



From Prevention and Intervention Research to Promotion of Positive Youth Development: Implications for Global Research, Policy and Practice with Ethnically Diverse Youth

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Abstract

In this chapter, we look at the underpinnings of Positive Youth Development (PYD) against the backdrops of resiliency, positive psychology and prevention/intervention science, frameworks that inform PYD approaches around the globe. We seek to draw upon the similarities and distinctions between PYD and these frameworks, the advances promulgated within the PYD, and future directions. We begin with a foundational discussion on the roots of PYD and its grounding in resilience and positive psychology. Next, in the context of discussing research on PYD around the

world, we focus on PYD prevention and intervention. We are particularly attuned to community programs as a tool for advancing practices that promote PYD, specifically among ethnically diverse populations. We close with implications for future research, policy and practice providing the foundation for growth in incremental knowledge in this vital and under-researched field.

Keywords

Positive youth development · Prevention science · Intervention · Resilience · Positive psychology · Research · Policy · Practice · Racial-ethnic and cultural diversity

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Over the past two decades, research on the positive development of youth has redefined the focus from the problems of children and adolescents to the more positive attributes families, schools, and communities hope to foster in young people. Though adolescence is indeed a time of tremendous, physical, emotional, cognitive, and social growth, current research has reminded us that neither childhood nor adolescence are necessarily quite so tumultuous. Furthermore, many

divergent, yet adaptable pathways to positive development exist that vary across individuals, societies, cultures, and nationalities. These ideas of potentiality, collaboration, and context inform our evolving theoretical frameworks in Positive Youth Development (PYD). In the following sections, we explore the conceptual and methodological underpinnings of PYD that draw upon previous work in risk and resilience and positive psychology. Subsequently, we examine the critical contributions of prevention science in informing a focus upon promotion. Contributions of these fields to concepts and methods in PYD and potential areas for future development are highlighted. Importantly, we look at the ways in which PYD is advancing new concepts and prospects for promotion with promise for broader sustainability, particularly in community based organizations that involve ethnically diverse youth around the globe, giving consideration to the implications of PYD for future rigorous, mixed-methods research, beneficial public policy and innovative practice.

Positive Youth Development: Theoretical Underpinnings in Resilience and Positive Psychology

Positive Youth Development (PYD) refers to desirable developmental attributes and characteristics in childhood and adolescence. As aptly put by Karen Pittman, PYD is not simply the absence of problems, but also helping youth to become caring, productive citizens of our society (Pittman, 1991). PYD is based upon the consideration of person-environment fit across development (Eccles et al., 1997; Fredericks & Simpkins, 2012). In fact, PYD is rooted in the idea of developmental systems in which youth interactions within their contexts contribute substantially to how they grow, think, regulate, and operate resiliently within their worlds. The relational developmental systems theory recognizes that it is in synergistic interactions in contexts at home, in school, with peers, and in community settings across childhood and adolescence that foster

PYD (Larson, 2000; Larson & Hansen, 2005; Lerner, Johnson, & Buckingham, 2015; Lerner et al., 2014). The ecodevelopmental theory stresses the varied and dynamic role of family, peer, school, community, and cultural contexts as integral to youth development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Cicchetti, Toth, & Maughan, 2000).

Some of the early research on PYD conducted by the Search Institute in the U.S. attended to the contextual influences, namely developmental assets of youth. These 40 assets categorized in 8 overarching areas included (1) support (love and caring from related and unrelated adults); (2) empowerment (youth voice and service); (3) boundaries and expectations; (4) constructive use of time; (5) commitment to learning; (6) positive values; (7) social competencies; and (8) positive identities (Roehlkepartain & Blyth, 2020; Scales, 2011; Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Shramko, 2017). Currently, broadly cited conceptualizations of PYD refer to the 5Cs of competence, confidence, connection, caring, character, and a possible 6th C of contribution (Geldhof et al., 2015). For ethnically diverse youth, there is a potentially 7thC referring to the role of culture and identity (Brittian & Williams, 2017; Smith, Peterson, & Leman, 2017; Smith, Witherspoon, & Osgood, 2017; Williams, Anderson, Francois, Hussain, & Tolan, 2014). For new PYD conceptualizations and an expanded 7Cs model including creativity among ethnically diverse youth see Abdul Kadir, Mohd, & Dimitrova, *this volume*; Dimitrova et al., *this volume*; Manrique-Millones, Pineda Marin, Millones-Rivalles, & Dimitrova, *this volume*).

