Assets in Individual, Family, and Community-Based Research—Latino Style

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Introduction

Given the recent news and press releases about the growing numbers of Latinos in the USA, product and service-based marketing attention to Latino communities, promotion of Latino entertainers by the motion picture and music industries, and the particularly salient and divisive local and national discussions about immigration policy, researchers maintain that the Latino community in the United States is largely invisible (Montero-Sieburth & Villarruel, 2000). Latinos may constitute 12.5% of the population of the United States, but they remain severely underrepresented in public and private positions of authority. Although we are in a time of significant population increases in Latino communities and particularly among Latino youth throughout the USA, there is very little research that focuses on this growing population. Latinos are noticeably absent from the literature that is often used to guide further research, program development, and policy-making (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel, 2003). A new prioritization is called for regarding the attention placed by researchers, practitioners, and policy makers on understanding issues and factors that influence Latino communities and foster positive development of the fastest growing population of youth in the USA.

The importance of Latino community-based research

The significant under representation of Latino communities in the current research literature is only part of the problem. The scenario for youth development research is most stark:

> Not only are Latinos noticeably absent from the current literature, but also a
> significant amount of what has been published further clouds our understanding
> of Latino youth and promotes damaging stereotypes. As noted earlier in this
> chapter, the current literature is plagued with conceptualizations and
> investigations that are based on a deficit model. Some issues facing Latino youth
> have been well documented: low educational attainment, lack of employment
> opportunities, poverty, teen pregnancy, poor health status, and limited health care
> (Padilla, 1995; Perez, 1992; Romo & Falbo, 1996). However, the factors that
> influence Latinos to thrive and succeed are yet to be explored and understood.
> (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel, 2003, p. ##)

The propensity of attending to and describing at length the problems and deficits that portray Latino communities is overwhelming. The assumption that there are barriers that must be overcome to achieve successful and healthy development drives this focus on the negative—on the deficits. Attending wholly on negative outcomes fails to uncover new understanding about how culturally and contextually specific strengths can be uncovered and developed to increase the level of thriving within Latino communities in environments burdened with poverty of "ideal" circumstances (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel, 2003).

We focus on Latino youth when presenting issues related to assets, particularly in examining relevant literature, because it is in the teen years that adult behavior is developed and formed and the contextual characteristics of families and communities take shape. The challenges to positive healthy development among Latino youth have largely been ignored by the

research community and the nation in general (Montero-Sieburth & Villarruel, 2000; Perkins, Luster, Villarruel, & Small, 1998). Outstanding adolescent researchers (e.g., Lerner, 1995), educators (Darder, Torres, & Gutierrez, 1997; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, in press; Valencia, 1991), and demographers (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Hernandez, Siles, & Rochin, 2001) have brought attention to the need for meaningful research if policy, programs, and practices are to be developed in a culturally and contextually appropriate way.

Adolescence

Youth development has defined the period of adolescence to include the ages of 10 to 20. There are no consistent biological markers that signify the beginning or end of adolescence. In industrialized societies, we are more likely to define the end of adolescence with significant social factors including joining the workforce and getting married (Elliot & Feldman, 1990). We find that in Latino communities, particularly for those in lower socioeconomic areas, the period of adolescence is much shorter due to early entry in the work force and marriage.

Adolescence is generally defined as a period of significant physical, social, and cognitive development. Physical changes bring about social changes where adolescents find themselves in new social roles. Accompanying the obvious changes are changes in ability to think, reason, and make decisions. Regrettably, our understanding of such transitions is founded on developmental research based on non-Latino youth. "Although there is no clear a priori theoretical expectation that many of these transitional stages do differ for Latino youth, there is little to no evidence that they are similar for youth of different racial or ethnic backgrounds" (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel, 2003, p.##).

