

Latino Youth Development: A Vision of Success in a Period of Empirical Drought

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Attention to youth development is potentially our greatest strategy in building communities that are skilled to overcome many unnecessary social problems. This implicates youth development as a primary vehicle for the reversal of seemingly intractable problems. Unfortunately, dialogue and research in youth development has not kept pace with demographic trends. Although it is well known that Latinos account for most of the growth in the USA youth population (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Ramos, 2002), research focused on their development is sparse. The Bureau of the Census (2002) projects that by 2010, 20% of youth in the 10 to 20 age group will be of Latino origin.

The negative issues facing Latino youth have been well documented: low educational attainment, lack of employment opportunities, poverty, teen pregnancy, and poor health status and limited care (Padilla, 1995; Perez, 1992; Romo & Falbo, 1996). This is an unfortunate description too often attached to Latino youth in the USA. We may know how many Latinos complete high school or college, or how many are located in various levels of poverty concentration, but we are no closer to knowing Latino youth because of it.

Another issue is labeling. The way we choose to describe Latino youth in this country limits our ability to know them or communicate any understanding we gain to others. In fact, our use of the term Latino is limiting in some ways. Most researchers and civic leaders use the term Hispanic, one created for convenience by the United States government to recognize common Spanish descent. However, not all people included in this category can trace their ancestry to Spain (nor want to). We are unable to resolve these issues and so have elected to use Latino to describe people who identify their ethnic heritage in Mexico, Central and South America, and the

Caribbean, including the Southwest sections of the US which once were part of Mexico. Our preference would be to use the labels of national origin and location of current residence when possible to provide the richest description of these communities. Nonetheless, ethnic identity development is an important precursor to understanding Latino youth development (Niemann, Romero, Arredondo, Rodriguez, 1999; Oboler, 1992) and is an issue which developmental psychologists have argued be incorporated into research and practice if we, as a nation, are to promote the resiliency of Latino youth (Fisher, Jackson, & Villarruel, 1997). This is discussed again below.

The tradition of focusing on and describing at length the problems and deficits that characterize Latino youth is long and deep. The focus on negative aspects of Latino youth development has been based on a relatively unchallenged assumption that there are barriers that must be overcome to achieve successful youth development. Most of the time these barriers are seen as naturally occurring or pre-existing in the lives of Latino youth. This has led us to an unfortunate orientation to promote intervention and prevention efforts. Such an orientation is unfortunate because intervention and prevention presume negative, harmful, or life-threatening behaviors and conditions that require intervention or the development of prevention strategies.

We believe a more productive orientation is one that focuses initially on youth development as the primary strategy to preempt the need for intervention and prevention programming. Young people engage and invest in their development as a continuous process. “Throughout this process, young people seek ways to meet their basic physical and social needs and to build the competencies and connections they perceive as necessary for survival and success” (Pittman, 1992, p. 14). The need to develop coherent, contextual, and culturally relevant theory regarding Latino youth development drives our work in this project.

Our Purpose

In this study, we present our challenge to youth service providers, policy makers, and researchers, to focus attention on assets rather than deficits and to view successful youth development as our strongest tool for preempting the need for prevention and intervention programming.

Specifically, we (with unfortunate brevity) describe several current theoretical frameworks that underlie much of the research on Latino youth development. We then describe the results of our comprehensive review of several prominent journals including volumes published from 1996 through 2001 to summarize their attention to Latino youth development. We review the results of several model intervention and prevention programs that target Latino youth with respect to their focus on or orientation toward developmental issues. Finally, as mentioned earlier, we address Latino youth service providers, policy makers, and youth development researchers directly by outlining our vision of success for positive Latino youth development.

Theory

Youth Development

Human ecological theories of development (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979; Buboltz & Sontag, 1993; Ford & Lerner, 1992; Lerner, 1991, 1995) have generally included a dimension of “culture” or “ethnicity” in their models of human development. Within these models of development, culture, ethnicity, and race are viewed as critical dimensions of growth and development, underlying the development of identity, belief, cognition, and social interactions. Despite this important recognition, researchers have generally avoided examining the impact of ethnicity on human development within their investigations. As will be described more

completely below, current youth development researchers frequently refer to many of these general theories of development, but rarely employ them as the focal framework of study.

While an array of issues can be offered for this omission, including but not limited to difficulties in measuring ethnicity and the general question of whether this is a primary or secondary variable influencing development, there is growing recognition within the field of developmental sciences that ethnicity must be central to future research endeavors if we are to develop responsive programs and policies (Fisher, Jackson, & Villarruel, 1997).