Resilience and PYD

There are a number of shared characteristics between PYD and resilience. Ann Masten defines resilience as the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to threats to the system function, viability, or development (Masten, 2014). This conceptualization of resilience emphasizes a systems framework, akin to the ideas of context and relational developmental systems inherent in

PYD. The distinction comes in that for resilience to be evident, it requires adversity, and overcoming that adversity. At the core of resilience theory is the idea of risk, protective, and promotive factors. Risk factors are those that if allowed to persist, result in undesirable outcomes. Protective factors are those that in the presence of adversity, moderate or reduce the risk for undesirable outcomes (Twum-Antwi, Jefferies, & Ungar, 2020). Promotive factors are akin to the idea of developmental assets in PYD representing positive aspects that exist regardless of levels of risk (Roehlkepartain & Blyth, 2020).

Extant global research has helped to identify family and school factors related to resilience that have informed prevention and intervention around the globe (Bahramnejad, Iranpour, Karamoozian, & Nakhaee, 2020; Gomez & Ang, 2007; Kozina, 2020; Laible et al., 2017; Luthar & Eisenberg, 2017; Maalouf et al., 2020; Tam, Li, Benotsch, & Lin, 2020). It is around the idea of promotive factors or promotion, that resilience and PYD converge (Masten, 2014; Oshri, Topple, & Carlson, 2017). Both are couched within developmental systems frameworks that acknowledge the interaction of the individual and their context, and that some influences are overwhelmingly positive.

In resilience, the emphasis on adversity and overcoming it, is a central premise. In a society in which some groups are characterized as “disadvantaged” and “less advantaged” due to their socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, or immigrant status, we seem to imply that having every advantage is most desirable. Indubitably, it is critical to have the resources necessary for nutritious food, clothing, safe housing and health. Yet, we should not presume that being advantaged universally leads to positive development. High rates of substance abuse, suicide, sexual harassment, and crime across social classes and geographic areas provide evidence to the contrary (Miech, Johnston, O’Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2015). Prevention, intervention, and promotion activities with youth are increasingly examining ways to help youth recognize that learning is a process, that they are capable of growing, particularly if with

adult and systemic support, they learn from mistakes and persist.

Similar ideas talk about the “steeling” effects of adversity that help youth to become stronger and more resilient (Davidson & Carlin, 2019; Rutter, 2012). Determining the quality or levels of adversity that are more facilitative versus debilitating, i.e., *hormesis*, could represent another frontier in resilience research (Oshri, 2019). Scholars have discussed hormesis as a curvilinear dose-response relation in which a low dose of environmental adversity or toxicity induces positive adaptation up to a threshold (Oshri, 2019). Further emphasis has been given to the consequent positive development that can result from overcoming adversity, not in a passive way, but instead using the circumstances as opportunities to learn and transform (Yunes, 2015). However, Davidson and Carlin (2019) caution from their analysis of initiatives in Scotland, that public policies should not be predicated upon individual’s “overcoming” adversity but instead ameliorating underlying causes including discrimination, youth unemployment and lack of opportunity.

Advances in resilience include understanding the interaction of biological science and neuroscientific explorations of how brain development interacts with adversity and executive function, the top-down internal system of self-regulation, memory, and psychological flexibility (Blair, 2016). Further socio-biological research regards physiological reactions to adversity, such as stress, coping, and “weathering” (Brody, Miller, Yu, Beach, & Chen, 2016), advances that have not yet been integrated into PYD research. However, though family and even school factors have been considered substantially in resilience research (Luthar & Eisenberg, 2017; Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Ungar & Hadfield, 2019; Walsh, 2016), context is more heavily emphasized in PYD research with great consideration of work in community based settings and youth organizations.