Adolescents in all communities encounter many developmental challenges. Latino adolescents, given their complex environments and ethnic minority status, encounter additional challenges, with effects that are not well understood. One common experience among Latino youth is discrimination. Discriminatory acts, prejudice, and unfairness experienced and perceived by Latino youth bring on additional stressors that have largely been ignored in the research. Some researchers have suggested that because of discrimination, Latino youth face more than two to three times more institutional and educational distress (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). Latino youth experience a wide range of discriminatory acts, included being hassled by store personnel, receiving poor service in restaurants, being treated as though they were not too smart, having more expected of them than of others, and being assumed to have poor English skills.

Moving Toward Assets

A handful of researchers have been promoting a realignment of the current direction taken by most youth development researchers for some time now (Feldman & Elliott, 1990, Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2002). They provided arguments and evidence of the limiting nature of deficit oriented models and have suggested that a more productive orientation is one that focuses on positive development as a strategy to advance long-term outcomes. Families and communities invest in their development continuously. "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). Because of the history of culturally inappropriate research and subsequent policy decisions, we now find ourselves

immersed in decision-making frameworks based on inadequate knowledge and understanding, particularly about what is "normative." We need to expand our understanding of "normative" across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic indicators (Stanfield, 1993; McLoyd, 1998; Fisher, Jackson, & Villarruel, 1997; Graham, 1992).

As we begin an examination of an asset basis for our work, moving beyond the limiting and historically unproductive deficit orientation, we must expand our knowledge of resiliency and asset-based orientations to develop contextually relevant policies to support the positive development of Latino communities. Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel (2003) have identified several factors that impact Latino youth development and contribute to positive developmental outcomes, including language, gender roles, religion, family and ethnic identity. The summary below of these critical features of Latino life is based on the work from Rodriguez, Morrobel, and Villarruel (2003), the lead author being the author of this work.

Assets in Latino Lives with a Focus on Adolescents

Language

In the USA, about half of the 35 million Latinos prefer to speak in Spanish; 37% do not speak English well or at all, and 15% describe themselves as bilingual (Ramos, 2002). The variety of language experiences of Latinos in the USA preclude our ability to classify them as a group, including the presence of numerous indigenous languages, "Spanglish" words, and colloquialisms that are subgroup specific and not understood by all Latinos (Ramos, 2002). The language or expressions used by Latino youth will differ given age group, social class, geographic location, and ethnicity.

Language is an important unique characteristic of Latino youth development because it is through language that families and communities communicate beliefs, values, cultural norms, and approaches to managing internal and external signals. In most other arenas of research Language is thought of as static; however, we see language as a dynamic characteristic that varies among individuals and across Latino communities.

Language is a complex factor that must be explicitly considered when working with Latino communities.

> There is a general assumption that in order for programs to be culturally appropriate, relevant or effective with Latinos, they must be in Spanish. This is no longer true. Latinos can be described as consisting of a myriad of individuals and families from diverse economic, educational, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds including those who are monolingual English speakers and have been so for many generations. (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel, 2003)

Developing programs and services for members of Latino communities might do well in attracting participants and clients by providing service in Spanish, but services primarily in Spanish might be a deterrent for others. In some Latino families and communities, the retention and intergenerational teaching of traditional Latino familial values and cultural practices is an integral part of life, but in some communities, reliance on Spanish language is diminishing, while in other more recent immigrant communities, it is the only means of communicating.

English language fluency will improve the successful management or negotiation of USA systems including schools, social services, and other broader community settings and social networks. Latinos who are monolingual Spanish speakers will certainly face more challenges, compared to bilingual members of the community. Given the linguistic heterogeneity among Latino communities, linguistic ability cannot be determined by surnames alone or ethnic heritage. In order to understand the complexity of Latino communities, "researchers and practitioners must carefully consider how they address issues of language so that their practices are inclusive and address the linguistic needs of Latinos" (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarreal, 2003).

Gender Roles

In traditional Latino families, compared to the dominant culture of the USA, gender roles are fairly distinct and defined. In Spanish, the two terms that are used to identify gender role socialization are *machismo* and *marianismo*. These two characteristics include an intricate set of attitudes, behaviors, values, and beliefs. For men, machismo integrates courage, trustworthyness, responsibility, authority and the duty to provide fully for one's family (Alvarez, Bean, & Williams, 1981). Traditionally, Latino males are encouraged to be sexually active beginning in adolescence.

