among certain segments of the general public—an atmosphere which continues to persist today. Additionally, the present political climate, especially regarding issues of immigration, made it reportedly difficult for community organizations to recruit parents at the level desired for the quantitative research component of the study. Turning these concerns into a call to action, Child Trends achieved two major milestones: (1) it effectively mobilized a network of researchers, practitioners, and media professionals for this Study who helped to position social science as a significant asset for the greater society; and (2) it began to facilitate an ongoing dialogue among them, helping to strengthen the research-news connection and engaging new thought leaders along the way.

Within this context, CTNS was indeed able to build a vibrant network of relationships throughout the community—the sort of network required to plan and implement the proposed proof-of-concept. The CTNS Advisory Panel was comprised of professionals representing the research, media, child development, and philanthropic communities. Building on the PI’s close partnership with Ivanhoe Broadcast News, CTNS effectively captured the attention and interest of an impressive number of news stations—more than sufficient to ensure that the video segments were aired frequently and in desired markets.

CTNS engaged social science researchers from within and outside of the Child Trends organization to identify and feature applicable research developments into its news segments. Strategies to recruit and engage researchers included tapping into Child Trends’ large cadre of researchers from around the country and across various specialties within child development, examining major publications in child research, and reviewing research projects funded by national agencies including NSF. The result was that a significant number of interview hours were recorded, some of which were featured in the news segments—the rest, possibly a meaningful resource for future applications.

Researchers participating in the AP, which met formally three times during the study and whose members engaged with the Child Trends team in various ways, weighed in on theme selection, story development, and quality control. Research by some panel members was also

featured in the segments. At least two of the non-AP featured researchers became so enthusiastic about the study that they agreed to join the Panel for the next phase of CTNS.

Contributing researchers who were interviewed shared positive feedback with the reviewers. They felt fully supported by the CTNS team during the process, appreciated the videos that had been produced, and expressed appreciation for what they learned from the experience. This Study, with its multifaceted components, undoubtedly raised awareness among researchers in the child development space and piqued their interest about the significance of sharing with the public the context and outcomes of their own research in lay-person terms. It was suggested by researchers interviewed that “all” researchers would benefit greatly from such support.

Regarding Quality Empirical Evidence

Q. To what extent did CTNS generate sufficient evidence that parents would be interested in the research news segments and that the latter stories could influence their awareness, knowledge, and behavior?

One of the key goals of this proof-of-concept was to gather preliminary information about how the news segments might inform parents’ attitudes and behaviors. To that end, formative and post-production research was conducted by a team of researchers at Child Trends, with input from research advisors specializing in communication science and assistance from researchers at the University of Florida. In addition, the External Review Team had the opportunity to review the research design and implementation approach; positive feedback from that review was provided in the previous report.

Feedback from formative research instruments helped refine the message for successive news segments and enhance their effectiveness. Post-production, the research was to examine the extent to which parents responded to the segments and how their experience could be measured in terms of changes in awareness, knowledge, and/or behavior.

While the study has not yet had the opportunity to generate sufficient quantitative data to demonstrate the project’s impact on parents’ awareness, knowledge, or behavior, the formative research was effectively used both to inform video messaging and to define the criteria for accessible themes and stories to be produced. Feedback from Latino parents participating in the focus groups about how they “interact with child development research information to inform behavioral decisions,” also led to a series of meaningful recommendations.

The Review Team concurs with CTNS’ conclusions regarding the relevance of this research. In anticipation of the August 2018 release of CTNS’ research brief entitled, *“Expanding Latino Parents’ Access to Child Development Research Through the News Media,”* the study’s PI shared Child Trends’ conclusion that this research: *“...advances the field of communication science—specifically the understanding of how to effectively communicate social science in ways that are*

relevant and useful to the intended audiences... and...contributes to the knowledgebase of how people learn about science through informal channels such as the mass media.”

Child Trends therefore anticipates that its findings will be useful to researchers, communication science professionals, community-based organizations, and funders of philanthropic initiatives, particularly those seeking to improve outcomes for Latino and low-income families. The brief presented a specific set of recommendations, developed from the perspective of parents participating in the study, about how to communicate evidence-based research to lay audiences more effectively, which are captured in the next table.

Recommendations from Parents’ Focus Groups (as identified by CTNS research)

Continue to communicate and reinforce well-known, research-informed parenting behaviors.