Methodologically, the resilience research has taken both variable-centered and person-centered approaches. Variable-centered approaches examine the types of factors that predict risky and

adaptive outcomes. Person-centered approaches have been described as more “wholistic” allowing examination of a number of factors that characterize individuals and examining multiple potentially adaptive profiles of individual development (Masten, 2014). Emerging research in PYD is beginning to draw upon the methodological advances that utilize person-centered approaches to explore diverse pathways to PYD (Bowers, Winburn, Sandoval, & Clanton, 2020; Lerner et al., 2017; Yu, Smith, & Oshri, 2019). The ideas that there are multiple idiographic pathways to well-being and adjustment suggest that we might consider more than “one size fits all” approaches. Youth programs are great settings for offering a variety of activities relevant to individual youth interests and needs.

In summary, resilience has offered many conceptual frameworks to PYD particularly in terms of considering promotive factors in development. Methodologically, research in resilience is integrating biosocial factors and person-centered approaches that acknowledge multiple diverse pathways to positive development, frontiers for future research, policy and practice in PYD. However, PYD scholarship advances work in resilience by a deeper examination of community contexts and youth organizations with potential for delineating future practices in these organizations that foster youth development, policies that provide varied youth experiences, and professional developmental systems to adults to appropriately support young people.

Contributions of Positive Psychology to PYD Research

Work on positive psychology, draws upon conceptualizations akin to resilience and PYD. The movement of positive psychology was started by Martin Seligman and colleagues who embraced the mission of promoting this field (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). According to Poseck (2008) the term, “positive psychology” appeared for the first time in a work by Maslow, dated 1954 and again in his book “Toward a Psychology of Being” (Maslow, 1962). At that

time, these thinkers were already seeking a wholistic view of human beings. Positive psychology connects to concepts in resilience and PYD, redefining traditional psychology changing from solely focusing on the understanding of psychopathologies. This is not to say that psychology should ignore psychic illnesses and their consequences, but that it is possible to study both suffering and happiness, as well as the interactions between these two human dimensions (Seligman et al., 2005).

Another important conceptual contribution from positive psychology has been that of eudaimonia (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Eudaimonia, a sense of fulfillment obtained from achieving larger more collective goals, is contrasted with hedonistic happiness that focuses on self fulfillment. Ryan et al. (2008) argue that eudaimonia is not only enjoying life, but living well. Related neurological research is beginning to examine regions of the brain associated with eudaimonia, and pursuing rewarding goals, with other affective decision-making processes (Lewis, Kanai, Rees, & Bates, 2013). This research in positive psychology suggests that youth programs, policy and practice should attend not only to well-being among youth, but also their pursuit of worthy, beneficial, humanitarian goals.

A great deal of prevention/intervention research emanates from the study of positive psychology, particularly regarding cognitive approaches in reframing human suffering to gratitude, approaches that could inform prevention and intervention research in PYD. Examples of prevention/intervention research rooted in positive psychology include mentoring approaches (see Eichas, Montgomery, Meca, Garcia, & Garcia, [this volume](#); Larsen & Holsen, [this volume](#)). Previous studies with social educators have shown that the role of the “resilience mentor” could be defined as a progressive and constant relationship, a “significant other” that supports and activates the initiation of resilience processes in the presence of pain or trauma (Fradkin, Weschenfelder, & Yunes, 2016; Weschenfelder, Fradkin, & Yunes, 2018). It is a concept that Walsh (2005) calls the “relational lifesaver,” exemplifying proximal processes of healthy

development as described in the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Extensive meta-analytic research in the U.S. on mentoring approaches has found that effective quality and consistent mentoring is impactful upon youth (Christensen et al., 2020; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Tolan et al., 2020).

In summary, work in PYD shares conceptual foundations with the ideas of positive psychology. Like PYD, positive psychology has sought to reframe the focus of study from clinical concerns to well-being. Prevention and intervention research in positive psychology seeks to help people reframe their life perspectives with gratitude and in connection with supportive relational mentors; exemplars that hold promise for prevention and intervention work with youth. The policy implications of work in positive psychology points to public support and training for programs that connect youth in schools and communities to caring and helpful adult mentors, particularly for youth who are diverse in their racial-ethnic backgrounds and often the victims of discriminatory treatment in the education, employment, and the justice systems (Barbarin, Murry, Tolan, & Graham, 2016). In summary, positive psychology has contributed to attention concepts that define well-being, shifting the focus from problems and developing interventions that promote support, character, gratitude, and cognitive frameworks that promote positive individual adaptation.

