Chapter 1
Applying Research About Adolescence in Real-World Settings: The Sample Case of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development

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This book describes the nature of positive youth development (PYD) and the evidence from developmental research about how to promote thriving among the diverse youth of the United States. This evidence comes from research associated with the 4-H Study of PYD and, as well, from other relevant research pertinent to promoting positive development among adolescents.

In this chapter we discuss the PYD perspective and the specific approach to understanding PYD used within the 4-H Study. We then explain how findings from both the 4-H Study and other research can support practitioners and policy makers as they propose ideas and take actions to promote youth thriving, or PYD. In this way, we hope that colleagues in youth development programs and policy professions may provide ways for communities across America to enhance youth thriving. To explain how research from the 4-H Study may be used, we provide brief summaries of each of the chapters in this book. Finally, we summarize how the other chapters in this book provide a means to advance evidence-based practice and policy innovations for youth development programs.

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The Positive Youth Development Perspective

Only about a dozen years ago at this writing, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a, 2003b) reviewed the literature on youth development programs aimed at enhancing health and thriving among adolescents. They concluded that young people should be regarded not as problems to be managed but, instead, as resources to be developed. Their insight built on at least three sources. First, Larson (2000) provided a compelling vision for research aimed at understanding and promoting PYD. Second, Eccles and Gootman (2002) edited a field-defining report issued by the National Academy of Sciences about the ways in which community programs for youth development could promote several attributes of psychological and behavioral functioning believed to be indicative of such development. The report included a summary of the attributes of positive development and suggested that they could be represented by five constructs, or by "Five Cs": competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring. Third, Hamilton (1999) explained that the idea of PYD was being used in the developmental science literature in three ways: (1) as a label for a model of the processes through which health and thriving developed in adolescence; (2) as a philosophy for, or an approach to, designing community-based programs aimed at promoting thriving; and (3) as instances of such programs.

The links between the positive development of youth and their engagement with contextual resources, or ecological "developmental assets" (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006), represented by community-based youth development programs, reflected the spirit of the times, the *zeitgeist* of developmental science during the latter years of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first (Lerner, 2012; Lerner, Lerner, Bowers, & Geldhof, 2015). In earlier periods, conceptions of human development stressed genetic or maturational determinants of development *or* approaches to development that reduced human behavior to stimulus-response relations. Today, these ideas are being replaced by concepts that emphasize that development involves mutually influential relations among a person's biological and psychological characteristics, as well as their social relationships. The latter influences are associated with families, schools, community institutions, out-of-school time (OST) programs, and both the designed and natural environments. These influences are always present across life and are believed to change in their significance across both life and historical periods (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Lerner, 2012; Overton, 2015).

When the individual and his or her context are the focus of research, these mutually influential relations are represented as individual ↔ context relations (Lerner, 2006). The relations involved in these exchanges are termed "developmental regulations" (Brandtstädter, 1998). When developmental regulations are beneficial to both the individual and the context, they are regarded as *adaptive* developmental regulations (Brandtstädter, 1998).

The scholars interested in the development of PYD (e.g., Benson et al., 2006; Damon, 2004, 2008; Eccles, 2004; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2009; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2015; Masten, 2001; Spencer, 2006) framed their approaches within

this set of ideas. PYD was regarded as an instance of an adaptive developmental regulation that involved mutually beneficial relations between youth and their families, schools, and communities. PYD was thought to arise when there was a match, or fit, between, on the one hand, attributes of youth such as strengths such as self-governance, self-control (or what we term intentional self-regulation; Bowers, Geldhof, Johnson, Lerner, & Lerner, 2014; Lerner et al., 2015), hopeful future expectations, and school engagement and, on the other hand, support from the social world such as warmth and monitoring by an engaged mother or father or sustained relations with a caring and competent mentor or youth program leader. This strength-based approach to youth development in general, and to the understanding of thriving in particular, was a framework for the design of PYD programs and was involved in activities of such programs (e.g., Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002; Flay & Allred, 2003; Kurtines et al., 2008).