These characteristics differ a great deal from *marianismo*, which for women embodies the importance of virginity and chastity, as well as spirituality and obedience to males (Baca Zinn, 1982; Falicov, 1982). *Marianismo* is based on the qualities of the Virgin Mary (*Maria*) within the Roman Catholic religion.

Males and females are socialized to understand and behave in ways consistent with these roles from an early age, with significant importance during adolescence. However, the validity of these stereotypical descriptions of Latino gender roles (*machismo* and *marianismo*) has been challenged (Casas, Wagenheim, Banchero, & Mendoza-Romero, 1995; Valentine & Mosley, 2000). Such stereotypical descriptions ignore the important effects and function of social class, acculturation, regional differences, generational status, and simple characteristics including rural versus urban living, level of education, and the presence of extended family (Vasquez, 1999).

It is possible to accurately define traditional Latino gender roles positively, with an asset orientation. "Women most frequently take care of the household and family affairs and, in many places in the United States, are the brokers between the family and the community. Men bear the responsibility for financial support, make major decisions (often in consultation with their spouses), and provide a sense of security and stability to the family" (Vasquez, 1999, p. 180). Given such a description, both genders provide significant assets to families and communities. Again, it is easy to see how such roles can be affected by urban versus rural living, employment options, and the economic goals of both genders.

Religion

For many Latino families and communities, religion influences gender roles and lifestyle choices. The Hispanic Churches in American Public Life Project conducted a nation-wide study of Hispanic religion and politics (Parks, 2001). The researchers reported slight changes in religious affiliation of Latinos in the USA, where 70% reported to be Roman Catholic and 22% Protestant, up from 18% since 1990. Researchers also found a "U" shaped curve to Latino

church attendance based on generational status; attendance was high among first generation Latinos, dropped off in the second generation, and increased in the third.

Nearly 90% of the Spanish-speaking world (internationally) is Roman Catholic (Clutter & Nieto, 2000). For Latinos around the word, religion is an important factor in daily life. "The church influences family life and community affairs, giving spiritual meaning to Hispanic culture" (Clutter & Nieto, 2000). Religion helps shape attitudes toward family, gender, and community-based responsibilities (Stevens-Arroyo & Diaz-Stevens, 1994).

Religion, and in some respects its focus on family, community, individual and collective responsibility, social justice, and other related factors, can certainly serve as an asset in the lives of individuals who face obstacles toward healthy and positive development. Churches are viewed by some as mediators between individuals and families and the larger systems like schools, health care systems, social services, and other government agencies. The role of the church largely has been overlooked and its potential unrealized. Some service organizations, like Casa de Esperanza in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, have recognized the important function of the church in realizing their mission: to eliminate domestic violence in Latino communities. They have created "congregational response teams" (Casa de Esperanza, 2007) to work with families dealing with domestic violence – here the church is seen as a way to provide support for families in need because families do not feel capable (or at least have traditional not done so) to work directly with government-based social services.

Family

"The role of the family is one of the least understood and underestimated factors in Latino youth development" (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel, 2003). One stark example is found in common theories of youth development, which maintain that gaining independence from parents and family is a central feature of adolescent development. Youth development researchers and theorists have argued that autonomy and increased emotional and social distance from parents and family is an important stage of maturation (Cole & Cole, 1993; Comstock, 1994; Elliot & Feldman, 1990). Elliot and Feldman (1990) argued that in the USA, "adolescence is characterized by marked age segregation and little regular interaction with adults" (p. 3). Such outcomes in theorized youth development stages are not likely to hold for Latino youth.