Prevention, Intervention, and PYD

In this section, we explore the conceptual and methodological contributions of prevention science to the field of positive youth development. Prevention science evolved from previous eras in which researchers, practitioners, and policy makers sought to identify “what works?” (Eichas et al., [this volume](#); Eichas, Ferrer-Wreder, & Olsson, 2019). Initial conceptualizations of prevention examined the degree to which efforts were targeted to reducing the incidence and risk of problem behaviors (primary and secondary prevention, respectively), or reducing the duration or effects of these behaviors (tertiary). Later

conceptualizations ranged from indicated models that focused upon those at highest risk to more universal models, encapsulating entire classrooms, schools, or communities (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994).

The appeals of universal models was that they could be implemented across an entire specified group. Universal programs were targeted to individual socio-emotional skills in school based programs designed to help children recognize, express, and address their emotions in socially acceptable ways (Greenberg et al., 2003). Another exemplar of a school-based universal program is the Good Behavior Game (GBG), delivered in classrooms using cooperative teams of children who encourage each other’s self-regulation with helpful reminders and praise. GBG was found to most benefit urban, ethnic minority male 1st and 2nd graders in the Baltimore, Maryland Public School System by reducing hyperactivity at a critical developmental point. Follow-up as late as early adulthood found reduced problem behaviors, substance abuse, and better mental health among those that took part in the program in 1st and 2nd grade compared to their counterparts who went without (Kellam et al., 2008).

Indicated approaches in prevention are often built upon research in resilience identifying key risk and protective factors. Though indicated approaches may identify and label youth, it is possible that these approaches conserve resources by focusing upon those most in need. In one study in the United States, the label identified both need and potential by delivering the intervention in a multi-family group format to the top 25% of middle-school students, identified as antisocial *and* influential among their peers. Intervention was implemented with students and community based family groups from 40 schools across 4 states, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia and Illinois, resulting in improved parenting practices and reduced school-wide violence perpetration (Henry & Multi-Site Violence Prevention Project (MVPP), 2012; Smith et al., 2004).

The largest and longest federally funded prevention-intervention trial, Fast Track, was conducted in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and

Washington state in the United States for high risk children (African American, European American and Latino/a) identified in kindergarten. The study used multi-component aspects to enhance parenting, school based socio-emotional learning and peer interactions, and afterschool mentoring and tutoring with longterm effects on delinquency, substance abuse, and mental health (Dodge et al., 2013). Some of this prevention research is disseminated internationally in Hong Kong and India (Balaji, Andrews, Andrew, & Patel, 2011; Ma, Shek, & Leung, 2019).

Though funding streams often require attention to reducing “silos” of problem behaviors (e.g., conduct disorder, substance use, sexual risk), initiatives among prevention scientists have built upon common risk, protective, and promotive factors. Many of these prevention programs hypothesized that problem behavior would be reduced by fostering aspects of positive development including socio-emotional skills, family and community support (see Bradley, Ferguson, & Zimmer-Gembeck, [this volume](#); Kopic, Wium, & Dimitrova, [this volume](#); Upadaya & Salmela-Aro, [this volume](#)). Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2002; Catalano et al., 2019) offer an extensive review of some of the early work in PYD prevention programs in the U.S. and globally confirming impacts upon positive aspects of development. Thus, prevention science though attuned to risk has often hypothesized that the pathway to prevention was through promotion.

Methodologically, over the past 2–3 decades, prevention science has been characterized by research with large samples often at risk of problem behaviors, examining program effects upon experimental treatment/control groups, using multiple measures of potential risk and protective factors in multivariate analyses across time from childhood to early adulthood and diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds. While these randomized control trials have been helpful in identifying some important practices, the costs and intensity of some would prove challenging, while others have and are being disseminated widely at the state and national levels in homes, schools, and community based facilities (Bradshaw et al.,