Despite advances in scientific methodologies, the predominant trend in social science research has involved the inclusion of race and ethnic identity differences among less dominant racial groups. Such an approach has led researchers who are concerned primarily with how non-minorities have defined other groups as "different" in an effort to maintain and justify supposed differences. Concurrently, other researchers (e.g., Fisher, Jackson, & Villarruel, 1997) have attempted to challenge future researchers to not only include more ethnic minorities in their research, but to develop a grounded theory of the developmental contextual issues related to their development as opposed to continuing the perspective of using non-minority groups as a "normative" comparative group.

Race and Ethnicity

The challenge for Latinos is further embedded in the fact that panethnic views of ethnicity are often espoused, but issues of identity and development are interrelated with dimensions of race. Moreover, within Latino communities, race is a secondary, not a primary characteristic of identity. However, the concepts of race within the US have been considered on the basis of phenotypic and genotypic criteria as opposed to the social-cultural or developmental-contextual contributions of ethnicity in adolescent development. Moreover, it must be

recognized that there are societal issues that seriously impede some of the scientific advances that are necessary. For example, Stanfield (1993) has argued that race and ethnic issues within the social sciences are inextricably linked by political and cultural ideologies. Unfortunately, given the challenges confronting our nation, issues that Latino youth face daily in their local communities as well as at levels of policy may impact their development, and yet, within the social scientific community, are regulated to secondary attention.

The Influence of Ethnic Identity.

A key developmental marker of adolescence is identity development. Swanson, Spencer, and Petersen (1998) argued that environmental contexts are critical in identity development processes, whether from an ecological, psychological, or phenomenological perspective (each is reviewed by Swanson, Spencer, and Petersen). The unique ecology of Latino youth provides a set of environmental contexts that require attention when considering identity development and the concomitant development of ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity is one area of adolescent development that has received significant attention and has been viewed as an aspect of personal identity (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). While the majority of work in this area has focused on African Americans (e.g., Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Phinney, 1990), fewer studies have involved Latino youth (e.g., Bautista del Demanico, Crawford, & De Wolfe, 1994; Phinney, 1990; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). Moreover, the theoretical work in this area far outweighs empirical work (e.g., Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota & Ocampo, 1993; Kerwin et al., 1993; Marshall, 1995; Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Stevenson, 1994).

While the models of ethnic identity have generally been based on Erickson's (1968) theory of ego identity formation and Marcia's (1966) empirical work on the stages of ego

development, important insight related to Latino youth development can be noted. In general, ethnic identity formation is conceptualized as a series of stages an individual passes through over time, from a cultural identity to a highly diffused identity that develops in concert with dominant cultural views (Phinney, 1991). Three significant findings are central to our subsequent discussion. First, ethnic identity research supports a developmental process of ethnic identity formation (Phinney, 1989, 1992; Phinney & Chavira, 1992). Second, Latino ethnic identity is highly influenced by interpersonal relationships and other external factors such as family, extended family, and member of their community rather than by internal factors (Marin & Marin, 1991; Zayas & Solari, 1994). While both of these findings support the notion for additional research in this domain, a third, nonetheless important fact remains: the knowledge base on child development has generally come from studies of middle-class White families and based on Euro-American values and standards of behavior (Zayas, 1994; Zayas & Solari, 1994).

Formation of ethnic identity in Latino adolescents is a complex process, complicated by building relationships in mainstream culture while participating in families with various levels of traditions and acculturation. There is some evidence to suggest that bicultural environments, at least for Cuban American youth, can lead to identity crises (Suarez, 1993). However, some youth are able to develop integrative ethnic identities in multicultural settings, where they develop the capacity to handle themselves in various settings, negotiate the demands of each situation, and maintain pride in their various roles. Guanipa-Ho and Guanipa (1998) developed these ideas in a review of identity formation and ethnicity where they employed a definition of identity that included issues related to internalizing and self-selecting characteristics, such as values and beliefs, that define one's sense of self, including experiences inside and outside family.

Guanipa-Ho and Guanipa (1998), relying on the work of Rosenthal and Feldman (1992), argued that evidence exists regarding the interaction of contextual and developmental factors in the ethnic identity formation of adolescents, including such forces as family. Families provide the primary experiences of ethnic group membership for youth and the degree to which parents are involved in the ethnic community relates directly to the stability of an adolescent's ethnic identity. There is also evidence suggesting a relationship between the stability of ethnic identity and behavior. Phinney (1993) argued that adolescents with positive ethnic identities more effectively handle negative stereotypes and prejudice instead of internalizing negative self-perceptions. She also reported that positive ethnic identity contributes to positive psychological adjustment.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the notion that the limited scientific foundation of Latino adolescent development may be skewed such that Latino's appear to be less healthy because we simply do not have a theoretical foundation upon which we can understand Latino youth development and the development of their cultural identity.