Family was a significant factor and played a different role for Puerto Rican youth than for White non-Latino youth in a study on new immigrant Puerto Rican youth, delinquency, and crime. The peer group of White youth was the primary factor predicting likelihood of delinquent behavior; among Puerto Rican youth, family was the important factor (Rodriguez, 1996). As an asset and resiliency factor, the central importance of the family in the lives of Latino youth and the maintenance of cultural identity were significant deterrent to delinquent behavior. Also, negative changes in family composition and deteriorating family functioning has been found to be associated with negative behavior in Latino youth (Vega, 1995).

Research in health-related areas has been fairly restrictive and not particularly practical. Again, in research with Latino youth, health researchers that report results for Latino youth tend to include sexual activity as a variable in their studies. These researchers have found that the emotional environment within families is an important factor in adolescent sexuality (Driscoll, Biggs, Brindis, & Yankah, 2001; Huerta-Franco & Malacara, 1999). Factors these researchers have found to be important include socio-economic status, national origin, peers, acculturation, and family involvement. These researchers have also argued that we do not know enough about

each of these factors to develop comprehensive meaningful approaches to address critical health-related issues.

Compared to non-Latino families, in Latino families, fathers may function in a more important role in strengthening the family. In a national study, Latino fathers were a more important factor than White fathers regarding behavioral (engaging in various activities) and cognitive (restrictions regarding television and time outside home) interactions with the family, where Latino fathers took on the role of fathering with a stronger belief in the value of family (Toth & Xu, 1999). Researchers found that compared to White fathers, Latino fathers were more likely to reinforce the value of family closeness and respect for parents.

Ethnic Identity

Another central feature of adolescence is identity development. Environmental contexts are critical in identity developmental processes in ecological, phenomenological, and psychological perspectives (Swanson, Spencer, and Petersen, 1998). The unique environments of Latino youth produce conditions that require attention when considering identity development, and for Latino youth specifically, development of ethnic identity.

One area of significant research and theory building is ethnic identity. Some have positioned ethnic identity within the realm of personal identity (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Much of the work in ethnic identity was initiated in African American communities (e.g., Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Phinney, 1990), whereas fewer studies have involved Latino communities (e.g, Bautista de Demanico, Crawford, & De Wolfe, 1994; Phinney, 1990; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). In both cases, the theoretical work on the development and role of ethnic identity has outpaced the amount of 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 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). (Rodriguez, Morrobel, & Villarruel, 2003).

Ethnic identity is an important characteristic of individuals that transcends family and

community—collective identity is more than the sum of individual identity. In Latino communities, there is something unique about the ethnic cultural identities of their members that collectively bonds and strengthens all members. Variations in ethnic identity exist and in some cases appear to be related to generational status, multiracial versus monoracial family status, and other family and community characteristics.

For Mexican youth, level of ethnic identity was related to parental maintenance of culture, native language proficiency, and Mexican-peer interactions , but not family social class (Phinney, Nava, & Huang, 2001). Ethnic identity plays an important role in the development of self-esteem among Latina adolescents (Carlson, Uppal, & Prosser, 2000). Suarez (1993) found that bicultural environments produce identity crises for some Cuban Americans. However, some Latinos are able to integrate multiple ethnic identities in multicultural settings, developing the ability to negotiate the unique characteristics of each situation while maintaining pride in each roles (Guanipa-Ho & Guanipa, 1998). Individuals with positive ethnic identities are more able to successfully deal with negative stereotypes and prejudice and generally have more positive psychological adjustment (Phinney, 1993).

Cultural Capital

A relatively recent concept, that of cultural capital introduced by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, has provided a venue for discussion and investigating hard to identify and measure resources available to lower-class and minority communities. Cultural capital is generally thought to encompass "cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed on from one generation to another" (McLaren, 1998, p. 193).

Bourdieu (1986) and others have argued that there are three primary forms in which cultural capital is manifested, including personal and familial dispositions that are reflected in ways of interacting with others and expressing oneself (including cultural preferences), material goods that reflect cultural values including personal and family belongings, books, music, art, tools, technological devices, and others; and professional standing and qualifications that formalize an individual's contributions to society.

