

Positive Youth Development and Diversity

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Positive youth development (PYD) is a term that is utilized frequently in the youth services literature. At their best, positive youth development researchers and practitioners are trying to guide PYD in youth, help families build it, or construct services of doing a better job of creating opportunities for it to happen. The positive youth development literature can do much to help youth advocates formulate what we are aiming for when it comes to the implementation of strength-based and “developmentally appropriate” youth services that youth actually want to participate in. What is often lacking in much of the conversation is a more pluralistic and multi-faceted understanding of what “positive youth development” means in the diverse communities we serve. This conversation is vital to reducing persistent disparities – and requires a commitment to anti-oppressive elements as well. There is a need to delve more deeply in the multiple and overlapping identities that youth bring most settings and to understand the complexities of their circumstances, as well as to renew our own commitments as youth workers to keep learning about state of the art approaches to improve our practice as well as our partnerships with families and communities to reclaim young lives. For this reason, the following annotated bibliography is presented to inspire and stimulate further consideration of the breadth and possibility of a diverse and liberatory frame of reference for positive youth development in our work with young people.

Note: These references are either published directly from abstracts or compiled from text within the documents/resources themselves.

Positive Youth Development (General)

Brendtro, L.K., Brokenleg, M., Van Bockern, S. (2002). Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

This book integrates Native American child-rearing philosophies and Western psychology to provide unique perspectives on troubled youth. Part I examines the alienation of children in modern society. Part II presents a holistic Native American philosophy of child development that is built upon the idea that the education of children is the most important function of a society. Part III offers principles and strategies for creating reclaiming environments.

Dworkin, Jodi B; Larson, Reed; Hansen, David. (2003). Adolescents' accounts of growth experiences in youth activities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 32(1), 17-26.

Little theory and research exists on the developmental processes that occur during adolescents' participation in extracurricular and community based-activities. As a step in that direction, the authors conducted 10 focus groups with 55 adolescents (Aged 14-18 yrs) aimed at getting high school students' descriptions of their "growth experiences" in these activities. The youth reported both personal and interpersonal processes of development. The personal experiences included experimentation and identity work, development of initiative skills such as learning to set goals and manage time, and learning strategies for emotional regulation. The interpersonal experiences included acquiring new peer relationships and knowledge, developing group social skills such as taking responsibility and how to work together as a team, and developing valuable connections to adults. Across domains, adolescents described themselves as the agents of their own development and change. Youth activities appear to be a context in which adolescents are active producers of development.

Eccles, J.S., & Gootman, J.A. (Eds.) (2002). Community programs to promote youth development. Washington, D.C.: National Research Council, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Institute of Medicine.

Recognizing the importance of adolescence as a period of transition to adulthood, Community Programs to Promote Youth Development offers authoritative guidance to policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, and other key stakeholders on the role of youth development programs to promote the healthy development and well-being of the nation's youth.

Fergus, S. & Zimmerman, M.A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding health development in the face of risk. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 26, 399-419.

Adolescent resilience research differs from risk research by focusing on the assets and resources that enable some adolescents to overcome the negative effects of risk exposure. We discuss three models of resilience – the compensatory, protective and challenge models – and describe how resilience differs from related concepts. We describe issues and limitations related to resilience and provide an overview of recent related to adolescent substance use, violent behavior, and sexual risk behavior. We then discuss implications that resilience research has for intervention and describe some resilience-based interventions.

Hamilton, S.F. & Hamilton, M.A. (Eds.) (2004). The youth development handbook: Coming of age in American communities. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

What are the types of environments in which youth thrive? How do we cultivate such environments to promote optimal development and positive behavior in youth? This book provides youth and development practitioners access to current theory and research in the field of youth development, including illustrations of good practice, original case studies, and a contextual approach to such topics as youth participation and diversity.

Because youth practitioners typically identify themselves with one or more context such as youth-serving organizations or faith-based organizations, the editors have organized the book so that each chapter explores the application of youth development principles to its context, drawing on current research. Part I of the book is organized around contexts in which adolescents grown up, such as schools, workplaces, families, peer groups, youth-serving organizations, recreation groups, juvenile courts, health clinics, neighborhoods and cyberspace. Part II addresses broader issues such as evaluation, funding and community-wide initiatives, and the concluding chapter identifies themes that cut across contexts, including mentoring, universal vs. targeted approaches and evidence-based practice.

Hansen, D.M., Larson, R.W., Dworkin, J.B. (2003). What adolescents learn in organized youth activities: A survey of self-reported developmental experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 13(1), 25-55.

This research inventoried adolescents' reports on different developmental and negative experiences in organized youth activities, including extracurricular and community-based activities. High school students' experiences were assessed using a newly developed instrument, the Youth Experiences Survey (YES). These youth reported higher rates of learning experiences in youth activities than in 2 other major contexts of their lives. Youth activities were associated with experiences related to initiative, identity exploration and reflection, emotional learning, developing teamwork skills, and forming ties with community members. The findings also suggest that different youth activities offer distinct patterns of learning experiences. Service, faith-based, community, and vocational activities were reported to be frequent contexts for experiences related to identity, prosocial norms, and links to adults. Sports were a frequent context for those related to identity work and emotional development.

Holt, N. (2007). Positive youth development through sport. London: Routledge.