Methods

It is possible to gauge the degree to which developmental researchers investigate issues related to Latino youth by reviewing the literature. The degree to which research includes, reports, or focuses on Latino youth development provides one indication as to the relative importance of Latino youth development issues in the field.

In a review of six American Psychological Association journals, McLoyd (1998) found that 5.2% of the empirical articles reported data on African Americans during 1970 to 1974 and by 1985-89, only 2.0% of the articles did so. Similarly, in their review of 11 child and youth developmental journals, Phinney and Landin (1998) found ethnic minority groups investigated in

5% of the articles. Only 9 of the 67 articles including ethnic minorities focused on specific cultural or ethnic factors influencing psychological outcomes; factors that were measured directly rather than assuming that relevant cultural factors were responsible for results that were not evaluated directly.

In his review, McLoyd (1998) also reported that empirical studies were rarely guided by a conceptual or theoretical framework and were primarily exploratory. In addition, researchers rarely explained why race or ethnicity should matter. Another issue he raised, although not evaluated in this review, was the confound in comparisons of low-SES minority children with middle-SES White children. Our perceptions are that this is too often overlooked in research on Latino youth as well.

We reviewed several leading journals including volumes from 1996 through 2001 (six years of issues). These journals included Adolescence, Journal of Adolescent Research, Journal of Early Adolescence, Journal of Research on Adolescence, Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Youth and Society, Journal of Hispanic Behavioral Sciences, and Latino Studies Journal. We reviewed and coded all articles included in each issue for inclusion of Latino subjects and the report of results for Latino subjects. Articles that were not substantive, including editor statements and book reviews, were excluded from review.

All coding was completed by three researchers during periods where two researchers were coding different volumes but at the same place and time to facilitate communication and consultation. Articles that were ambiguous with respect to one or more characteristics were included in consultation sessions where consensus was reached regarding the appropriate description and coding of the study. During initial coding, articles were randomly selected for

simultaneous coding to establish consistency in interpretation of codes. In the few cases of discrepancies, consensus was achieved after additional review of the articles.

Specifically, the following study characteristics were coded for each article:

1. Did the authors report to include Latino subjects? If yes:
 - a) What were their ethnic background, age range, gender makeup, geographic location, and proportion of the total sample?
 - b) What was the theoretical framework used by the investigators?
2. Did the authors report results for Latino subjects? If yes:
 - a) Was the focus of the study on Latino adolescents exclusively?
 - b) What assets were included in the investigation?
 - c) What deficits were included in the investigation?

Results

The rate of inclusion of Latino subjects in youth development research journals from our review is summarized in Table 1. In total, 1141 journal articles were reviewed; 26.4% of these articles reported to include Latino subjects; 5.8% of the articles actually reported data for Latino subjects; 2.6% of the 1141 articles exclusively studied Latinos.

In addition, 86.2% of the articles were empirical (others included literature reviews and essays). Of the empirical literature, 30.6% reported to include Latino subjects, 6.7% reported data on Latino subjects, while 3.0% focused exclusively on Latino subjects.

The Focus of Youth Development Journals

It is evident that Latino youth are not a priority among the interests of youth development researchers. However, those researchers that do investigate issues regarding Latino youth adopt a wide range of theoretical perspectives, even though they are, as presented later, heavily deficit

oriented. For each researcher that reported to include Latino youth in the sample, we coded any apparent theoretical framework or perspective used. Generally, the majority of the research during these six years has been primarily exploratory. This should be qualified by noting that most researchers make appropriate use of the literature in describing and framing the issues they have chosen to address. However, the empirical work as reported, is largely exploratory in nature, rather than directly theory-confirming or theory building in nature. The handful of theoretically driven work included models regarding social learning theory, social control theory, theories of motivation, theories modeling self-esteem and ethnic identity development, and a social relational model of self-regulation.

Developmental Issues in Latino-Focused Journals

The Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Science and Latino Studies Journal were reviewed in a similar manner as the other journals; however, our primary target for coding included articles investigating issues related to Latino youth development. We coded ethnic origin of subjects, age group, gender breakdown, geographic location, and primary theoretical framework used by the investigators.