Be cautious when relaying information that may elicit emotional reactions.

Take time to understand your audiences' needs and interests; and consider how you can relate your messages to these interests.

Use visuals to emphasize the information you want to communicate and to depict relatable situations, activities, and outcomes.

Ensure that both the content and presentation of information is relatable to your audiences.

Carefully consider whether and how to present information related to the achievement gaps between ethnic/racial groups.

As part of its outreach effort, to broaden the engagement of child development and parenting communities of practice, Child Trends submitted the brief to a few organizations that agreed to share it within their networks, listed below.

Organizations agreeing to share the Child Trends Research Brief (as per CTNS)

30 Million Word Initiative

Abriendo Puertas

AVANCE

Crimsonbridge

Development and Research in Early Math Education | DREME

Early Learning Project – Georgetown University

ED Source

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

Hispanic Center

Latino Caucus – Society for Research in Child Development

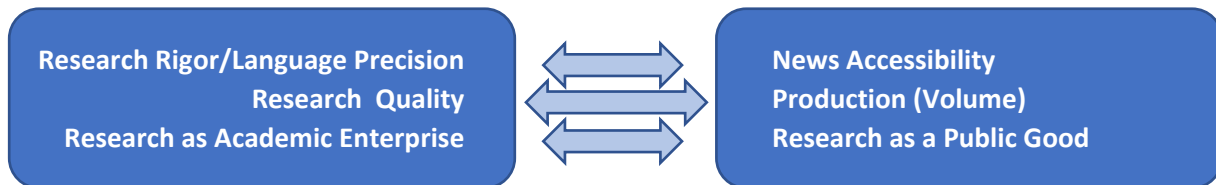
Learning Heroes

National Institute for Early Education Research

...In addition to the CTNS Advisory Panel

Special Observations Regarding the Researcher-Media Interface

As stated earlier, the reviewers observed a natural, healthy tension present at the nexus of research and media communications. The Project helped put in perspective the views of researchers (left box in the diagram below) and news directors (right box) and facilitated their “rapprochement” directly or indirectly. The challenge for the Child Trends Team was to help establish and maintain a steady, dynamic equilibrium among them.



Social science research by definition is designed to improve social interactions, quality of services, and public policy making. In order for that to occur, a bridge with the public must be firmly built. After all, the very context of social science research poses the question, “what’s in the best interest of society”?

The External Review Team focused its evaluation during the last few months of the project on the dynamics of this research-media interface. We consider the nature of this collaboration to be one of the most significant factors influencing the outcomes of this or similar studies that seek to translate evidence-based concepts for lay, public consumption. While these two groups of professionals (researchers and news producers/directors) worked together towards a common goal, the unique perspectives of each group might often be diametrically opposed.

To gain an even deeper understanding of these apparent contradictions, we first must learn what each party seeks to gain from the interaction. In other words, “What’s in it” for the researcher? “What’s in it” for the news professional? And how is it possible to cultivate the collaborative spirit of a “two-way street” in which the needs of both parties are met?

With that in mind, the External Review Team posed a series of specifically targeted, yet overlapping, questions to a select group of researchers and news directors as well as members of Ivanhoe and CTNS video production teams. With the exception of a conversation with the lead team from Ivanhoe, all of the interviews were conducted individually. Below is a sample of questions (not all questions posed to all groups), along with a summary analysis of what was learned as a result of these interviews and throughout our observations of the project, including several comments shared by respondents.

Sample of Interview Questions: News Editors, Researchers, and CT Staff

- ✦ Was there any tension between the needs of the researchers and the needs of the news producers? How was it resolved?
- ✦ What would make a perfect message in a research-based news segment?
- ✦ Has this experience influenced your perspective about communicating research moving forward?
- ✦ How important is it for you that there be a change in parents: awareness, knowledge, attitude, and behavior?
- ✦ What makes a news report compelling?
- ✦ Which is more important to you: the details and accuracy of the research or the parenting tips derived from it? Which is more important to your audience?
- ✦ In your opinion, does science news differ from social science news?

The Review Team concluded that the quality of news segments depended in no small measure on a number of factors: selection and engagement of researchers in the process, planning and execution of interviews, and the scope of conversations held behind the scenes in advance and in support of each interview.