The 4-H Study of PYD

In the context of the above-described scholarly work, the 4-H Study of PYD was designed and launched in 2002 (Lerner et al., 2005). The study aimed to collect repeated (longitudinal) information about youth and the key settings in their lives. The goal was to understand the possible links between the strengths of youth and ecological assets. The study assessed these links by measuring the Five Cs of PYD noted above among participants. The study also sought to learn about the possible impact of the development of the Five Cs on youth actions that benefited their families, schools, and communities. Specifically, youth *contributions* to these settings were measured. In addition, the associations between PYD, youth contributions, and risk/problem behaviors were also measured, with the aim of learning if the promotion of thriving was connected to lowering risks and problem behaviors among adolescents (Schwartz, Pantin, Coatsworth, & Szapocznik, 2007). An illustration of the relations assessed in the 4-H Study is presented in Fig. 1.1.

With the support of the National 4-H Council and the Altria Corporation, the 4-H Study involved eight waves of data collection. Most of the youth who participated in the study, however, were *not* involved in 4-H clubs or programs. The study sought to examine the strengths of diverse youth within the several different settings in which they are embedded. Many, but not all, youth were engaged in a variety of OST activities, but, again, the great majority of youth were not engaged in 4-H programs. The findings from the study have been reported in several special issues of journals (Bowers et al., 2014; Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011; Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, & Lewin-Bizan, 2009; Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, & Bowers, 2010), in special sections of journals (Geldhof, Bowers, & Lerner, 2013), and in numerous single articles, chapters, and books (see Lerner et al., 2015, for a review). In this book, we seek to use the 8 years of data from the 4-H Study, along with research by
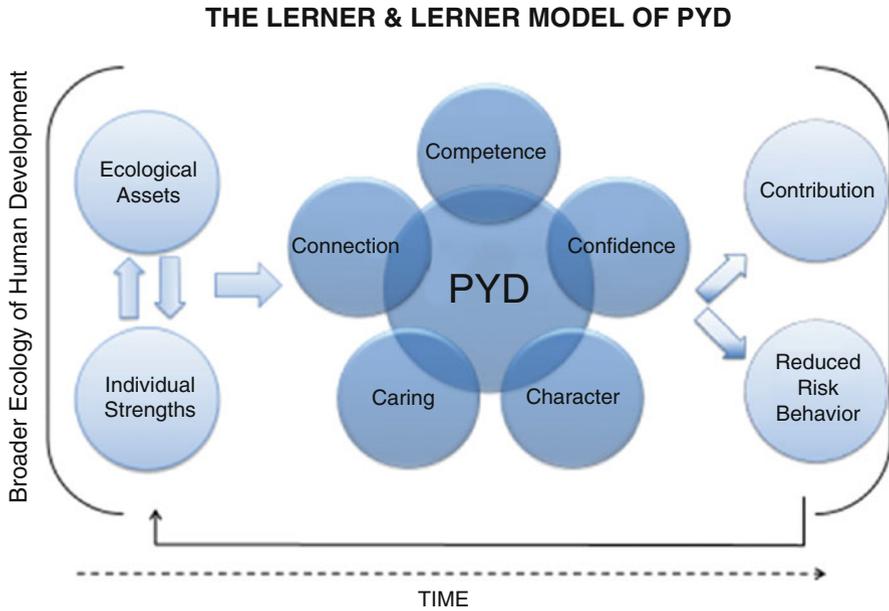
THE LERNER & LERNER MODEL OF PYD

Fig. 1.1 The relational, developmental systems model of PYD used by Lerner, Lerner, and colleagues

other scholars of youth development from across the nation, to both summarize what is known about PYD in regard to several key areas of adolescent behavior and development and, as well, to discuss implications of this information for applications to programs and policies. However, before summarizing how the chapters in this book provide this information, it is useful to briefly describe how the 4-H Study was conducted.

Methods of the 4-H Study of PYD

The full details of the method of the 4-H Study have appeared in numerous publications (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005, 2009, 2010, 2011). Accordingly, we provide here only a summary of the overall method of the study.