Of the 261 articles reviewed, 59 (23%) were devoted to developmental issues focusing on adolescents (ages 10 to 24). At least eight empirical studies included young children (less than 10 years of age) and were not included in further analyses. Based on the 59 developmental adolescent-focused articles, about half included only Mexican American subjects (46%) while fewer articles focused on Puerto Ricans (4), Cubans (3), Central Americans (1), and Dominicans (1). Other articles included mixed Latino populations or did not report the ethnic composition of subjects. Most of the articles included a mix of males and females; however, 17% focused on females while none focused on males. Finally, the studies included subjects located in Texas

(12), California (8), New York (7), Florida (3), Chicago (2), unspecified locations in the Southwest USA (9) or Midwest (1), Massachusetts (1) and Idaho (1), or national samples and unspecified locations (15).

We were primarily interested in the theoretical frameworks used by researchers in the Latino focused journals addressing youth development issues. Of the 59 developmental articles, 45 were clearly exploratory in nature (76%), rather than theory confirming or building. Of the 14 appearing to be theory specific, three employed the diathesis-stress model, three evaluated models of acculturation, and the others evaluated Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, social capital, attachment, health locus of control, ethnic identity development, cultural orientation, moral development, self-efficacy, and motivation. Of these theory-based studies, several were actually more exploratory than they were theory confirming or building.

Asset and Deficit Orientation

We closely reviewed the few articles that reported results for Latino subjects (66 of 984 empirical studies) and coded the assets and deficits that were evaluated in each study, using the framework of the Search Institute (Benson, 1993; Scales, 1996). We did this separately for Latino focused journals, Journal of Hispanic Behavioral Sciences and Latino Studies Journal, and the general developmental journals. As presented in more detail shortly, studies in the mainstream journals on Latino youth development were overwhelmingly deficit oriented. The assets and deficits evaluated in the journals reviewed are summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

Researchers employed 17 of the 40 assets that comprise the SI framework. The most frequently reported assets included family support (15% of articles reporting results for Latino subjects), parent communication (11%), and the presence of other adult resources and families having clear rules or consequences (6% each). There were a number of other assets employed in

these studies, several of which were among the asset framework of the Search Institute (SI) and reported in Table 2, but a number of other characteristics that research authors considered assets that did not fit clearly within the SI framework. These included general social support, teacher support, positive family relationships, occupational aspirations, parental cultural maintenance, ability to access services, negotiation skills, and residential stability. Each of these additional assets was included in one or two studies each.

Researchers employed 20 of the 24 deficits that comprise the SI framework. The most frequently employed deficits included sexual activity and pregnancy (42% of studies reporting results for Latino youth), depression and suicide (17%), negative peer pressure or deviant peers (17%), drug use (17%), and alcohol use (13%). There were a number of other deficits employed in these studies, several of which were among the SI deficit framework and reported in Table 3, but a number of other characteristics that researchers considered deficits that did not fit clearly within the SI framework. These included psychopathology (9%, several including clinical populations) and gang involvement (8%). A large number of deficits, not included in the SI framework, were also employed in one or two studies each, including family stress, school suspensions or expulsions, neighborhood problems, lack of parental monitoring, anti-social behavior, poor school performance, divorce, discrimination incidents, victimization, runaways or homelessness, negative perceptions of weight and physical appearance, sexually transmitted diseases, alienation, parental conflict, and peer conflict.

Finally, there were a number of characteristics that were considered neither assets nor deficits, but employed by researchers reporting results for Latino youth. These included, most frequently, socio-economic status (9%), ethnic identity (8%), and self esteem (8%). Additional characteristics were employed by one or two researchers each, including attitudes toward

fighting, general parental involvement, acculturation, parental occupation, parenting styles, general academic performance, language proficiency, employment, religion, internet use, psycho-social impact of puberty and the onset of menarche. Many of these have asset or deficit counterparts, but were employed by researchers in a neutral manner, mostly in correlational studies.

Also of interest to us was the asset and deficit orientation of the articles in the two Latino focused journals. Most of the 59 developmental articles were either mixed or neutral in terms of an asset or deficit orientation while 12 were deficit oriented and seven were asset oriented. The assets and deficits employed in these studies are summarized in Tables 4 and 5. The Latino focused journals addressed half of the forty assets that comprise the SI framework, primarily including family support (17% of developmental articles), optimism about one's personal future (13%), motivation to do well in school (12%), and parent communication (8%). Several other characteristics were identified by researchers that were not clearly stated in the SI framework, including general social support and mentoring (8%), academic self concept (6), and others included in one or two articles such as educational resiliency, self-efficacy, intolerance of drug use, street awareness, sex abstinence, ethnic pride, interest in community, leisure activities, and religiosity.