2012; Chamberlain et al., 2008; Dishion et al., 2014; Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland, & Cunningham, 2009; Olds, 2002). Clearly, prevention science offers contributions in terms of exemplars of rigorous randomized longitudinal research (see Kaniūšonytė & Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė, [this volume](#); Lansford et al., [this volume](#)), conceptual models that include both prevention and promotion (see Ferrer-Wreder et al., [this volume](#); Ginner Hau, Ferrer-Wreder, & Westling, [this volume](#); Kozina, [this volume](#)) and examples of partnering within state and national systems to foster public policies, broader implementation and sustainability (see Acosta, Chinman, & Phillips, [this volume](#); Fagan et al., [this volume](#); Hull, Ferguson, Fagan, & Brown, [this volume](#); Li, He, & Chen, [this volume](#)). While the methodology in PYD has yet to attain this level of sophistication in terms of rigor and longitudinal evaluation, the vast number of community organizations hold promise for longer term implementation and sustainability of best practices to support youth. In the following section, we explore the unique contributions and opportunities for PYD promotion both in terms of “bottom-up” community approaches, innovative conceptualizations, methodologies and broader implementation and sustainability. Pittman and Fleming (1991) remind the field to involve youth insolutions: “What is needed is a massive conceptual shift - from thinking that youth problems are merely the principal barrier to youth development to thinking that youth development serves as the most effective strategy for the prevention of youth problems”.

Taking it to the Streets: PYD and Community Programs

While work in resilience, positive psychology, and prevention science have conducted substantial applied research in home and school settings, much less research in these areas have focused on community settings, as in the field of PYD promotion. Community programs have been a part of society at least as early as the mid-1800’s in which the Young Men’s (YM)/Young Women’s

Christian Association (YWCA) was established in London and the United States. About this time, the Boys Club was also established in the mid-1800's and renamed the Boys and Girls Club in 1990. The heart of these initiatives was providing safe places to live, learn, develop, and grow (see Wang, Chase, & Burkhard, [this volume](#)). Today, thousands of youth programs exist supported by private and governmental sources (Montgomery, 2020). However, identifying what qualifies as a PYD prevention or intervention approach is complex. PYD approaches are thought to engage young people in structured and productive activities that divert them from unhealthy behavior (see Bremner & Schwartz, [this volume](#); Miconi & Rousseau, [this volume](#); Ross & Tolan, [this volume](#)) providing them with experiences that help develop their interests, talents, skills and competencies in a supportive atmosphere in which young people develop bonds with peers and adults (Catalano et al., 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016).

Research in PYD has drawn upon both qualitative and quantitative work that attends to the role of youth agency, collective efficacy, engagement, leadership, and voice (Eichas, Montgomery, Meca, & Kurtines, 2017; Larson & Angus, 2011; Ozer, Newlan, Douglas, & Hubbard, 2013; Smith, Osgood, Caldwell, Hynes, & Perkins, 2013). For example, qualitative research by Larson and Angus (2011) built upon grounded theory and ethnographic approaches among 11 programs, 708 interviews, and 108 youth. They explored the “arc of work” that included projects in which youth led, planned, monitored, adjusted plans, and received authentic evaluation of the project's results through which learning occurs (Larson & Angus, 2011).

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) models draw upon youth leadership of ethnographic research coupled with engagement in gathering quantitative research that helps to assess needs and spur youth community activism. In PYD more so than in prevention science, more “bottom-up” approaches have emerged that engage youth in community settings in creating, innovating, and leading in their communities (Barton & Tan, 2018; Ozer et al., 2013; Smith

et al., 2013). PYD is promoted in programs that integrate youth participatory methods around the globe. Projects in the United States utilized interactive technology to inspire youth to create change-based stories of coping and success (Ozer et al., 2017). International studies in Portugal demonstrated that participatory action research was successful in giving youth a voice in the areas of health, well-being and active citizenship (Branquinho, Cerqueira, Ramiro, & Matos, 2018; Branquinho & Matos, 2019; Matos et al., 2018). PYD has also incorporated research on broader dimensions beyond measures of self-esteem, self-efficacy, cognitive and academic development, including new concepts such as authenticity, future orientation, personal expressiveness (activities that are meaningful), creativity and spirituality (Dimitrova, Fernandes, et al., [this volume](#); Eichas et al., 2017; Thomaes, Sedikides, Bos, Hutteman, & Reijntjes, 2017; Tirrell et al., 2019). PYD often includes both individual and settings-level aims that are attuned to collective social processes and organization, particularly the redistribution of more responsibility and autonomy to young people (Tseng & Seidman, 2007). Thus, work in PYD is more “bottom-up,” engaging youth in leadership and voice, and exploring novel concepts that not only describe individual development but also social processes among youth, adults, and their contexts (Dimitrova, 2018; Dimitrova, Sam, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2021; Dutra-Thomé & Ponciano, [this volume](#); Larsen & Holsen, [this volume](#)).