Design and Sample

The 4-H Study of PYD began in 2002 with a convenience sample of about 1,700 fifth grade youth and about 1,100 parents from 13 states in the United States. The 4-H Study was funded through the support of the National 4-H Council (and hence

its label) although, as we have noted, most participants in the research did not participate in 4-H programming. The study used a research design wherein the sample size *increased* across successive waves of testing. That is, information from fifth graders were gathered in Wave 1 of the study (the 2002–2003 school year), and these fifth graders were the initial group (cohort) in the study. However, in order to be able to assess the effects of retesting youth repeatedly over several years, the research included in each additional wave of measurement of the study a new group of youth (and a sample of their parents) of the same age as the original group of youth. Participants in the added "retest control" group were then also followed repeatedly (longitudinally).

For instance, in Wave 2, the grade level of the initial cohort was Grade 6. As such, a "retest control" group of sixth graders was added to the study, and these youth became members of a second longitudinal group. Both the original group recruited during their fifth grade year and the added group of sixth graders were followed into Grade 7. Then, in Grade 7, in addition to retesting the initial Grade 5 and initial Grade 6 youth, a new group of seventh graders was added to the study (along with a sample of their parents). This process was followed in subsequent waves of testing.

By the completion of collection of Grade 12 data, the 4-H Study included more than 7,000 youth (about half of whom have been assessed two or more times) and about 3,500 parents from 42 states. As shown in Table 1.1, in Grade 5 the average age of participants was 10.9 years (*SD*=0.42 years), and in Grade 12 the average age was 17.7 years (*SD*=0.76). In regard to race/ethnicity, the sample was 65.8 % White, 7.3 % Black, 9.4 % Latino, and 14.4 % others (including Asian, Native American, multiethnic/multiracial, or "others" and 3.1 % of youth did not report race/ethnicity). Participants resided in different types of communities, with 35.7 % living in rural areas, 16.3 % in urban areas, and 25.7 % in suburban areas (22.2 % had missing data for locale). The sample's demographic characteristics were not completely constant across all waves of the study, however. There were more female and White participants in later waves of the study.

The participants' parents provided data regarding the socioeconomic status of their families, as indexed by the amount of education completed by the child's mother. In Grade 5, 20.8 % of mothers had attended or completed high school, 24.8 % had completed some college, and 18.6 % had a bachelor's degree or higher (35.8 % did not respond); average per capita income at Grade 5 was about $13,657 (*SD*=$8,348) and rose to $23,401 (*SD*=$13,798) in Grade 12.

Although, as noted, initial waves of the study corresponded to particular school grades (for instance, Wave 1=Grade 5, Wave 2=Grade 6, and Wave 3=Grade 7), as the youth traversed their subsequent grades, their academic careers became more varied. Accordingly, at later waves of the study, there was not only one grade level represented within a wave. In general, wave and grade continued to correspond (such that in Wave 8 most participants were in Grade 12), but there was some variation in grades, particularly in Waves 6–8. Because of this variation, reports derived from the 4-H Study always make clear the grade/age composition of the participants involved in any statistical analysis.

Table 1.1 Participant demographics in the 4-H Study of PYD, by grade

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Age M	10.94	12.01	13.00	14.02	14.98	15.82	16.83	17.71
(SD)	(0.42)	(0.43)	(0.47)	(0.53)	(0.57)	(0.70)	(0.76)	(0.76)
Mother's education (%)								
High school or less	20.8	18.2	13.2	6.4	2.8	1.2	1.0	1.6
Some college	24.8	22.1	19.4	9.9	9.1	4.2	4.3	1.4
BA or higher	18.6	17.8	18.2	10.3	8.5	6.8	4.4	3.2
% missing	35.8	42.0	49.3	73.4	79.6	87.8	90.3	93.8
Mean per capita income	13,656.86	13,635.81	16,553.42	19,137.40	19,981.29	24,331.31	24,981.29	23,401.44
(SD)	(8,348.46)	(8,621.05)	(10,631.93)	(13,216.27)	(12,938.41)	(18,664.92)	(17,316.31)	(13,798.49)

It is important to note that one key limitation of the 4-H Study method is the limited racial and ethnic variability of the sample. That is, the majority of the convenience sample used throughout the study was European American (on average, about 65 % across waves). The absence of sufficient, representative numbers of youth from diverse racial and ethnic groups limits the generalizability of the 4-H data set. To address this limitation, future research should be conducted with more diverse, representatively sampled groups of youth than are present in the 4-H Study data set.