The deficit oriented articles included 20 of the 24 deficits identified in the SI framework, focusing primarily on alcohol use (19%), sexual activity (13%), depression and suicidal behavior (13%), drug use (12%), dropping out of school (10%), and police trouble (8%). Others employed by researchers but not clearly identified by the SI framework included psychopathology (8%), poverty (8%), poor school performance (6%), general delinquency (6%), and several characteristics that were included in one or two articles each like gang involvement,

discrimination, family discord, loneliness, alienation, sibling drug use, and participation in violence or being victimized.

Neutral characteristics of interest to these researchers included acculturation (29% of developmental articles included this characteristic), ethnic identity (13%), self concept or self esteem (13%), generational status (10%), cultural attitudes (6%), and academic performance (6%). These characteristics were not viewed clearly as assets or deficits, but as relevant variables. There were a host of other characteristics employed in one or two studies that were considered in a neutral way, including multicultural interactions, religion, language development, motivation, employment, socio-economic status, memory, school adjustment, parental education, body image, media exposure, ethnic loyalty, sex role attitudes, moral judgments, attachment, health locus of control, and general attributions.

Summary of Review

From this review of the literature on youth development, we argue that ethical and practical considerations demand a reorientation. Although 984 empirical articles were published in six mainstream journals, only 66 reported results for Latino youth, less than half (30) of which focused on issues related to Latino youth exclusively. The vast majority of articles were exploratory in nature rather than attempts to validate or build theory. In addition, the articles were largely deficit oriented (42% reporting issues related to sexual activity, 17% including issues related to substance use, 17% including issues related to depression, and 17% including issues related to negative peer pressure or deviant peers). At the same time, the promotion of developmental research on Latino youth cannot be relegated to Latino-focused journals. Between the two Latino-focused journals we reviewed, 22.6% of the 261 articles focused on developmental issues and were fairly balanced in terms of asset and deficit orientations.

Whether you prefer to consider it lack of scholarship or neglect, the field suffers substantially because of the limited nature of research on Latino youth development.

Model Programs

The connections between research and practice are not strong, in large part because of the lack of empirical research involving Latino youth and, in the existing limited research, absence of theory. Much of what we know of Latino youth programming is anecdotal and relatively untested. Latino youth workers have told us repeatedly, “We know what works and what doesn’t work with our kids, we just don’t have the framework to describe it or the evidence to prove it.”

The literature on model programs for youth development has been summarized in at least four recent reports. The American Youth Policy Forum released two volumes of abridged program evaluations (James, 1997, 1999). Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, and Fester (1998) reviewed youth development program evaluations with an eye toward promoting healthy adolescents. We briefly comment here on their attention to programs that serve Latino youth. Finally, Slavin and Calderon (2001) edited a text that addressed effective educational programs for Latino students. We also comment briefly on their contributions.

James (1997) reviewed evaluation reports of 49 youth serving programs that were divided into three primary types, including (1) extended learning programs that were primarily school-to-work programs and apprenticeship or work readiness programs, (2) programs that involve youth in community service learning and mentoring (community building), and (3) post-secondary access and retention programs. For each of the 49 programs, James commented on the evidence of effectiveness, key programmatic components, and factors that contributed to program success. The studies included in his review were recommended by a set of academic researchers,

professional evaluators, and youth practitioners. Each of the initiatives was published, supported by legislation or foundations, at least statewide in scope, and pilot or demonstration programs.

The first set of evaluations included 29 programs on extended learning. Of the 29 programs in this group, 24 were based on programs that served Latino youth (for 4 programs this was not reported). However, none were reported to be focused on Latino youth or have culturally relevant components for Latino youth. Three programs focused on minority youth, including Real Entrepreneurship (North Carolina), Job Corps (Department of Labor), and Minority Female Single Parent (Rockefeller Foundation). However, only the Job Corps programs were identified as having cultural awareness programs as a key programmatic component.

The second area of evaluation reports reviewed included those focused on community building. Of the ten evaluations in this group, six included Latino participants (three had target populations that were not reported). None of the programs focused on Latino youth or reported culturally relevant components for Latino youth. Four programs focused on minority youth, including Big Brothers Big Sisters, Learn & Serve America, New Futures (Casey Foundation), Quantum Opportunities. Each of these programs included some aspect of cultural awareness, including same race matches in Big Brother Big Sisters and attention to attitudes regarding diversity and collaborative decision-making.

The third area of evaluations included programs focused on increasing post-secondary access and retention. Of the ten evaluations in this group, seven included Latino participants while the other three did not report ethnic group participation. None of the programs focused on Latino youth or reported a Latino culturally relevant component. Three programs targeted minority youth, including Higher Ground, Student Support Services (TRIO federally funded

program), and Upward Bound (TRIO). Of these programs, only the TRIO programs reported cultural awareness components, including participation in cultural events.