Programs in PYD have a shared mission in providing a safe haven for young people, helping them to develop into productive and caring citizens. One of the few rigorous, longitudinal studies of PYD was based on relational developmental systems, understanding the mutual interactions between youth and their contexts (Lerner et al., 2017). In this important study of a large, national sample of youth in the United States, spanning over a decade and hundreds of published articles, more evidence is provided on the importance of family contexts, on youth self-regulation and ability to benefit from participation in youth programs and on concepts such as civic engagement

and participation. Though the authors readily acknowledge that the sample lacks representative groups of ethnic minority youth, this critical work sets the stage for defining PYD, considering novel concepts such as plasticity, and new idiographic methodologies attuned to varying pathways to PYD.

Beyond this important work, though youth programs are widely available, few have been the topic of rigorous, and needed longitudinal evaluation (Courtin, Kim, Song, Yu, & Muennig, 2020). Some of the few more notable programs include the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Mentoring program, in which adolescent youth receiving monthly support from a mentor over 12–18 months were significantly less likely to have started using illegal drugs or alcohol, hit someone, or skipped school. They were also more confident about their school performance and got along better with their families (De Wit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose, & Lipman, 2020; Grossman & Tierney, 1998).

The Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP), a community-based youth development program, provided cultural enrichment, education, service, personal development activities, as well as financial incentives, over a 4-year period, from 9th grade through high school graduation in small groups of youth and adults. QOP increased the likelihood of high school graduation and reduced the likelihood of dropping out of school or becoming adolescent parents (Lattimore, Grotper, & Taggart, 1998). Other more culturally-oriented community based programs have sought to help racial-ethnic minority youth adapt successfully to their contexts resulting in more positive identities, cultural values of collective responsibility, less substance abuse and sexual risk (Belgrave, Chase-Vaughn, Gray, Addison, & Cherry, 2000; Flay, Graulich, Segawa, Burns, & Holliday, 2004; Riggs, Bohnert, Guzman, & Davidson, 2010; Tebes et al., 2007).

In the United States, afterschool programs have become an important context for PYD programs designed to support increasing numbers of working parents, providing safety and monitoring to children who would otherwise be unsupervised. Initial assessments of the 21st Century Learning

Centers (21C) were pessimistic or mixed in terms of their results, often confounded by program quality and implementation (Cross, Gottfredson, Wilson, Rorie, & Connell, 2010; Gottfredson, Cross, Wilson, Rorie, & Connell, 2010; James-Burdumy, Dynarski, & Deke, 2008). More recent work is beginning to take into account the variability of the contexts in terms of quality of adult support, youth engagement, and the impact on youth outcomes (Frazier et al., 2015; Frazier, Mehta, Atkins, Hur, & Rusch, 2013; Kuperminc et al., 2019; Smith, Osgood, Oh, & Caldwell, 2018; Vandell, Lee, Whitaker, & Pierce, 2020).

Meta-analyses have been conducted to examine the effects of PYD programs across multiple studies. Ciocanel, Power, Eriksen, and Gillings (2017) detected modest effects upon socio-emotional outcomes and the largest effects on academic outcomes. Further, this meta-analysis demonstrated a more narrow focus on risk and protective factors but not the wider range of outcomes that are often the goal of PYD programs. Other meta-analytic work with follow up data demonstrated that socio-emotional interventions do influence PYD. In this meta-analysis, the largest effects were found on academic performance of youth from varying racial-ethnic and social backgrounds. Further, interventions with children had larger effects than those with adolescents emphasizing the importance of early promotion efforts (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).