The purpose of this book is to provide a focus on the role of sport to critically examine the ways in which sport can be and has been used to promote youth development. Young people are too frequently looked upon as problems waiting to be solved. From the perspective of Positive Youth Development (PYD), young people are understood to embody potential, awaiting development.

Involvement with sport provides a developmental context that has been associated with PYD, but negative outcomes can also arise from sport participation and school PE. Sport itself does not lead to PYD; rather, it is the manner in which sport is structured and delivered to children that influences their development. *Positive Youth Development Through Sport* fills a void in the literature by bringing together experts from diverse disciplines to critically examine the ways in which sport can be and has been used to promote youth development.

Kahne, J. & Bailey, K. (1999). The role of social capital in youth development: The case of the “I have a dream” programs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 21(3), 321-343.

This paper presents findings from a 2 ½ year study that focused primarily on two “I Have a Dream” (IHAD) programs. To better comprehend the implications of bringing this youth development strategy model to scale, we also collected more limited interview, focus group, and student performance data from the 10 other IHAD sites in Chicago. Each IHAD sponsor “adopts” an entire sixth grade class and together with a project coordinator provides these students long-term financial, academic, and social support with the hope that they will graduate from high school and attend college. Because IHAD sponsors “adopted” all of the sixth graders at a given school, we compared their graduation rate with the graduate rates of students who were in the sixth grade at the school the previous year. We found that the two IHAD programs were enormously successful. Their graduate rates (71% and 69%) were roughly twice those of their respective comparison groups (37% and 34%). This study examines the programmatic features of IHAD that appear most responsible for its success and the implications for policy and practice. From a theoretical standpoint, our analysis of these cases focuses on the significance of differing forms of social capital (social trust, social networks, and social norms with effective sanctions) in enabling meaningful support of youth in inner-city contexts.

Kelley, T.M. (2003). Health realization: A principle-based psychology of positive youth development. *Child/Youth Care Forum*, 32(1), 47-65.

While we have numerous research-based programs for youth aimed at curbing drug use, violence, teen pregnancy, and delinquency, we lack a rigorous principle-based psychology of positive youth development. Instead of focusing on fixing what is assumed to be missing or broken in at-risk youth, we need a psychology grounded in fundamental causal principles that reveal clearly how such children and adolescents can become self-motivated, socially competent, compassionate and psychologically vigorous adults. While the emerging field of positive psychology has attempted to shift the field’s emphasis from understanding and treating youthful dysfunction to facilitating well-being and resiliency in young people, it lacks a principle-based foundation and continues to mistakenly endorse external causes of positive affect and prosocial behavior. This paper offers a

unique, principle-based psychology of positive youth development commonly known as health-realization (HR). The underlying principles of HR are delineated, contemporary research that supports its major assumptions cited, and the results of applied HR research with at-risk youth in clinical, educational, and community empowerment settings described.

King, P.E., Dowling, E.M., Muller, R.A., White, K., Schultz, W., Osborn, P., Dickerson, E., Bobek, D.L., Lerner, R.M., Benson, P. L., & Scales, P.C. (2005). Thriving in adolescence: The voices of youth-serving practitioners, parents and early and late adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(1), 94-112.

This study assesses if correspondence existed between concepts scholars use to discuss positive youth development (PYD) and terms used by practitioners, parents, and youth to discuss exemplary PYD, or thriving. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of 173 interviews about the meaning of thriving found no significant commonality between the terms used in the scholarly literature and the specific words or phrases used by the adult and youth participants. However, the terms generated by the adults and youth were able to be grouped into categories that reflect the general concepts used in the APYD literature (e.g., the five C's of competence, confidence, connection, character, caring and the sixth C contribution). Applications to public education youth programs are discussed.

Kirshner, B. (2007) Youth activism as a context for learning and development. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51 (3), 367-379.

Recent studies have documented the potential of youth activism for influencing political change toward socially just ends. This special issue builds on such research by focusing on youth activism as a context for learning and development. What kinds of learning opportunities are generated through working on social action campaigns? How do adults support youth's participation in ways that foster youth engagement and leadership? In addition to reviewing the articles in this issue, this introduction proposes and describes four distinctive qualities of learning environments in youth activism group collective problems solving, youth-0adult interaction, exploration of alternative frames for identity, and bridges to academic and civic institutions. It concludes by highlighting directions for future research.

Larson, R. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 170-183.

This article analyzes the development of initiative as an exemplar of one of many learning experiences that should be studied as part of positive youth development. The capacity for initiative is essential for adults in our society and will become more important in the 21st century, yet adolescents have few opportunities to learn it. Their typical experiences during schoolwork and unstructured leisure do not

reflect conditions for learning initiative. The context best suited to the development of initiative appears to be that of structured voluntary activities, such as sports, arts, and participation in organizations, in which youths experiences the rare combination of intrinsic motivation in combination on intrinsic motivation in combination with deep attention. An incomplete body of outcome research suggests that such activities are associated with positive development, but the developmental processes involved are only beginning to be understood. One promising approach has recorded language use and has found that adolescent participating in effective organizations acquire a new operating language that appears to correspond to the development of the initiative.

Masten, A.S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56 (3), 227-238.