Although most of the evaluation reports reviewed were based on programs that served Latino youth, none of them either focused on Latino youth or contained culturally relevant program components for Latino youth. The few programs that focused on minority youth were similarly described without noting any culturally relevant factors contributing to their success with Latino youth. This does not exclude the possibility that these programs do in fact contain components designed for Latino youth despite their lack of inclusion in the review.

More recently, James (Ed., 1999) reviewed an additional 64 program evaluations of 46 youth serving programs, in an attempt to be more comprehensive and broaden the scope from the first review. The summaries followed the format of the earlier report. Programs were divided into three general areas, including (1) education and career development, (2) building strong communities, and (3) special programs of interest -- which were essentially summaries of studies on special topics including health behavior, employment, and GED recipients.

Of the programs evaluations reviewed, two were focused on Latino youth and both were English development programs, including Español Aumentativo in Houston, Texas, and Santa Ana Unified School District in California. At least five of the programs did not report to include Latino youth in their populations; however, none of the other programs included culturally relevant characteristics in their descriptions of key program components or factors contributing to their success.

An independent attempt was made to review program evaluations that focus on promoting healthy adolescents. Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, and Fester (1998) selected 15 youth-serving program evaluations from a set of over 60 that met certain criteria regarding

methodological rigor (were experimental or quasi-experimental in design) and those that served youth that were not clearly problematic (excluding programs focused on pregnancy, drop-outs, or adjudicated youth).

Roth et al. (1998) provided a basic definition of youth development programs as those that “provide opportunities and support to help youth gain the competencies and knowledge they need to meet the increasing challenges they will face as they mature” (p. 423). As a basis for understanding outcomes, they used a definition for successful youth development based on the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development which suggested that successful youth are (1) intellectually reflective, (2) bound for a lifetime of meaningful work, (3) good citizens, (4) caring and ethical, and (4) healthy. They found that positive outcomes for youth development resulted from (1) incorporation of aspects of youth development, (2) caring adult-adolescent relationships, and (3) longer-term programmatic efforts. They made no mention of the role of culture or ethnicity throughout their review.

In their text on effective programs for Latino students, Slavin and Calderon (2001) organized a series of chapters by various authors under the shared belief: “Latino students can succeed at the highest levels if they are given the quality of instruction they deserve, and a shared belief that reform of schools serving many Latino students is both possible and essential” (p. ix). The chapters presented case studies, data, and examples of school based efforts to help Latino students succeed in elementary and secondary schools. These programs included language development (English, Spanish, and bilingual language development), dropout prevention and college attendance programs, with several chapters focused on literacy and reading programs. The final two chapters presented factors that place Latino youth at risk for failure and a review of educational models that have been used to explain academic achievement.

The evidence we have from youth program literature regarding Latino youth development is severely limited, focusing almost exclusively on language and literacy development. For those programs that do serve Latino youth, in the context of diverse communities, we know little about what makes them successful for Latino youth, if in fact they are successful with Latino youth.

A Vision of Success

“A vision of success” is a notion of strategic planning that stems from the private and corporate sector, which has been applied to public and nonprofit sectors as well. The importance of a vision of success has been widely recognized. When possible, it should be based on consensus among key stakeholders, which in our context includes service providers, policy makers, researchers, youth and their families. It serves as a source of inspiration and can mobilize and direct energy. It should be challenging enough to spur action, yet not impossible to achieve so as to demoralize individuals (Bryson, 1988).

A vision of success for Latino youth development must be developed. What we propose here is a draft statement. This statement must be reviewed, evaluated, discussed, and strengthened. Although broad-based consensus may never be achieved, we should not let our philosophical or theoretical orientations detract us from this simple notion: successful Latino youth development is attainable for all. Most professional organizations have developed statements of ethics and responsible, professional conduct. The vision of success is one step beyond such statements. It provides a guide and outcome to strive for, a common ground or focal point. It should not limit our work, but should motivate continued groundbreaking efforts. It recognizes that there is a common goal, however that goal is achieved, and that this goal deserves concerted broad-based attention.

Our Vision

Our mission, as researchers and youth advocates is to promote the positive development of Latino youth in all arenas, including research, policy making, and program design, implementation, and evaluation. Our basic philosophy is focused on positive youth development as the primary means for achieving success for all youth. Problems faced by many teens, particularly Latino teens, derive from an imbalance of assets and deficits throughout all developmental stages. The critical issue for us is the identification of relevant assets for Latino youth. This imbalance leads to unsuccessful development and personally, socially, and physically maladjusted young adults. The basic goal is to foster developmentally appropriate environments that embrace the culturally unique strengths of Latino youth in ways to enhance their ability to take advantage of the assets they have.