Measures

Consistent with the illustration presented in Fig. 1.1, the measures involved in the 4-H Study include assessments of each part of the model. These measures included individual characteristics of youth that were thought to reflect their individual strengths (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011). Measures included *intentional self-regulation*, assessed through the Baltes and colleagues' measure of selection, optimization, and compensation (e.g., Freund & Baltes, 2002; see also Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007); *hopeful future expectations* (e.g., Schmid et al., 2011); and *cognitive, emotional, and behavioral school engagement* (Li & Lerner, 2011).

Measures of ecological developmental assets were based on the work of Theokas and Lerner (2006). We assessed *individuals in the lives of youth* (e.g., parents, teachers, coaches, or mentors; Laursen & Collins, 2009; Rhodes & Lowe, 2009); *opportunities for youth-adult collaboration* in family, school, or community activities (e.g., food or clothing drives, community- or educational-planning organizations or meetings; Lerner, 2004); *institutional resources* such as out-of-school time (OST) programs, parks, playgrounds, libraries, and media (e.g., Boyd & Dobrow, 2011; Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015); and *access* to individual, collaborative, or institutional resources. To illustrate, we indexed the nature of parents as resources through assessments of parental warmth, monitoring, and academic/school involvement (e.g., Bebiroglu, Geldhof, Pinderhughes, Phelps, & Lerner, 2013; Lewin-Bizan, Bowers, & Lerner, 2010). Opportunities for youth-adult collaboration were assessed through the presence of youth coalitions in the community (Bowers et al., 2011). We measured institutional resources in the lives of youth by assessments of youth participation in OST programs (e.g., Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009; 2010; Zarrett et al., 2009).

PYD was measured through assessing the Five Cs shown in Fig. 1.1. In turn, we measured youth *contribution* (Alberts et al., 2006; Jelicic, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2007) and, in later grades, active and engaged citizenship (Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner, & Lerner, 2010). Finally, we measured *risk/problem behaviors* by assessing substance use, bullying, delinquency, and depression (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005; Lewin-Bizan et al., 2010). Additional information about the full set of measures assessed at each wave of the 4-H Study is available at http://ase.tufts.edu/iaryd/researchPositive4HpydResources.htm.

Procedure

In Grades 5 through 7 of the 4-H Study, trained study staff or, at more distant locations, hired assistants collected data from youth. We used the same "script" to collect data and to ensure the return of all study materials. After Grade 5, youth who were absent on the day of the survey or who were from schools or programs that did not allow on-site testing were contacted by e-mail, mail, or phone. They were asked to complete and return the survey to us. Beginning in Grade 8, youth completed the survey online, unless they requested a paper survey. Parents completed paper surveys that were delivered to their homes by their children or through the mail. Return postage was provided if a survey was sent through the mail.

From Method to Findings

The succeeding chapters in this book draw from all waves of the 4-H Study and from related research about youth development. We now summarize briefly the ways in which the chapters in this book illuminate the course of thriving among the participants on the 4-H Study.

Overview of the Chapters in This Book

The chapters in this book highlight the diverse ways positive development can occur across adolescence. In addition, the chapters illustrate that different facets of PYD are interrelated while discussing the possible bases of PYD. All chapters draw implications of the evidence about the nature and bases of PYD for programs and policies that exist or may be designed to promote thriving among diverse young people.