Researchers have argued that schools are organized to reflect the values of economically and culturally dominant members of a community, validating and reinforcing the cultural capital of students from these communities (Neito, 1996). Bourdieu's perspective of the capital aspects of culture are parallel to the concepts of economic capital, where social activity is centered around economic exchanges typically involving money – where certain aspects of cultural capital provide similar exchange value, where elements of cultural capital can be "cashed in" for other benefits. Some have argued that educational attainment is one of those benefits available to those with specific forms of cultural capital. "Since the possession of particular values, skills, and knowledge is necessary for educational attainment and success, it is important to consider the concept of cultural capital and to determine if the cultural capital valued in public schools plays a role in placing migrant students at a distinct academic and social disadvantage" (p. 41).

The World Bank has used the concept of social capital as a framework for developmental projects around the world. They define social capital as "the norms and networks that enable collective action. It encompasses institutions, relationships, and customs that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions" (World Bank, 2007). The World Bank cites evidence that one critical determinant of economic sustainability of developing societies is social capital, that social capital can be enhanced and used to improve project effectiveness. It does

this by "building the community's capacity to work together to address their common needs, fostering greater inclusion and cohesion, and increasing transparency and accountability" (World Bank).

The World Bank defines social capital in terms of five dimensions for operational purposes—when pursuing community-based development projects. The five dimensions include:

> Groups and networks - collections of individuals that promote and protect personal relationships which improve welfare; Trust and Solidarity – elements of interpersonal behavior which fosters greater cohesion and more robust collective action; Collective Action and Cooperation - ability of people to work together toward resolving communal issues ; Social Cohesion and Inclusion - mitigates the risk of conflict and promotes equitable access to benefits of development by enhancing participation of the marginalized; and Information and Communication - breaks down negative social capital and also enables positive social capital by improving access to information. These dimensions capture both the structural and cognitive forms of social capital. (World Bank, 2007)

In many studies that examine cultural characteristics of individuals in at-risk situations, aspects of culture are often seen as deficits or handicaps. In the unique context of migrant students, certain aspects of "migrant culture" have been seen as limiting access to academic success and acceptance by schools (Romanowski, 2003). Romanowski argued that specific aspects of migrant cultural capital places students in conflict with schools and teachers and at significant educational disadvantage because schools fail to recognize the reasons for conflict and student behavior that is interpreted as misbehavior. He offered several suggestions. Schools should adopt creative stances toward curriculum development and instructional practices that encourage acculturation (actually more like accommodation) in ways that meet students' needs and provide mechanisms for fuller participation. School personnel must develop an awareness of and practices that honor migrant values, ways of knowing and being, ways of communicating and problem solving. Acknowledgement and integration of migrant cultural capital by teachers is essential to provide inroads to the curriculum for migrant students so teachers are able to integrate classroom expectations with family and cultural expectations.

Others have identified characteristics of migrant youth (as well as immigrant youth) as aspects of cultural capital that are typically seen as deficits or handicaps. Trueba (2002) argued that "as demographics change, those individuals who can best function in a diverse society will have a large cultural capital and greater ability to function effectively" (p. 7). He points to the ability to speak two languages, to be able to cross racial and ethnic boundaries, and the resiliency developed by enduring hardship and other obstacles. These characteristics "will clearly be recognized as a new cultural capital that will be crucial for success in a modern diversified society" (Trueba, 2002, p. 7).

The Role of Cultural Capital

One promising area for community-based programs is the enhancement of social and cultural capital. Latino experiences and the unique cultural capital of Latino families and communities need to be viewed as strengths (Trueba & Bartolome, 1997). Effort should be made to acknowledge Latino individuals' language, culture, and experiential knowledge. Some have

argued that the underclass framework for studying immigrant Latino communities is not relevant, particularly in those studies that employ the social and cultural resources when working with Latinos in economically poor communities (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1993).