Strategies to achieve the goal of successful Latino youth development must be undertaken collectively through more direct communication between researchers, policy makers, youth service providers, parents and youth themselves. Initial strategies must include greater effort to include culturally appropriate frameworks for the study of Latino youth development. This presumes the inclusion of Latino subjects in developmental investigations and the reporting of results for Latino subjects. Policy makers should continue to inform their policy making with relevant evidence and seek that evidence vigilantly—providing funds to do so where the evidence is absent. Youth service providers, educators, and parents should continue to learn about developmental issues facing Latino youth and structure developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive environments that allow Latino youth to identify and take advantage of their assets and strengths. Youth service oriented organizations and programs must begin to adopt

developmental strategies to secure positive development—successful development is our strongest tool to overcome and move beyond the limiting nature of deficit-oriented services.

Youth development researchers, policy makers, and youth service providers must be held to high standards of performance. Our reviews of the developmental research and the evaluation literature on youth development programs are indications of the neglect in the field toward Latino youth. Continued monitoring of the developmental research and more concerted efforts to evaluate Latino-focused youth development programs should help keep these issues salient. Salience, however, is not enough to promote change. Accountability of our own work and the inclusive and diverse nature of the research investigations undertaken, policies designed, and programs implemented, must become a core ethical standard. Our work must be congruent with the world in which we live. To continue to ignore the fastest growing segment of the population is an ethical offense and practical disaster. Youth service workers, educators, and policy makers are not released from their responsibility because of the lack of empirical research on Latino youth development. Ethical standards for policy and program design, implementation, and evaluation must be maintained, even in the face of empirical research drought.

Room for Research

As Pittman (1992) suggested, when youth can effectively build the competencies and connections they perceive as necessary for success, and in some cases survival, risk factors can be overcome. Ironically, the concept of “community” youth development is something that has been inherent within and across Latino communities long before it became part of our current ideological framework. Suffice it to say, academia has failed to understand the significance of this phenomena for Latino youth, whereas grassroots organizations have made this a pillar of

their efforts—but often they too fail to disseminate information on the relative importance of creating connections for youth within and across their communities.

This call for a new paradigmatic emphasis on Latino development is not unparalleled in developmental sciences. McLoyd (1998), for example, asserted that culturally relevant conceptual frameworks are a basic necessity of developmental sciences. Moreover, McLoyd argued that if we are to expand our knowledge of "normative development" across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, we must expand our knowledge base of "normative" development. One means of accomplishing this objective, she suggested, is to expand our knowledge of resiliency among Latino youth, and to subsequently translate this information that subsequently can be used in prevention and intervention efforts as well as to inform and develop newer and relevant policies that can further support the positive development of youth.

There are recommendations for researcher strategies to overcome many of the challenges presented above. Cooper, Jackson, Azmitia, and Lopez (1998) have outlined at least three researcher-centered models to improve the progress of our research with youth. These include (1) ecocultural models, to employ multidimensional aspects of culture, ethnicity, and family, goals and communication, and uncover socially constructed meanings within communities; (2) parallel research designs, to study multiple cultural communities; employ the perspectives of insiders to measure community concepts and processes from relevant frameworks or orientations, then map similarities and differences across communities; and (3) collaboration among stakeholders to strengthen links between researchers, youth, families, and institutions, and to coordinate goals, needs, and perspectives to enhance trust.

Given the population demographic shifts of the last two decades as well as the projections for the future, it is imperative that we develop a new framework for understanding Latino youth

development. Moreover, scientific advances must become the pillars of programmatic initiatives both locally and nationally. These recommendations and those to come must be considered in the context of a shared vision of success.

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Table 1

Inclusion of Latino Subjects in Youth Development Journals: January, 1996-December, 2001

| Journal | Number of articles | Number of empirical articles | Of the empirical articles: | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | | Included Latino subjects | Reported results for Latinos |
| Adolescence | 407 | 348 | 28.7% | 6.3% |
| J. of Adolescent Research | 146 | 121 | 37.2% | 5.0% |
| J. of Early Adolescence | 118 | 106 | 41.5% | 12.3% |
| J. of Research on Adolescence* | 104 | 81 | 33.3% | 9.9% |
| J. of Youth and Adolescence | 258 | 245 | 27.8% | 5.3% |
| Youth and Society | 108 | 83 | 20.5% | 4.8% |
| Total | 1141 | 984 | 30.6% | 6.7% |

* The Journal of Research on Adolescence included 18 of 24 issues during this time period.