The first section of the book is a set of chapters about the strengths of youth. In the opening chapter in this section, Weiner, Geldhof, and Gestsdottir discuss the nature and role of intentional self-regulation in adolescence. They note that self-regulation is a broad concept that encompasses a wide variety of emotional, cognitive, and social processes. Furthermore, self-regulation plays a critical role in goal-directed behaviors. In this chapter we provide information about self-regulation and recommendations for youth development practitioners and policy makers who want to use research on self-regulation to promote thriving among youth. Specifically, they discuss various lessons that can be learned from previous research on self-regulation, emphasizing intentional self-regulation as a facet of self-regulation that is especially important during adolescence. They note also the limitations of this research. Finally, they recommend five priorities for improving youth policy and practice such as making adolescent ISR a funding priority and the importance of promoting ISR across the life span.

In the next chapter, Wang, Vujovic, Barrett, and Lerner discuss a specific facet of self-regulation: emotion regulation. They explain that how one behaves in one's world and the social relationships one experiences in one's life are always associated with one's emotions. A key part of healthy development is to understand the rules, or "regulations," that govern the links among behavior, experience, and emotions. The child must attain the skills to adjust, or regulate, his or her emotions to create good matches among emotions, behaviors, and social experiences/social relationships. Emotion regulation (ER) is, then, a key facet of healthy and positive development and may be particularly important during adolescence, given that the young person is undergoing major, interacted changes in his or her physical, psychological, and social functioning. Drawing on evidence from the 4-H Study and from other research, they discuss both important facets of ER during adolescence and the bases of ER during this period of life. They suggest some implications for applications to policy and practice based on this evidence and recommend that parents, practitioners, and policy makers should take a more targeted focus (e.g., specific ER skills, particular time periods), use a process-oriented perspective (e.g., consider the interaction among thoughts, behaviors, and emotions), and capitalize on social supports from different contexts (e.g., family, school, and community) in order to promote ER and positive youth development.

Another facet of self-regulation involves a young person's engagement with his or her school. Chase, Warren, and Lerner discuss the interrelation of school engagement and academic achievement. They point out that school engagement is integral to the promotion of academic success. To explore the relations between school engagement and school success, they review findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development and other related research in order to describe how cognitive, emotional, and behavioral school engagement relates to academic success and thriving among youth. Based on the research they review, they make recommendations for in-school and out-of-school programs and for policies supporting such programs that involve assessing school engagement across all school years, supporting peer mentoring and modeling programs, enhancing the integration of in-school, school-engagement promotion with out-of-school time youth development programs, and rigorously evaluating school-engagement enhancement initiatives. If proven effective through such evaluations, the programs and policies they recommend can lead to more actively engaged students. The actions can result, then, in the development of youth who invest their time and energy to achieve positive and valued academic and life goals.

Callina, Mueller, Buckingham, and Gutierrez discuss the contexts that support hope in youth. They explain that, within the field of positive youth development (PYD), a key goal is to identify strengths of youth that will help explain why some adolescents are able to develop into successful young adults by working toward productive goals and selecting positive behaviors, whereas others follow developmental paths marked by problematic behaviors. They describe the importance of *hope* in positive development and define hope as having three key ingredients: intentional self-regulation, positive future expectations, and connectedness. The

authors provide evidence from the 4-H Study of PYD to show how these three ingredients work together to promote the Five Cs of PYD and youth contribution. They make recommendations for practitioners to incorporate or enhance each of these hope ingredients in their youth development programs, as well as how to recognize hopelessness among youth and how to intervene. The authors conclude the chapter with priorities for youth policy, such as allocating funding for programs and program evaluations that take a comprehensive and integrative approach to youth development programming. They believe that hope should be a cornerstone of youth programming and that practitioners, researchers, and policy makers can be intentional in promoting hope to ensure all young people have opportunities to thrive.