In particular, three unique aspects stand out regarding the production process, which led to fruitful interactions between the researcher and the news professional. These include the overlapping purpose for engaging by researchers and media professionals, the deliberative production process developed by CTNS, and the way in which the ultimate content of the segments was decided upon using an iterative, negotiated approach.

Overlapping Purpose: Social science researchers express the desire for parents to ultimately adopt research-informed behaviors. They care about the value their work has for society. As such, they find in their engagement the opportunity to publicize their own scholarly work and see great value in having it translated for public consumption. News directors welcome the opportunity to have actionable research shared with their viewers as “news that can be used” and need a constant feed for their news hour to build, maintain, and grow their viewership. They care about the reliability and quality of their broadcasts to the public.

There was a connection, a space of overlap, between these two perspectives. There was also a shared agreement that the new segments are not about the researcher or research per se, but rather about the social relevance or practicality of the “parenting tips” and usefulness of the information shared with the viewer.

Deliberative Process: CTNS staff supported the production process in a number of significant ways, from researcher recruitment to crafting a compelling news script, zooming in on the specific research result to be shared, and developing the messaging. An extensive pre-planning and supportive process allowed for practical conversations and decisions about how to translate research for the public. These conversations—and joint decisions that ensued—frequently occurred between CTNS and Ivanhoe, between CTNS staff and featured researchers as they identified the issues, and between the featured researchers and the video production team as they finalized common language, determined the angle of the story, and considered various nuanced concepts.

The researchers' positive experience and the high quality of produced videos (in terms of visuals and script), as relayed by the researchers and news directors alike, likely resulted from the production process put in place by CTNS. Further, this immersive experience appears to have raised the researchers' own awareness and knowledge, and effectively led to changes in their own behavior fueled by a desire to make their research useful to the public.

Negotiated Outcome: To state the obvious, the main objective of the production effort was to translate rigorous research, given the research culture, academic language, and complexity of the methodology, in ways that are accessible to parents, i.e., make the message easy to follow and understand, immediately pertinent to their lives, and motivational—inspiring concrete change or new action. Each video interview with the researcher was not simply a one-time engagement by the researcher; rather, it became a component of a longer process, tantamount to a negotiation around the nature and content of the actual message.

To achieve a successful outcome, issues relating to correlation versus causality, details of research design, and specifics of research results have to be effectively resolved along the way. Rigor, proper use of scientific terminology, and precise representation of methodology and design are of highest importance to researchers. For news directors, there is a great need for fast-paced messaging in simple lay language accompanied by immediately practical ways to take immediate action. Both agree that messaging matters and show a serious willingness to listen to the “other’s” views, looking for reasonably effective solutions that will lead to a “more perfect” message.

This perfect message, according to one news director, may include three components in equal measure: indisputable data (reliable research), actionable advice from an expert (trusted researcher), and a story that provides emotional connection (possibly shared through the person who experienced the change). For it to be effective, the message has to be “new and important for parents and give them insights they did not previously have.” One researcher referred to the messages as a collection of “scientific nuggets,” referring to them as “accessible, edible, and digestible science.”

CTNS has produced a valuable prototype for a process to supportively navigate the research-media interface in a way that might inspire others to do similarly within their own fields.

Overview of Observations

In summary, the External Review Team concludes that the goals of the proof-of-concept phase of the study have been met, creating a strong foundation upon which to build in the next research and production phase. The next table captures a list of outputs produced and outcomes achieved.

OUTPUT

CTNS Built working infrastructure & social media platform
Engaged a growing group of researchers, news professionals, and practitioners
Designed & launched research studies (formative & post-production)

| |
|--|
| <p>Produced 96 news segments (Eight/month from July 2017 through June 2018) More than 217.5 million viewers reached in designated market areas (2.4 million on average per news segment)</p> |
| <p><u>OUTCOMES</u></p> <p><i>Production-related</i> Significant enhancements made across news segments (informed by research & AP input) A total of 251 broadcasts (and 87 news reports) in the top 25 Latino TV markets Significant interest expressed and exhibited by news directors “Positive Parenting” as a rebranded series gaining greater appeal</p> <p><i>Research-related</i> Preliminary evidence reached (trends in interest/awareness) Baseline data now available New insights into how Latino parents interact with child development research Early learnings relating to how social science research can be effectively communicated</p> |
| <p><u>OUTCOMES AT CHILD TRENDS</u></p> <p>Deepened interest in public communication of research New foundation for research program in communication science</p> |
| <p><i>Figures above as per Meltwater Data Report</i></p> |

Considered within the Review Framework, the project has successfully completed its start-up-phase and moved far beyond, which points to great potential for an even smoother process in the next phase of the research. CTNS has engaged a dedicated and committed network of professionals across multiple disciplines, and expanded the membership of the Advisory Panel. This offers the opportunity to expand the network yet further and to deepen the engagement of AP members. Lastly, the project has amassed promising and encouraging evidence and is now primed to continue, incorporating new refinements and more robust quantitative research.