In summary, PYD has drawn upon conceptual and research underpinnings in resilience, positive psychology, and prevention science. Though these areas still offer much in terms of future research in PYD (e.g., socio-biological research, rigorous, longitudinal methods, person-centered approaches), PYD makes unique contributions in terms of using mixed-methods, both qualitative and quantitative to understand not only individuals but the settings processes that are core to relational developmental systems. PYD has a history of integrating more bottom up and top-down approaches that engage youth and foster agency. PYD also expands the focus of developmental science from the typical focus on variables like self-esteem and efficacy

to authenticity, racial-ethnic identities, cultural orientation, mindsets and more long-term future and life outcomes.

Broadening PYD: Ethnically Diverse Populations and International Research

The idea of studying the positive development of racial-ethnic minorities has been raised by communities that have long been defined by deficit perspectives (McLoyd, 1990). The identification of more culturally relevant dimensions becomes increasingly important as the study of PYD advances to examine the interaction of race, culture, and ethnicity both domestically and internationally. More recently, new initiatives have been undertaken by the Ethnic and Racial Issues (ERI) Committee of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) under the leadership of Natasha Cabrera. The SRCD sponsored a widely subscribed special themed conference on positive youth development among racial-ethnic minority youth resulting in a SRCD Social Policy Report and subsequent book volume (Cabrera, 2013; Cabrera & Leyendecker, 2017). Subsequently, the SRCD ERI Chair Emilie Smith, the SRCD International Affairs Committee Chair, Anne Petersen and a British psychologist Patrick Leman, edited a Special Section of *Child Development* on PYD in diverse and international contexts (Leman et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2017). Further, both Committees in collaboration with the European Association of Developmental Psychology (EADP) and the European Association for Research on Adolescence (EARA) supported an expert meeting in line with the SRCD Strategic Plan Initiatives to generate new insight on explanatory mechanisms on what is presently known about PYD and positive adaptation of immigrant and ethnically diverse youth from a global perspective. Consequently, two special issues were published on explaining positive adaptation of immigrant and minority youth in the *Journal of Adolescence* (Titzmann, Ferrer-Wreder, & Dimitrova, 2018) and on PYD across cultures in *Child & Youth Care Forum* (Wium &

Dimitrova, 2019). More initiatives, including the current volume are critical in bring international work in PYD to the forefront (Chen, Wium, & Dimitrova, 2018, 2019; Dimitrova et al., 2016; Dimitrova et al., [this volume](#); Dimitrova & Ferrer-Wreder, 2016; Fernandes, Fetvadjev, Wium, & Dimitrova, [this volume](#); Kozina, Wium, Gonzalez, & Dimitrova, 2019; Petersen, Koller, Motti-Stefanidi, & Verma, 2016; Wium, Ferrer-Wreder, Chen, & Dimitrova, 2019).

Though in practice, substantial PYD programming is often conducted in racial-ethnic minority communities around the globe, framing strengths-based processes that describe the interaction of race, ethnicity and culture around the globe, are still emerging topics of PYD research (Brittian & Williams, 2017; Dimitrova et al., 2016; Dimitrova, Johnson, & van de Vijver, 2018; Dimitrova & Wium, [this volume](#); Smith et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2014). Brittian and Williams (2017) describe PYD programs as potentially culturally relevant contexts that can socialize youth into a positive sense of their identity and culture, while promoting other aspects of health and adjustment that are culturally congruent, such as compassion for others, a collective sense of work and responsibility, along with a positive racial-ethnic identity. Research has specifically explored the interaction of ethnic identity, a sense of affirmation and belonging to one's group and found positive associations with PYD among 5–7th grade African American and Latino youth (Williams et al., 2014).

PYD work has been conducted in school contexts revealing that more democratic and equitable settings foster civic attitudes among youth of color (Jagers, Lozada, Rivas-Drake, & Guillaume, 2017). Other research has found that for Columbian youth, school climate is related to prosocial behaviors, which in turn is related to positivity, defined as optimism, self-value, and life satisfaction (Luengo Kanacri et al., 2017). Civic engagement has been explored by a number of researchers interested in PYD examining the social boundaries and opportunities for civic engagement in adolescence and early adulthood (Finlay, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011; Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020).