The study of resilience in development has overturned many negative assumptions and deficit-focused models about children growing up under the threat of disadvantage and adversity. The most surprising conclusion emerging from studies of these children is the ordinariness of resilience. An examination of converging findings from variable-focused and person-focused investigations of these phenomena suggests that resilience is common and that it usually arises from the normative functions of human adaptational systems, with the greatest threats to human development being those that compromise these protective systems. The conclusion that resilience is made of ordinary rather than extraordinary processes offers a more positive outlook on human development and adaptation, as well as direction for policy and practice aimed at enhancing the development of children at risk for problems and psychopathology.

Roehlkepartain, E.C., King, P.E., Wagener, L. & Benson, P. (2006). The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This book articulates the state of knowledge in the area of childhood and adolescent spiritual development. Key features include:

- Interdisciplinary theory and research, as well as proposals for future areas of inquiry to help move spiritual development into a mainstream field of learning.
- Provides the first comprehensive collection of social science research on spiritual development in childhood and adolescence.
- Features the works of scholars from around the world and in multiple disciplines (psychology, sociology, anthropology, medicine, and educational philosophy) to present a diversity of traditions and approaches.

Sachs, S.B. (2002). *Voices of reason: Adolescents talk about their futures over time*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

In their own words, ten diverse adolescents talk about their school experiences, family issues, societal problems and their own attempt to deal with social inequities. The book is also a study of "future" talk, as jointly constructed attempts by students at making sense of their educational and vocational goals and their own sense of where the education and guidance systems have helped or failed them. Using tools of discourse analysis developed for this study, Dr. Sachs presents a systematic way of looking at the construction of "groundedness" in social contexts, particularly how and how effectively adolescents construct their arguments for the choices they make. The business of education touches many facets of society, and this study will be of interest to practitioners who wish to become qualitative researchers, for students in qualitative methods courses, and for middle and high school guidance sources including teachers and parents who want to better understand adolescents' concerns. And it is a book for adolescents themselves who, in reading what their peers are saying, can reflect on their own sense of where they are currently and in which direction they want to go.

Ungar, M. (2005). *Handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This book examines lives lived well despite adversity. Calling upon some of the most progressive thinkers in the field, it presents a groundbreaking collection of original writing on the theories, methods of study, and interventions that promote resilience. Unlike other works that have left largely unquestioned their own culture-bound interpretations of the way children and youth survive and thrive, this volume explores the multiple paths children follow to health and well-being in diverse national and international settings. It demonstrates the connection between social and political health resources and addresses the more immediate concerns of how those who care for children create the physical, emotional and spiritual environments in which resilience is nurtured.

Ungar, M. (2005). *Pathways to resilience among children in child welfare, corrections, mental health, and educational settings: Navigation and negotiation*. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 34(6), 423-444.

In this paper I explore how social service delivery systems influence the pathways children travel to resilience. In particular, I look at children's navigation to the health resources that are available through service delivery systems and their negotiation with service providers for service once under a provider's mandate. Two case examples are used to illustrate health-enhancing and health-challenging patterns of service provision and utilization among high-risk youth. I then address two questions that are critical to understanding children's pathways to resilience: "What services do children say they need to achieve resilience?"

and “How does the structure of services affect children’s access to the health resources required to nurture and sustain resilience?”

Ungar, M., Brown, M., Liebenberg, L., Othman, R., Kwong, W.M., Armstrong, M., and Gilgun, J. (2007). Unique pathways to resilience across cultures. *Adolescence*, 46(166), 287-310.

An international mixed methods study of resilience of 14 sites in eleven countries identified seven tensions that youth resolve in culturally specific ways. Resolution of these tensions is foundational to the experience of resilience. This paper reports on the qualitative findings from interviews with 89 youth. Results support a culturally embedded understanding of positive youth development that better accounts for young people’s resilience in western and non-western countries. Specifically, the seven tensions identified include: access to material resources, relationships, identity, cohesion, power and control, social justice, and cultural adherence. Findings show that no one pattern in the resolution of these tensions predicts resilience better than another. A case study of a Palestinian boy demonstrates the intersection of the seven tensions and the uniqueness of their resolution. The implications of this work for interventions is discussed.

Ungar, M. (2004). A constructionist discourse on resilience: Multiple contexts, multiple realities among at-risk children. *Youth and Society*, (35)3, 341-365.

An ecological approach to the study of resilience informed by Systems Theory and emphasizing predictable relationships between risk and protective factors, circular causality, and transactional processes, is inadequate to account for the diversity of people’s experience of resilience. In contrast, a constructionist interpretation of resilience promotes a postmodern understanding of the construct that better accounts for cultural and contextual differences in how resilience is expressed by individuals, families and communities. Research supporting this approach has demonstrated a nonsystemic, nonhierarchical relationship between risk and protective factors that is characteristically chaotic, complex, relative, and contextual. This article critically reviews research findings that support an ecological perspective and explore the emerging literature that informs a constructionist approach to the study of resilience. It will show that an alternative constructionist discourse on resilience greatly enhances our understanding of resilience-related phenomena and our approach to interventions with at-risk populations.

Wagner, W. G. (1996). Optimal development in adolescence: What is it and how can it be encouraged? *The Counseling Psychologist*, (24)3, 360-399.