Assets, Challenges, and Opportunities

We end the report with a brief overview of CTNS’ significant building blocks and a look at challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

CTNS Capital Assets

Child Trends brought a number of significant strengths to the Study and pursued several effective strategies in order to meet its intended proof-of-concept goals. In fact, the Review Team considers that the unique combination of these factors contributed in no small part to the ultimate success of the study. We list here only a few:

- ✦ Child Trends has a solid reputation as a leading child research organization. This facilitated ready and rapid access to researchers and gave the study the credibility needed to reach out to the child research community—adequately enough to engage the desired number and quality of researchers in the study and news production process.

- ✦ The CTNS Principal Investigator brought to the study significant prior experience, profound knowledge of TV news, and a vast network of strong relationships that enabled the recruitment of key partners, Advisory Panel members, and staff needed to successfully undertake the project.
- ✦ The judicious choice of Ivanhoe Broadcast News, a highly respected, independent news syndicate, was key to opening the door to television stations. Ivanhoe is one of the few syndicates of its kind remaining; it enjoys many years of proven experience producing series for broadcasting in a number of areas, including medical and health news. Ivanhoe’s large pre-existing network of local news stations in local markets provided an immediate pool of potential broadcasters who had trust in the validity of the research because it was being shared by Ivanhoe, and were therefore receptive to airing the segments, supported by the strategy to provide them to the stations at no cost.
- ✦ Also critical was the proven working relationship between the CTNS PI and the President of Ivanhoe prior to CTNS, who worked together closely to ramp up the production process and effectively overcame common production challenges and resolve related issues. These issues included determining how to effectively support collaboration and communication between researchers and media professionals, and manage an extremely condensed production ramp-up period.
- ✦ The success of the Study relied heavily on the appointment by Child Trends and Ivanhoe of two highly seasoned individuals who worked very collaboratively on the production end. Through the support of the CTNS PI and the President of Ivanhoe, these two individuals developed, implemented, and continually refined the production process, from the point of identifying the story and crafting the message to the review and production of the actual news segment.
- ✦ Child Trends was also effective in engaging a number of individual expert advisors, including researchers, news professionals, and child development experts, who also participated in meetings of its Advisory Panel, along with AP contributors whose participation was significantly more limited.
- ✦ The CTNS Team’s decision, made relatively early on in the project, to expand its efforts beyond Child Trends itself was highly strategic. By disseminating research news for the larger community of child development researchers, Child Trends assumed the leadership role of communicating entity. This approach ultimately led to changing the name of the service from Child Trends News Service to “Positive Parenting,” a name which reportedly resonated with local broadcasters.

Opportunities and Challenges

This proof-of-concept study has already contributed significant value to the field, having shared important child development research to increase public awareness and knowledge, driving new communication science learning, and building a strong foundation for further study.

The formative research will be expanded in the next phase, supported by continued NSF funding, which will allow Child Trends to learn more about how these segments could indeed influence parents' attitudes and behaviors. In the words of the CTNS Principal Investigator as articulated in introducing the research brief:

"If scientists can better understand how people use information to inform their knowledge and ultimately their behaviors, they could more effectively share their findings with people who need it most."

In many ways, this Study produced groundbreaking work and blazed a new trail in the dissemination of social science research. We see nothing else like it in the field at this time. The accomplishments and learning achieved, however, could not have been made had CTNS not successfully tackled a number of significant challenges encountered along the way, which were elaborated upon in our prior reports.

Perhaps the most significant of these was the working arrangement, especially early on between the communication and research arms of this effort within Child Trends. And then between CT and Ivanhoe, acknowledging that this is a natural tension between theoretical rigor and practical useful information to parents. Working in very close collaboration, these issues appear to have been effectively addressed or significant headway made, yet others may present opportunities for future development and growth. Today, CTNS resides within the research arm of the organization, reporting directly to a researcher who served formerly as a founding president of Child Trends.