Both schools and afterschool programs are important contexts for PYD interventions and promotion (see Acosta et al., [this volume](#); Ginner Hau et al., [this volume](#)). In one of the few cluster, randomized study of a universal cooperative strategy in afterschool, Smith et al. (2018) found that team strategies that afford youth collective efficacy and responsibility had direct effects upon reduced hyperactive behavior and increased prosocial behaviors of listening and caring. Further, across time, program quality (i.e., appropriate levels of structure, support, and engagement) was related to caring and connection across time for African American and European American youth and was particularly related to the cultural value of respect for adults among African American and Latino youth. These collectivistic cultural values are potential newly identified aspects of PYD for youth of color (Smith, Witherspoon, et al., 2017).

PYD in international contexts is an emerging area of research (Petersen et al., 2016; Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). Wiium and Dimitrova (2019) present original research across 20 countries and 4 continents (i.e., Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America) with interdisciplinary scholars across psychology, public health, and environmental science among youth and emerging adults from ages 16–29. New studies in Brazil among diverse racial-ethnic youth have facilitated the exploration of the degree to which connectedness to family and community foster confidence and self-esteem, less perceived prejudice and problem behavior (Dutra-Thomé, DeSousa, & Koller, 2019).

In Brazil, a model of a PYD intervention fostering persistence among youth was designed for implementation in public schools. The intervention, entitled “Be the Superhero of Your Own Life” uses the images and symbolic forces of comic super heroes (CSHs) as tools for inspiring and promoting resilience among children and adolescents (Fradkin et al., 2016; Fradkin, Weschenfelder, & Yunes, 2017; Yunes, Fernandes, & Weschenfelder, 2018). Utilizing pre- and post-test meetings, the facilitator used experiential methodology as a guide to promote dialogues during the 5 modules with 2–3 activities lasting approximately 2 hours each. The results revealed

that stories of pre-cloak CSHs and their “turning points” (Rutter, 1987) help adolescents who suffer from bullying, socio-economic deprivation and/or emotional abandonment to feel empowered, hopeful, and less alone. As indicated by Fradkin et al. (2016), the program “Be the Superhero of Your Own Life” confirmed that CSHs can help adolescents in gaining trust and establishing relations with peers who have experienced similar adversities. Pre-cloak CSHs can help in this process of trust and relationship building (Fradkin et al., 2016). Future research can expand upon these creative and innovative approaches in studies of broader implementation and evaluation.

Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

This chapter provides relevant implications for future research, policy and practice. With regards to research, PYD emerges from other psychological movements in positive psychology and resilience but is distinct in its focus on the development of broader desirable characteristics in youth such as caring, character, competence, confidence, connection, contribution, and for racial-ethnic minority youth, even cultural dimensions. While research on resilience has drawn upon multiple methodological innovations, incorporating biopsychological studies, the work in PYD is more bottom-up, deserving more attention in measurement and rigorous, longitudinal evaluation methodologies (see Dimitrova & Wiium, [this volume](#)).

With regards to policy, in the United States, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21C) are part of public policy that provides some support for afterschool programming when youth are most in need of appropriately structured and supportive developmental opportunities (Afterschool Alliance, 2014). Another national initiative designed to foster youth development particularly among ethnic minority males is the My Brother’s Keeper Program (Barbarin et al., 2016). Related family support programs are being broadly implemented and disseminated

with a number being shared internationally as well (Chamberlain et al., 2008; Henggeler et al., 2009; Olds, 2002). From a public policy perspective, it is paramount that we foster empirically based policy and practice that do not depend upon individual resilience, but proactively seek to transform youth *and* their contexts to reduce systemic barriers and foster their positive developmental outcomes locally, domestically and around the globe.

Finally, in terms of implications for practice, it is the bottom-up nature of PYD, endemic to community contexts and organizations that provides promise to the broader implementation and sustainability of best practices in PYD. Innovations are being created in PYD intervention around the globe, in schools, afterschool programs, and community opportunities for civic engagement that seek to help youth be able to emerge from multiple contexts and backgrounds strong and healthy. Many of these involve youth as leaders and participants actively engaged in the change process. Important to the success of these approaches is the posture of the adult facilitators to those who perceive the worth and value of youth diverse in race-ethnicity, socio-economic status, culture and nationality, being a mediator of learning that allows youth to explore, plan, solve problems, and create. These innovations provide the focus for enhancing novel conceptual frameworks in PYD, methodological work with rigorous evaluations and innovative practices that build upon youth agency.

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