Psychologists have traditionally focused on the problems experienced by what constitutes a minority of adolescents. In this article, attention has been directed to the optimal development of adolescents’ potential across six domains: biological, cognitive, emotional, social, moral and vocational. Criteria are proposed and

consideration is given to the role that counseling psychologists can play in enhancing the development of individuals in the 12- to 18-year-old age group.

African American Positive Youth Development and Identity

Clay, A. (2003). Keepin' it real: Black youth, hip-hop culture, and Black identity. *American Behavioral Scientist, 46*, 1346-1358.

The relationship between Black youth and hip-hop culture is the focus of this article. The author considers how African American youth use hip-hop as a form of cultural capital in everyday settings. By focusing on how Black youth interact with one another at the City Youth Center, the article examines how this particular form of cultural capital may be used to authenticate Black identity. Finally, how the articulation of this identity is based on traditional gender roles is explored. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital is heavily relied on to investigate how Black youth construct legitimate racial boundaries in predominately Black settings. The intention is to provide an extension of Bourdieu's theory by examining how Black youth identity is formed and renegotiated in everyday interactions with other Black youth and how this negotiation is mediated through hip-hop culture.

Eccles, J.S., Wong, C.A., & Peck, S.C. (2006). Ethnicity as a social context for the development of African American adolescents. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*, 407-426.

Does anticipated future racial discrimination undermine African-American adolescents academic motivation and performance? Do face-to-face experiences with racial discrimination at school undermine African-American adolescents' academic functioning? Does African-American ethnic identity buffer these relations? This paper addresses these questions using two waves of data from a longitudinal study of an economically diverse sample of African-American adolescents living near Washington, D.C. the data were collected at the beginning of the 7th grade and after the completion of the 8th grade. As expected, the experiences of day-to-day racial discrimination at school from one's teachers and peers predicted declines in grades, academic ability self-concepts, and academic task values. A strong, positive connection to one's ethnic group (our measure of ethnic identity) reduced the magnitude of the association of racial discrimination experiences with declines in both academic self concepts and school achievement. Most youth responded to anticipated future discrimination with increased academic motivation.

Ginright, S.A. (2007). Black youth activism and the role of social capital in Black community organizations. *American Behavioral Scientist*, (51)3, 403-418.

This article argues for a nuanced understanding of how Black youth respond, resist, and work to transform school and community conditions. It posits that community-based organizations in Black communities provide Black youth with critical social capital, which consists of intergenerational ties that cultivate expectations and opportunities for Black youth to engage in community change activities. Data for this study were collected from 3 years (October 2000-December 2003) of participant observation and interviews of 15 Black youth who were members of Leadership Excellence, a small community-based organization in Oakland, California. This study demonstrates how critical social capital is facilitated by changing negative concepts about Black youth in public policy, cultivated by strengthening racial and cultural identity among Black youth, and sustained through ties with adult community members who help youth frame personal struggles as political issues.

Haight, W. (1998). 'Gathering the spirit' at First Baptist Church: Spirituality as protective factor in the lives of African American children. *Social Work*, (43)3, 213-221.

Knowledge of human behavior in a cultural context is the source from which all ethnic-sensitive social work practice emerges. Although research on resilience has burgeoned over the past several decades, relatively little is known about socialization contexts and practices that support the development of African American children. This article summarizes an ethnographic study describing the beliefs of African American adults about children's socialization and related socialization practices within the context of Sunday school, and how this knowledge was used to generate an ethnic-sensitive social work intervention designed to support the development of resilience in African American children.

Nicolas, G., Helms, J.E., Jernigan, M.M., Sass, T., Skrzypek, A., DeSilva, A.M. (2008). A conceptual framework for understanding the strengths of Black youths. *Journal of Black Psychology*, (34)3, 261-280.

The strengths of Black youths lie in their abilities to resist the barriers that they encounter in the various environments in which they exist. Yet the media and social science literature have defined the youths in terms of the pathology of their environments rather than focusing on the assets that Black youths use in such environments. Thus, terms such as inner city, urban, and at-risk are used as proxies for the youths' personality attributes and themes, such as violence, substance abuse, school underachievement, and family instability are used to define their life experiences. In doing so, the literature suggests that the negative behaviors that it ascribes to Black youths are normative in actuality. In this article, a new framework for understanding the assets of Black youths is provided. The framework highlights the role of racial socialization in the youth's development of strengths that allow them to cope effectively with the barriers.

Teasley, M.T., Tyson, E., House, L. (2007). Understanding leadership development in African American youth. *Journal of Behavior in the Social Environment, (15)2/3, 79-98.*

This exploratory study assesses factors related to leadership development for African American adolescents participating in a community service program designed to develop young African American leaders (N=345). Psychometric characteristics of self-reported levels of leadership are explored to determine similarities and differences between gender groups. A multivariate analysis of socioeconomic factors, levels of self-esteem, school grades, and social activities as predictors of leadership development produced mixed findings. The results suggest that higher levels of global and academic self-esteem are related to leadership characteristics of female respondents, but not male. On the other hand, the impact of program participation on leadership was only significant in the area of personal relationship skills as a form of leadership for males. Findings from this investigation point out the need for research on leadership development dynamics among African American children and adolescents.