In the next three-year phase of the CTNS research-dissemination effort, which will seamlessly build on the firm foundation already established, a number of critical questions remain worthy of examination. Among them, we present the following:

- ✦ Given the ongoing climate, will CTNS, through its collaboration with Abriendo Puertas and/or other Hispanic serving community agencies, overcome the obstacles required to engage a sufficient number of parents in the study?
- ✦ Will the quantitative and qualitative research findings generated in the next phase of research demonstrate sufficient evidence that the videos have indeed impacted awareness, knowledge, and behavior among parents?
- ✦ Given the inroads by Ivanhoe in building relationships with large Latino-serving markets such as Univision, Telemundo and CNN Español, what is the project's potential to expand its reach to Latino audiences?
- ✦ What more might be learned about the nature of the research/media interface and its intersection with the work of practitioners, and can these learnings benefit other child development researchers or researchers in related fields of practice?
- ✦ Now that the segments have been produced, how can the power of social media be harnessed to share them on multiple platforms with parenting organizations around the country so that what has been accomplished may be leveraged beyond the continuation of the study?

- ✦ What is the opportunity for Child Trends to capitalize on the CTNS experience, taking it to the next level by increasing its own capacity to articulate why CTNS to the public, possibly building an even broader research collaborative with joint communication being one aspect?
- ✦ Is there potential for such a child development research collaborative, if cultivated, to address themes and issues beyond positive parenting, using a collective impact approach with a common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, and shared measures?
- ✦ What is the potential to share the findings of this research with other initiatives, and with researchers and news professionals, to enhance their effectiveness and expand public appreciation for science and social science general?
- ✦ How might the contributions of the CTNS Advisory Panel (and its individual members) who are invested in this effort, and passionate about the CTNS' approach to research and willing to advocate for it, be heightened and sustained in the future?
- ✦ Might NSF be inspired to do similar work centrally in other areas of social science research beyond child development to promote the value of science in general and social science research in particular?
- ✦ While there was limited capacity in this first phase to respond in real time and produce segments relating to external developments with immediate impact on families, immigration being one such area (there were for example four news reports on immigration and trauma), might CTNS identify or catalyze current research in these areas to produce in the future more breaking-news segments, in addition to continuing to develop timeless pieces?

Postscript

CTNS has demonstrated in its proof-of-concept phase that there is significant interest among all parties involved in translating social science research for public consumption. Lessons learned from the natural science and engineering media project, *Discoveries and Breakthroughs in Science*, can continue to inform the evolution of CTNS and its sustainability in the longer term.

One of the major spin-offs of this effort is that researchers gained higher awareness about the value of, and techniques for, sharing their research in precise but layperson terms. With few exceptions, academic researchers are not generally trained in media communications. CTNS has indirectly shown the need and import of such an exposure. In the language of one researcher, this experience would be very helpful for a lot of scientists so that they become better versed in effectively “reframing and rethinking how they convey what they’re doing and how it applies to the real world.”

At the end of the Advisory Panel meeting in June 2018, a call was made by a Child Trends executive to expand this public communication effort along new directions by developing news series focused on various areas of importance to children and parents, among them: childhood

obesity, autism, and healthy practices and habits. This is commendable and inspiring—and an indirect notable result of CTNS.

In closing, we must recognize that special arrangements contributed to the reported success of CTNS: funding of the featured researchers' engagement, the ability to offer the segments to news stations at no charge, and the solid reputation of Ivanhoe Broadcast News as a highly trusted news source—as affirmed by news directors we interviewed. Success, in our view here, is defined in multiple ways: researchers being pleased with the produced segments, news directors willing to air them, and Child Trends recognizing the value of, and potential for this communication research and effort. CTNS made serious headway toward these outcomes.

Our review has taken a very preliminary look at what makes a collaboration between social science researchers and media professionals successful, and what makes a piece of actionable research news influential. A lot more needs to be done, especially by looking at the area where theory meets practice—an area to be considered in the next phase of review.

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Our Managing Principal had the pleasure to meet with the AISL Program Officer and was inspired by her journey and vision for advancing informal science learning; he is reassured by the imperative of public engagement in science. Science is ultimately for the better of humanity; CTNS is vigorously contributing to that desired goal. We are indeed pleased to play our part.



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