As an example, factors of social capital and cultural norms may mediate the impact of negative community economic factors on Latino teen birthrates (Denner, Kirby, Coyle, & Brindis, 2001). In this context, factors of social capital that appeared to protect youth included shared adult monitoring of youth and the neighborhood, connection to adults, the presence of information networks, the presence of locally run agencies, shared community norms about teen behavior, social networks (mostly informal, including extended family), social service and school-based staff that are educated and from the community, the presence of youth that know and look out for each other, and the presence of adults that view youth in a positive way. Cultural norms that were important in protecting youth included commitment to family, connections to country of origin, living in intergenerational families, maintenance of religious values, and respect for adults. The authors argued "interventions should focus on building social capital within diverse communities by building communication across youth-serving agencies and between youth-serving agencies and diverse community members, helping residents see that the success of their community rests in part on their investment in youth" (Denner et al., 2001, p. 17).

A landmark chapter in terms of framing issues relevant to the power of cultural capital in Latino communities (although he did not refer to it as cultural capital) was Vélez-Ibáñez' 1993 chapter, *U.S. Mexicans in the Borderlands: Being Poor without the Underclass*. In this chapter, he argued that the U.S. Government Accounting Office's use of the term "underclass" was unfortunate and inappropriate to describe Latino communities. Although many Latino communities can be described in terms of characteristics attributed to the underclass, including concentrations of urban poverty and unemployment, this does not necessarily lead to flight of middle-class families and businesses, dependency on government support, high rates of births to single women, political apathy, and nonfunctional schools, which would be characteristic of the "underclass." Vélez-Ibáñez was able to identify several aspects of cultural capital (without using this term) that undermined the applicability of the underclass notion to Latino communities, paying particular attention to the border areas between the USA and Mexico.

One important example of the forms of cultural capital that Vélez-Ibáñez found critical included "clustered households," which captures the developmental cycle of family clustering of homes with extended families locating nearby. This clustering of households provides families with the ability to exchange and rotate scarce resources and labor. Families can mobilize resources and job contacts to get through difficult financial times.

Confianza (trust) is created through this network that includes extended kinship relations of *compadrazgo, comadres y copadres, madrinas y padrinos* (godparents), sharing in recreational activities, and religious and cultural celebrations. Vélez-Ibáñez (1993) reported that over 20% of Latino household income comes from unreported sources including child care within household clusters, housecleaning, informal labor, and exchange of other goods and equipment when needed by one family or another. The result is that individuals may be viewed as poor, but not as a part of a cluster with substantial resources collectively.

Funds of Knowledge

More importantly, one aspect of cultural capital that is particularly significant in Latino families is that which Vélez-Ibáñez (1993) described as funds of knowledge. This is the body of information and skills passed on from generation to generation, creating the ability to move beyond the debilitating effects of poverty and maintain subsistence. "They are in fact the currency of exchange, not only between generations but also between households, and therefore form part of the cultural glue that maintains exchange relations between kin" (p. 211). Overall, Vélez-Ibáñez argued that labels like "underclass" are not able to "capture the remarkable social and cultural strengths of U.S. Mexican households even in distressing economic conditions" (p. 213).

An example of the use of an Asset Orientation in Research

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. (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004)

In terms of direct work on developing an asset orientation in research, the most work has been done in the area of youth development. Researchers at the Search Institute (see http://www.search-institute.org) have developed a framework of developmental assets, which began before 1990, based on research on child and adolescent development, resiliency, and prevention (see Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999).
The asset framework was used as a basis for the creation of an asset inventory: *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*. Using this framework and the inventory, researchers have found that youth with more developmental assets are more likely to engage in thriving behaviors and less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors. Early criticism about this research was about the lack of diversity in participants and limited generalizability of results. Search Institute researchers and others adopting the asset framework have since increased the diversity of their samples and found that the "power of developmental assets across racial/ethnic groups underscores that *all* young people benefit from the kinds of supports, opportunities, and personal characteristics that are captured in the asset framework" (Sesma & Roehlkepartain, 2003, p. 5).

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