Wagner, W.G. (1996). Optimal development in adolescence: What is it and how can it be encouraged? *The Counseling Psychologist, 24(3), 360-399.*

Psychologists have traditionally focused on the problems experienced by what constitutes a minority of adolescents. In this article, attention has been directed to the optimal development of adolescents' potential across six domains: biological, cognitive, emotional, social, moral and vocational. Criteria are proposed and consideration is given to the role that counseling psychologists can play in enhancing the development of individuals in the 12- to 18-year-old age group.

Latino Positive Youth Development and Identity

Borden, L.M., Perkins, D.F., Villarruel F.A., Carleton-Hug, A., Stone, M.R., Keith, J.G. (2006). Challenges and opportunities to Latino youth development: Increasing meaningful participation in youth development programs. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, (28) 2, 187-208.*

This study examines the cultural and contextual factors that influence Latino participation in youth programs. Although youth programs are increasingly recognized for their positive influences, little is known about the factors that influence a young person's decision to participate. In this study, 67 Latino youth were asked about the reasons youth choose to and choose not to participate. Utilizing the Concept Systems method, youth participated in three phases of data collection – brainstorming, sorting and ranking – to provide an indepth understanding of reasons for and barriers to participation. Overall, youth ranked personal development and confidence as their top reasons for participation.

Participants also ranked factors for participation higher than barriers to participation. Gender and intergenerational differences are discussed in more detail.

Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2001). *Esperanza! Awakening to the strengths of Latino youth*. Author: Washington, D.C.

This is a report from a 2001 meeting to discuss needs, strengths and issues of Latino youth in the U.S. With the guidance and experience of Latino youth, service providers, advocates, elders, and civil rights leaders at the conference, CJJ has found promising approaches and practices to support Latino youth as they mature. CJJ has also learned a few principles that can shape how society addresses the issues surrounding Latino youth and their families:

- Latino children must be recognized as a population comprising distinctive ethnic groups with various cultures, needs and strengths.
- Interaction with the education system for Latino youth and their parents/families must be a source of confidence that keeps youth engaged in learning and not a frustration that pushes them to the streets.
- Comprehensive health care, encompassing mental health care, must be recognized as being critical to developing children's well-being, as well as a base for building self-esteem and emotional balance.
- Inequitable treatment of Latino youth, intentional or otherwise, must not be tolerated in the juvenile court system.

Rodriguez, M.C. & Morrobel, D. (2004). A review of Latino youth development research and a call for an asset orientation. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 26(2), 107-127.

A focus on youth development is the strongest means of prevention of problems faced by Latino youths. Latino youths are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population and have rates of developmental deficits. However, youth development researchers have not attended to the inclusion and reporting of results for Latino youths. This study presents a challenge to youth development researchers, service provider, and policy makers to adopt a youth development orientation to their work. A comprehensive review of six youth development journals and two Latino-focused journals allowed for the evaluation of Latino youths. Of 1,010 empirical articles, 20% included Latino youths, 6% reported results for Latino youths, and less than 3% focused on Latino youths. The researchers reporting results for Latino youths were largely unguided by specific theoretical frameworks and heavily deficit oriented. A framework to increase attention to Latino youths in developmental research is suggested.

Villalba, J.A. (2007). Culture-specific assets to consider when counseling Latino/a children and adolescents. *Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 35, 15-25.

Strength-based cultural considerations for counseling Latino/a children and adolescents are not well articulated in the literature. Furthermore, the research and demographic data indicate concerns for Latinas/os, such as acculturative stress and discrimination. This article describes treatment applications focused on Latina/o youth's cultural strengths, including family bonds, bilingual abilities, and bicultural skills.

Native American Positive Youth Development and Identity

Long, C., Downs, A.C., Gillette, B., Kills in Sight, L., Iron-Cloud Konen, E. (2006). Assessing cultural life skills of Native American youth. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 35, 289-304.

While the global United States society emphasizes independence and emancipation from parents and families as appropriate transition tasks for adolescents in foster care, American Indian communities tend to stress interdependence and continuing youth, family, and community connections. The purpose of this naturalistic collective case study is to describe cultural life skills needed by American Indian youth to leave foster care and successfully transition into adulthood. Three Northern Plains Native reservations and two urban Indian communities participated. The research team partnered with the American Indian gatekeepers, elders, youth, and professional staff in efforts to embrace qualitative methods, considered the best way to legitimate and liberate Native ways of knowing. Findings take into account the subtleties of vast diversities among America's First Nations' people and support the importance of positive cultural influences in youth identity development.

Project Trust Partnership (2008). Project trust: Report and recommendations for enhancing the well-being of Native American youth, families and communities.

This report represents the efforts of a working group of activists and social scientists to assemble a variety of information to promote the well-being of Native American youth, their families and their communities through the development of policy, practice, and research recommendations that emphasize the importance of cultural teaching and healing practices. The name Project Trust is intended to focus attention on the following dynamics which are essential to the promotion of healing and creation of trust:

- Truths about historical trauma and current inequities that impact the mental health and well-being of Native American youth and their families
- Responsiveness to issues and needs identified by Native youth and their families from their perspectives

- Understanding of the effectiveness of traditional indigenous healing practices and cultural teachings
- Transformation of individuals, families, communities, systems of care, and social structures

Bi-Racial Positive Youth Development

Kerwin, C., Ponterotto, J.G., Jackson, B.L., & Harris, A. (1993). Racial identity in biracial children: A qualitative investigation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 40(2), 221-231.