We have noted that the PYD model emphasizes that when the strengths of young people are aligned with resources in their contexts, thriving is enhanced. Accordingly, the second set of chapters is about these ecological assets. In the first chapter in this section, Bowers, Johnson, Warren, Tirrell, and Lerner discuss how youth relationships with parents and mentors may promote PYD. The authors note that resources to promote positive development in young people have been identified in many contexts such as families, schools, neighborhoods, and out-of-school time programs. The most important resources within these contexts are the relationships that young people have with committed, caring adults. They provide an overview of research, based on findings from the 4-H Study and other scholarly work, on the essential role of adults in promoting PYD. The authors offer examples of organizations that have applied this research to their programming and practices to impact the well-being of young people. Finally, they provide priorities for practice and policy based on these findings. Specifically, they recommend that programs promote positive parenting behaviors, build cultural competence among their staff, engage parents more fully in programs, train staff and youth in relationship-building skills, and thoughtfully consider how they create mentoring matches. The authors believe that policy makers should invest in creating supportive youth systems in which youth voices are heard, such as family support programs and comprehensive community initiatives, to promote youth thriving.

Donlan, Lynch, and Lerner discuss the significance of peers in the lives of youth, drawing on research from the 4-H Study and other related work. They note that the peers of adolescents can be the source of both positive and problematic development among youth. Positive peer relationships are associated with school engagement, perceived academic competence, school achievement, and character virtues, whereas involvement with problematic peer groups is linked with risk behaviors (e.g., delinquent acts and bullying, respectively) and lowered school functioning. Although over time youth spend increasingly more time with peers than with their family, parents remain a primary source of support for most adolescents. In studies of adolescents, parental monitoring, warmth, and communication have been associated with academic achievement, lower levels of risk-taking, and positive mood. The authors discuss the importance of peers in promoting PYD and recommend ways schools can build environments rich with supportive peers who value achievement. They show that young people typically do not turn away from parents to

embrace their peers, but rather both parents and peers can cumulatively support youth. The authors also discuss how the school-wide peer culture can promote both positive peer relationships and positive behaviors among youth, for example, through the creation of peer mentoring programs. Finally, the authors explore how strengthening the connections between in-school programs and out-of-school time (OST) youth development programs can enhance across the ecology of youth the positive contributions of peer relationships to PYD. They call for policy innovations that build bridges among the key contexts of youth.

Another major context of youth development involves the in-school and out-of-school time activities in which youth are engaged. Agans, Champine, Johnson, Erickson, and Yalin discuss the ways in which activity participation may promote healthy lifestyles among youth. The authors explain that most young people in the United States participate in some form of structured movement activity, such as sports or dance, and these activities have the potential to support positive youth development and continued engagement in healthy activity. They discuss the potential benefits and risks associated with youth participation in movement activities, potential barriers and facilitators to activity participation across diverse contexts, and ways to promote sustained participation. The authors emphasize that development takes place within an integrated system involving youth, their social relationships, and the multiple activities in which they participate. They examine how three key elements (positive sustained youth-adult relationships, life skill development, and opportunities for leadership) can be used to help movement-based programs promote positive youth development. In particular, the authors recommend that programs and policy makers should work collaboratively to provide developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant activities for young people that incorporate these three key elements, in order to better support positive youth development and healthy lifestyles.

The next set of chapters is about these outcomes. We believe that the chief set of outcomes of youth ↔ context alignments involves the Five Cs of PYD. Accordingly, the opening chapter in this section is about the Five Cs model of PYD. Geldhof, Bowers, Mueller, Napolitano, Callina, Walsh, Lerner, and Lerner note that the growing consensus among developmental scientists is that optimizing young people's development requires much more than simply ensuring that they avoid negative outcomes (e.g., drug use, delinquency). Practitioners must also foster strengths that help youth thrive in their diverse ecologies. As such, the authors draw on data and research from the 4-H Study to discuss the benefits of promoting such strength-based perspectives in youth development programs. Their discussion focuses primarily on the Five Cs of positive youth development and on how our understanding of this model can inform social policies and enhance the experience of both practitioners and the youth they serve.