Table 2

Assets Evaluated in Youth Development Research Articles Including Latino Subjects

| Asset | % | Asset | % |
|-------------------------------------|----|--|---|
| <u>Support</u> | | <u>Educational Commitment</u> | |
| Family support | 15 | Motivation to do well in school | 4 |
| Parent communication | 11 | Good school performance | 4 |
| Other adult resources | 6 | | |
| Caring neighbors | 2 | <u>Empowerment</u> | |
| Positive school climate | 2 | Youth feels safe | 2 |
| <u>Values</u> | | <u>Social Competencies</u> | |
| Is truthful, even when not easy | 2 | Friendship skills (empathy, sensitivity) | 2 |
| | | Comfort in multiracial settings | 4 |
| <u>Boundaries/Expectations</u> | | <u>Positive Identity</u> | |
| Family has clear rules/consequences | 6 | Feels control over what happens to them | 2 |
| Parents model prosocial behavior | 2 | Reports high self-esteem | 4 |
| <u>Constructive Use of Time</u> | | Optimistic about personal future | 2 |
| Participates in sports, clubs | 2 | | |

Note: The assets reported here are those found based on a list of forty assets in the framework developed by the Search Institute (see Scales, 1996).

Table 3

Deficits Evaluated in Youth Development Research Articles Including Latino Subjects

| Deficit | % | Deficit | % |
|--------------------------------------|----|--|---|
| Sexually activity/pregnancy | 42 | Social isolation (lack of care, support) | 8 |
| Depression/suicide attempts | 17 | Non-use of contraceptives | 6 |
| Negative peer pressure/deviant peers | 17 | Police trouble | 6 |
| Other drug use | 17 | School absenteeism | 6 |
| Alcohol use | 13 | Stress | 6 |
| Dropout | 9 | Vandalism/graffiti | 6 |
| Parental addiction | 9 | Alone at home | 4 |
| Physical abuse | 9 | Cigarette/tobacco use | 4 |
| Sexual abuse | 9 | Theft | 4 |
| Fighting | 8 | Weapon use | 4 |

Note. The deficits/risks listed here are those found based on a list of 24 assets in the framework developed by the Search Institute (see Benson, 1993; Scales, 1996).

Table 4

Assets Evaluated in Developmental Articles in Latino Focused Journals

| Asset | % | Asset | % |
|---------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|
| <u>Support</u> | | <u>Educational Commitment</u> | |
| Family support | 17 | Motivation to do well in school | 12 |
| Parent communication | 8 | Good school performance | 6 |
| Parent involvement in schooling | 6 | Cares about his/her school | 4 |
| | | Does homework daily | 2 |
| <u>Values</u> | | <u>Empowerment</u> | |
| Stands up for beliefs/convictions | 2 | Youth feels safe | 2 |
| <u>Boundaries/Expectations</u> | | Volunteerism | |
| Family has clear rules/consequences | 4 | | 2 |
| Parents model prosocial behavior | 4 | <u>Social Competencies</u> | |
| Best friend models prosocial behavior | 2 | Resists negative peer pressure | 2 |
| Parents/teachers are encouraging | 8 | <u>Positive Identity</u> | |
| <u>Constructive Use of Time</u> | | Optimistic about personal future | 13 |
| Participates in sports, clubs | 6 | Reports high self-esteem | 4 |
| Participates in music/theater/arts | 2 | | |
| Participates in religious programs | 4 | | |

Note: The assets reported here are those found based on a list of forty assets in the framework developed by the Search Institute (see Scales, 1996).

Table 5

Deficits Evaluated in Developmental Articles in Latino Focused Journals

| Deficit | % | Deficit | % |
|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------------|---|
| Alcohol use | 19 | Negative peer pressure | 6 |
| Sexual activity | 13 | Cigarette/tobacco use | 4 |
| Depression/suicide attempts | 13 | Non-use of contraceptives | 4 |
| Other drug use | 12 | Social isolation | 4 |
| Dropout | 10 | Eating disorders | 4 |
| Sexual abuse | 8 | TV overexposure | 4 |
| Police trouble | 8 | Physical abuse | 2 |
| School absenteeism | 6 | Driving/riding and drinking | 2 |
| Parental addiction | 6 | Weapon use | 2 |
| Stress | 6 | Fighting | 2 |

Note. The deficits/risks listed here are those found based on a list of 24 assets in the framework developed by the Search Institute (see Benson, 1993; Scales, 1996).