This article describes a qualitative study of issues salient in the development of racial identity for schoolchildren of Black/White racial heritage. Semistructured interviews were conducted individual with 9 Black/White biracial children and their parents (a total of 6 families). Major findings from this study tend to run counter to problems conjectured in the counseling and related literature. For example, in contrast to deficit models, participant children and adolescents did not appear to perceive themselves as “marginal” in 2 cultures. The majority of participant children, adolescents and adults demonstrated sensitivity to the views, cultures and values of both the Black and White communities. Developmental transitions associated with different ages were identified. Emergent themes yielded hypotheses with implications for future research.

Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Gay, Transgender, & Queer Positive Youth Development

Brown, M., Colbourne, M. (2005). Bent but not broken: Exploring queer youth resistance. In M. Ungar (Ed.) Working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This chapter explores homophobia and heterosexism as it applies to the developing adolescent, and the impact such forces can have. It describes processes, structures and elements of resistance and resilience that can provide a safe harbor for young people including appropriate support, education and social opportunities. It includes attention to supporting youth to find their true identities, support and guide their families through the process, and characteristics of the gay and ally communities that may be important as well.

Mallon, G.P., DeCrescenzo, T. (2006). Transgender children and youth: A child welfare perspective. *Child Welfare*, 86(2), 215-241.

Using an ecological framework, the existing literature and research, and the authors' combined 60 years of clinical practice with children, youth, and families,

this article examines gender variant childhood development from a holistic viewpoint where children, youth, and environments are understood as a unit in the context of their relationship to one another. The focus is limited to a discussion about the recognition of gender identity; an examination of the adaptation process through which gender variant children and youth go through to deal with the stress of an environment where there is not a "goodness of fit"; and a discussion of the overall developmental tasks of a transgender childhood and adolescence. Recommendations for social work practice with gender variant young people are presented in the conclusion of the paper.

Ragg, D.M., Patrick, D., Ziefert, M. (2006). Slamming the closet door: Working with Gay and Lesbian youth in care. *Child Welfare*, 86(2), 243-265.

The developmental challenges of gay and lesbian youth are well understood by professionals in the field. Increasingly, professionals are extending this understanding to the plight of gay and lesbian youth living in out-of-home care. Such youth face additional challenges and a lack of support that greatly complicates the development of a positive identity. Inherent in these additional challenges is the responsiveness of professionals mandated to work with youth. This study explores critical worker competencies for supporting gay and lesbian foster youth. Twenty-one youth were interviewed and asked to describe workers who were facilitative and workers who inhibited positive development. The interview transcripts were assessed to identify critical competencies. This article shares critical youth themes and underlying practice competencies.

Gender: Girls

Denner, J. & Guzman, B.L. (2006). Latina girls: Voice of strength in the United States. New York: New York University Press.

Latinas are now the largest minority group of girls in the country. Yet the research about this group is sparse, and there is a lack of information to guide studies, services or education for the rapidly growing Latino population across the U.S. The existing research has focused on stereotypical perceptions of Latinas as frequently dropping out of school, becoming teen mothers, or being involved with boyfriends in gangs.

Latina Girls brings together cutting edge research that challenges these stereotypes. At the same time, the volume offers solid data and suggestions for practical intervention for those who study and work to support this population. It highlights the challenges these young women face, as well as the ways in which they successfully negotiate those challenges. The volume includes research on Latinas and their relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners; academics; career goals; identity; lifelong satisfaction; and the ways in which they navigate across cultures and gender roles.

Latina Girls is the first book to pull together research on the overall strengths and strategies that characterize Latina adolescents' lives in the U.S. It will be of key interest and practical use to those who study and work with Latina youth.

Hoyt, M.A. & Kennedy, C.L. (2008). Leadership and adolescent girls: A qualitative study of leadership development. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 42*, 203-219.

This research investigated youth leadership experiences of adolescent girls who participated in a comprehensive feminist-based leadership program. This qualitative study utilized a grounded theory approach to understand changes that occurred in 10 female adolescent participants. The words of the participants revealed that they initially viewed leadership in traditional terms and were hesitant to identify themselves as leaders or to see themselves included within their concepts of leadership. Following the program their view of leadership expanded and diversified in a manner that allowed for inclusion of themselves within it. They spoke with greater strength and confidence and felt better positioned and inspired to act as leaders. Participants identified having examples of women leaders, adopting multiple concepts of leadership, and participating in an environment of mutual respect and trust as factors that contributed to their expanded conceptualization.

Iglesias, E., Cornier, S. (2002). The transformation of girls to women: Finding voice and developing strategies for liberation. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 30*(4), 259-271.

The theme of silence is one of the most pervasive themes in the study of girls and women across cultures. This article examines the emotional, physical, educational, and behavioral losses that occur for adolescent girls. Results of landmark research studies and the implications for practitioners also are discussed.

Lipford Sanders, J. & Bradley, C. (2005). Multiple-lens paradigm: Evaluating African American girls and their development. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 83*, 299-298.

Developmental issues for African American adolescent girls are best understood using a multiple-lens paradigm inclusive of gender, race, ethnicity and social class. This article provides a context for assessing the relevance of these socially influenced constructs to identify development for adolescent African American girls. The relationship between the “myth of femininity” and personal worth and value is examined using this paradigm.