The Cs of PYD include a positive sense of self (e.g., involving a young person's confidence that they can act in positive ways that matter to themselves, family members, teachers, peers, and other people in their world). The sense of self involved in this "C" pertains to a central construct in the adolescent development literature: identity. In the next chapter in this section, Xing, Chico, Lambouths, Brittian, and

Schwartz explain why identity formation is a central characteristic of adolescent development and discuss the links between adolescent identity development and other aspects of adolescents' health and positive development. The authors note that adolescents experience several developmental transitions involving physical growth, advances in cognition (thinking), and increased expectations from society. In light of these developmental experiences, they typically begin to explore and understand their place in the social world. This process is commonly described as identity development. The authors briefly review identity theories that are relevant for youth practitioners and policy makers to consider. They discuss how identity relates to other aspects of adolescents' health and development. In addition, they discuss priorities for youth policy and practice regarding adolescents' identity development and highlight a youth-centered policy and youth organization that focus on developing adolescents' positive identity (My Brother's Keeper and The Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health). Finally, they provide a few practical recommendations for youth practitioners and policy makers. Specifically, they describe three strategies that can be used by youth development practitioners who want to incorporate identity development into their programming: (1) encourage adolescents to explore social issues, (2) encourage adolescents to reflect on their experiences, and (3) give adolescents opportunities to engage in decision making.

One of the major outcomes of PYD studied among scholars of adolescent development involves youth contributions to themselves, their families, their schools, and the communities more generally: the "Sixth C" of the PYD model. Accordingly, Hershberg, Johnson, DeSouza, Hunter, and Zaff discuss conceptualizations and measurement of contribution within PYD research. The authors explain that contribution to civil society is a key outcome of PYD, as evidenced by findings from the 4-H Study. They focus on conceptualizations and measurement of contribution within PYD research. The authors first discuss conceptualizations of contribution as active and engaged citizenship (AEC) and the relations among AEC and other constructs, such as school engagement and risk behaviors, within the 4-H Study sample. They then describe research on contribution among youth of color, including recent research on social justice youth development and critical consciousness. They review strategies that practitioners can use to develop and promote meaningful contributions among diverse young people. Given associations between contribution and positive outcomes among America's diverse youth, the authors emphasize that policies and programs should provide more opportunities for youth contributions to society, including community service, social activism, and/or participation in local polities.

As the 4-H Study continued to assess youth across the adolescent years, it increased the number of youth development outcomes that were assessed. Two sets of outcomes—one ubiquitous in the lives of youth (sexuality) and the other a feature of their lives that is a growing concern among policy makers and practitioners (bullying)—became important foci of the research.

In the next chapter, Arbeit, Baldi, Rubin, Harris, and Lerner discuss positive sexuality development. They explain that sexual activity may be a part of positive, adaptive youth development, particularly in the later years of adolescence. Through

promoting PYD, youth development programs can take an active role in improving adolescent sexual health. In this chapter, they emphasize the positive potential of adolescent sexuality development. The authors review research regarding the interplay between indicators of PYD and indicators of adolescent sexual behavior and sexual health and research on the role of youth development programs in addressing adolescent sexual health outcomes. They present specific ideas about what aspects of youth development programs can be leveraged in promoting what aspects of adolescent sexuality development. The authors specifically explore the "Big Three" aspects of youth development programs: youth-adult relationships, skill building, and opportunities for leadership. They conclude with additional suggestions for how youth development programs can support both PYD and sexual health in integrated ways, with particular attention to the needs of systematically marginalized youth as relates to their sexual and relational development.

In the next chapter, Hilliard, Batanova, and Bowers note the growing presence of bullying research and interventions and discuss their ideas for reframing the design of anti-bullying programs from a PYD perspective. They note that bullying has been linked to a number of problematic developmental outcomes. However, to create positive and meaningful change in individuals, programs and policies need to go beyond punitive actions against bullying behaviors and acknowledge and respond to the complexities involved in bullying. They present a reframing of bullying and bullying interventions using a strength-based, positive youth development perspective. They then discuss innovative and effective ways of approaching bullying prevention and intervention efforts. To this end, the authors discuss the need for taking the whole child into account as well as the multiple contexts in which he or she lives. By moving beyond traditional bullying perspectives, they offer an approach that will help practitioners, policy makers, and educators create effective learning environments that support the development of the whole student and promote a positive school climate. The authors conclude the chapter by providing recommendations for future research, educational programs, and policy initiatives. Specifically, they recommend that programs and schools (1) address peer group, family, and program/school norms; (2) promote social and emotional learning as foundational to individual development, peer group functioning, and school climate; and (3) involve families in anti-bullying and positive behavior promotion efforts.