Ross-Leadbetter, B.J. & Way, N. (Eds.) (2007). *Urban girls revisited: Building strengths*. New York: New York University Press.

Published in 1996, *Urban Girls* was one of the first volumes to showcase the lives of girls growing up in contexts of urban poverty and sometimes racism and violence. It spoke directly to young women who, often for the first time, were seeing their own stories and those of their friends explained in the materials they were asked to read. The volume has helped to shape the way in which we study girls and understand their development over the past decade.

Urban Girls Revisited explores the diversity of urban adolescent girls' development and the sources of support and resilience that help them to build the foundations of strength that they need as they enter adulthood. Urban girls are frequently marginalized by poverty, ethnic discrimination, and stereotypes suggesting that they have deficits compared to their peers. In fact, urban girls do often "grow up fast," taking on multiple adult roles and responsibilities in contexts of high levels of adversities. Yet a majority of these girls show remarkable strengths in the face of challenges, and their families and communities provide many assets to support their development. This new volume showcases these strengths.

Gender: Boys

Way, N., Chu, J.Y., & Kimmel, M. (2004). *Adolescent boys: Exploring diverse cultures of boyhood*. New York: NYC Press.

A flurry of best-selling works has recently urged us to rescue and protect boys. They have described how boys are failing at school, acting out, or shutting down emotionally. Lost in much of the ensuing public conversation are the boys themselves—the texture of their lives and the ways in which they resist stereotypical representations of them.

Most of this work on boys is based primarily on middle class, white boys. Yet boys from poor and working class families as well as those from African American, Latino, and Asian American backgrounds need to be understood in their own terms and not just as a contrast to white or middle class boys. *Adolescent Boys* brings together the most up-to-date empirical research focused on understanding the development of boys from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The authors show how the contexts of boys' lives, such as the schools they attend shape their identities and relationships. The research in this book will help professionals and parents understand the diversity and richness of boys' experiences.

Other

Bender, K., Thompson, S.J., McManus, H., Lantry, J., & Flynn, P.M. (2007). *Capacity for survival: Exploring strengths in homeless street youth. Child Youth Care Forum, 36, 25-42.*

The majority of research on homeless youth has focused on the multitude of problems faced by this vulnerable population. The current study, while acknowledging the hazards of life on the streets, seeks to explore the personal strengths and informational resources street youth rely on to navigate their environments. Qualitative data from seven focus groups were analyzed using content analysis. These data, rich with interactions among youth participants, highlight three important themes: developing “street smarts,” existence of personal strengths, and informal resources relied upon by youth to survive. Results provide valuable insights into the strengths of homeless youth that can be useful to providers in assessing street youths’ service needs and increasing the likelihood of long-term positive outcomes.

Brown, R.T. (2000). *Adolescent sexuality at the dawn of the 21st century. Adolescent Medicine, 11(1), 19-34.*

Human sexuality can be defined as including the physical characteristics of and capacities for specific sex behaviors, together with psychosocial values, norms, attitudes, and learning processes that influence these behaviors. It also includes a sense of gender identity and related concepts, behaviors, and attitudes about the self and others as women or men in the context of one's society. At the dawn of the new century, adolescent sexuality remains a topic of concern to adults throughout the world. This concern is not unique to this new age. In each era of recorded history, adults have been concerned about adolescent sexual behavior, particularly sexual intercourse and its consequences. Things have not changed all that much in the realm of adolescent sexual behavior. What has changed is our ability to prevent the serious consequences of this behavior and, hopefully, to help adolescents avoid behaviors that put them at risk for the negative consequences of expressing their burgeoning sexuality. This article reviews the major influences on adolescents developing' sexuality, the data on adolescent sexual activity, some tips on caring for adolescents comprehensively, and ends with some predictions of how this issue will be addressed in the new century.

Deutch, N. (2008). *Pride in the Projects: Teens building identities in urban contexts.* New York: New York University Press.

Teens in America’s inner cities grow up and construct identities amidst a landscape of relationships and violence, support and discrimination, games and gangs. In such contexts, local environments such as after-school programs may help youth to mediate between social stereotypes and daily experience, or provide space for them to consider themselves as contributing members of a community.

Based on four years of field work with both the adolescent members and staff of an inner-city youth organization in a large Midwestern city, **Pride in the Projects** examines the construction of identity as it occurs within this local context, emphasizing the relationships within which identities are formed. Drawing on research in psychology, sociology, education, and race and gender studies, the volume highlights the inadequacies in current identity development theories, expanding our understanding of the lives of urban teens and the ways in which interpersonal connections serve as powerful contexts for self-construction. The adolescents' stories illuminate how they find ways to discover who they are, and who they would like to be — in positive and healthy ways — in the face of very real obstacles. The book closes with implications for practice, alerting scholars, educators, practitioners, and concerned citizens of the positive developmental possibilities inherent in youth settings when we pay attention to the voices of youth.

Durlak, J.A., Taylor, R.D., Kawashima, K., Pachan, M.K., DuPre, E.P., Celio, C.I., Berger, S.R., Dymnicki, A.B., Weissberg, R.P. (2007). Effects of positive youth development programs on school, family and community systems. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 39, 269-286.

A review of efforts at social system change in 526 universal competence-promotion outcome studies indicated that 64% of the interventions attempted some type of microsystemic or mesosystemic change involving schools, families, or community-based organizations in an attempt to foster developmental competencies in children and adolescents. Only 24% of the reports provided quantitative data on the change that occurred in targeted systems. However, studies containing the necessary information produced several mean effect sizes that were statistically significant, and ranged from modest to large in magnitude. These data indicate that attempts to change social systems affecting children and adolescents can be successful. Future work should measure more thoroughly the extent to which the systemic changes that are targeted through intervention are achieved, and investigate how such changes contribute to the development and sustainability of the outcomes that might be demonstrated by participants of competence promotion programs.

Gordon, R.D. (2007). Allies within and without: How adolescent activists conceptualize ageism and navigate adult power in youth social movements. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 36(2), 631-668.

Most research on youth subordination and youth inequality focuses on macro-level institutions, ideologies and discourses. While important, this macro-level focus mystifies the ways in which young people themselves conceptualize and negotiate ageism. This article examines how adolescents collectively experience, politicize, and respond to ageism as they become active in educational justice and antiwar movements. Based on comparative ethnographic research with youth

movement organizations in Portland, Oregon and Oakland, California, the author argues that adolescents' politicized understandings of ageism profoundly shape their social movement strategies. Furthermore, these understandings of ageism are rooted in youth people's race and class social locations, and stand in relationship to social movement legacies. The divergent ways in which white, middle-class youth activists and young working-class activists of color collectively experience, interpret, and respond to ageism reveal the extent to which age inequality operates in conjunction with other systems of power and privilege.

Smith, C. (2003). Theorizing religious effects among American adolescents. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(1), 17-30.

A large body of empirical studies shows that religion often serves as a factor for promoting positive, healthy outcomes in the lives of American adolescents. Yet existing theoretical explanations for those effects remain largely disjointed and fragmented. This article attempts to formulate a more systematic, integrated and coherent account of religion's constructive influence in the lives of American youth, suggesting nine key factors (moral directives, spiritual experiences, role models, community and leadership skills, coping skills, cultural capital, social capital, network closure and extra-community links) that cluster around three key dimensions of influence (moral order, learned competencies, and social and organizational ties).

Williams, N.R. (2004). Spirituality and religion in the lives of homeless and runaway youth: Coping with adversity. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*, 23(4), 47-65.

This qualitative study, part of a larger study of resiliency, explores the impact of spirituality on runaway and/or homeless youth. Interviews with 19 former runaway and homeless youth were analyzed to explore their experience of spirituality as they coped with the adversity in their lives. Five themes related to relationship with a nonjudgmental higher power, use of prayer, participation in traditional and nontraditional religious practices, and finding meaning purpose in life including a desire to "give back" to their community. Implications for social work practice and research are addressed.

Yohani, S.C. (2008). Creating an ecology of hope: Arts-based interventions with refugee children. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 25, 309-323.

This paper illustrates how human ecological theory and hope theory were used to develop arts-based research tools and program interventions with refugee children in a Canadian inner city context. Building on key ideas such as: the contextualized, reciprocal, and dynamic nature of hope, the paper identifies a series of program activities. These include the use of photographs, a hope quilt, the development of narratives, followed by opportunities for children to share

their hope work with others and for parents and other adults to undertake child-focused and hope-based discussions. Policy and program implications for refugee children are then discussed.

Strength-Based Practice

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Strength-Based Bill of Rights for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System

1. I have the right to be viewed as a person capable of changing, growing and becoming positively connected to my community no matter what types of delinquent behavior I have committed.
2. I have a right to participation in the selection of services that build on my strengths.
3. I have a right to contribute things I am good at and other strengths in all assessment and diagnostic processes.
4. I have a right to have my resistance viewed as a message that the wrong approach may be being used with me.
5. I have the right to learn from my mistakes and to have support to learn that mistakes don't mean failure. I have the right to view past maladaptive or antisocial behaviors as a lack of skills that I can acquire to change my life for the better.
6. I have the right to experience success and to have support connecting previous successes to future goals.
7. I have the right to have my culture included as a strength and services which honor and respect my cultural beliefs.
8. I have the right to have my gender issues recognized as a source of strength in my identity.
9. I have the right to be assured that all written and oral, formal and informal communications about me include my strengths as well as needs.
10. I have a right to surpass any treatment goals which have been set too low for me, or to have treatment goals which are different than those generally applied to all youth in the juvenile justice system.
11. I have a right to be served by professionals who view youth positively, and understand that motivating me is related to successfully accessing my strengths.
12. I have a right to have my family involved in my experience in the juvenile justice system in a way that acknowledges and supports our strengths as well as needs. I have a right to stay connected to my family no matter what types of challenges we face.
13. I have the right to be viewed and treated as more than a statistic, stereotype, risk score, diagnosis, label or pathology unit.
14. I have a right to a future free of institutional or systems involvement and to services which most centrally and positively focus on my successful transition from institutions.

15. I have the right to service providers who coordinate their efforts and who share a united philosophy that the key to my success is through my strengths.

16. I have the right to exercise my developmental tasks as an adolescent; to try out new identities; to learn to be accountable and say I'm sorry for the harm I've caused others - all of which is made even more difficult if I'm labeled a "bad kid."

17. I have the right to be viewed and treated as a redeemable resource and a potential leader and success of the future.

Developed by Laura Burney Nissen, Ph.D., MSW, CAC III, 1998