Finally, in an afterword for the book, Suzanne Le Menestrel places the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development into the context of 4-H, both as an instance of a youth development program and as a national system for promoting PYD. She discusses the relative absence of strength-based approaches to youth development that characterized the literature on youth development prior to the 4-H Study, and she notes the impact of the study on the investigation of youth development and on the 4-H youth development organization. These impacts include the clear articulation of PYD improving the quality of 4-H programming, the articulation of impacts through the power of longitudinal research, and raising more questions about youth programs and the positive youth development process. She concludes that the 4-H Study has provided a strong baseline from which PYD research can continue to grow as youth development professionals strive to exemplify the 4-H motto: "To Make the Best Better."

Conclusions

The findings derived from the 4-H Study and related research discussed in this book indicate that there is now an evidence base for discussing young people in a new way. In the past, positive development in youth was discussed in regard to what youth did not do (Benson et al., 2011). Youth were thriving if they did not fail in school, smoke, drink, bully, or engage in unsafe sex (Benson et al., 2011). The absence of bad was evidence of positive functioning.

The chapters in this book make clear, however, that there now exists evidence for the use of a strength-based vocabulary to speak about youth development—one predicated on attributes of youth that are valued by adults as well (King et al., 2005). In addition, the research derived from the 4-H Study and related investigations makes clear that there are measures that practitioners can use to efficiently, and with reliability and validity, index: (1) PYD; (2) key antecedents of PYD—such as developmental assets in the ecology of young people as well as the strengths of young people, such as intentional self-regulation and hope; and (3) key outcomes of PYD, such as contribution and active/engaged citizenship.

We believe that the 4-H Study research base provides evidence that can be used to inform the practice of youth-serving professionals who are trying to arrange the conditions needed to promote PYD. Knowledge about the process of youth ↔ context relations involved in PYD can provide a means for promoting behaviors that parents, policy makers, and youth themselves value. Moreover, when PYD, its antecedents, and/or its outcomes are part of the theory of change framing youth development programs, practitioners can make use of the set of tools described in this book to gauge the effectiveness of their programs in leading to the enhancement of PYD.

The findings of the 4-H Study make at least two innovative contributions to youth policy, especially when these contributions are put into historical context. When the 4-H Study started, policy makers were not in the business of defining their actions as promoting good attributes but rather in diminishing bad ones. That is, elections were won by politicians promising to decrease youth drug use, to get teenage prostitutes off the streets, or to throw violent youth in jail. Politicians did not get votes by showing that they sponsored actions resulting in youth having better self-esteem, caring, or positive connections to mentors.

Accordingly, the first innovative impact of the 4-H Study on policy is that policy makers can now show to their constituents that there are desirable and measurable ways to promote good attributes and not just to diminish bad ones. For instance, they can point to active citizenship as something that is worthy of promoting and that has visible impacts in their communities. Therefore, one implication of the 4-H Study is that policy makers now have evidence they can point to about promoting good characteristics of youth through their policies. The second implication of the 4-H Study has been to illustrate for policy makers what can be done through youth programs to promote these visible, positive aspects of youth. Therefore, policy makers now have a greater rationale for investing in youth-serving programs because

these programs promote desirable, definable, and quantifiable qualities of youth. Their constituents value and can experience the benefits of, for example, 4-H programs promoting responsible young people by getting youth more engaged in their communities, by showing that youth are adding to the economy of their communities, and by demonstrating that youth are contributing to the welfare of the multiple generations living in their communities.

In sum, the chapters in this book will be a means to further evidence-based practice and policy innovations for youth development programs. We aspire for this book to be used as a resource for advancing the applications aimed at promoting healthy and positive development among youth. We also hope this book illustrates how theory-predicated, developmental research can accompany community-based actions designed to enhance the lives of diverse young people.

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