CHAPTER 15

Positive Youth Development
Processes, Philosophies, and Programs

JACQUELINE V. LERNER, EDMOND BOWERS, KELLY MINOR, MICHELLE J. BOYD,
MEGAN KIELY MUELLER, KRISTINA L. SCHMID, CHRISTOPHER M. NAPOLITANO,
SELVA LEWIN-BIZAN, AND RICHARD M. LERNER

Interests in the strengths of youth, the plasticity of human development, and the concept of resilience coalesced in the 1990s to foster the development of the concept of positive youth development (PYD; J. Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009). As discussed by Hamilton (1999), the concept of PYD was understood in at least three interrelated but nevertheless different ways: (1) as a developmental process; (2) as a philosophy or approach to youth programming; and (3) as instances of youth programs and organizations focused on fostering the healthy or positive development of youth.

In the decade following Hamilton’s (1999) discussion of PYD, several different models of the developmental process believed to be involved in PYD were used to frame descriptive or explanatory research across the adolescent period (e.g., Benson, Scales, & Syversten, 2011; Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005). As we argue below, all of these models of the developmental process reflect ideas associated with what are termed “relational developmental systems” conceptions of human development (e.g., Overton, 2010; Overton & Müller, this volume).

In this chapter we will use the tripartite conception of PYD suggested by Hamilton (1999) as a frame to review the literature on (a) the different theoretical models of the PYD developmental process; (b) philosophical ideas about, or conceptual approaches to, the nature of youth programming with a special emphasis on the model of PYD with the most extensive empirical support, the Five Cs Model of PYD (Lerner et al., 2005, 2009, 2010, in press); and (c) key instances of programs aimed at promoting PYD. We conclude this chapter by discussing the conceptual and practical problems in integrating these three facets of PYD scholarship. We point to the use of employing both the PYD and prevention science approaches to adolescent development to maximize efforts to promote positive youth outcomes.

PYD AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

Developmental science seeks to describe, explain, and optimize intraindividual change and interindividual differences
366 Adolescence

in intraindividual change across the life span (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1977). The contemporary, cutting-edge theoretical frame for such scholarship involves relational developmental systems theoretical models (Overton, 2010; Overton & Müller, this volume). These models emphasize that the basic process of human development involves mutually influential relations between the developing individual and the multiple levels of his/her changing context. These bidirectional relations may be represented as individual ←→ context relations. These relations regulate (govern) the course of development (its pace, direction, and outcomes). When these “developmental regulations” involve individual ←→ context relations benefitting both the person and his or her ecology, they may be termed “adaptive” (Brandtstädtler, 2006).

Examples of these models include Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), action theory models of intentional, goal-directed behaviors (e.g., Baltes, 1997; Brandtstädtler, 2006; Heckhausen, 1999), Elder’s (1998) life-course theory, the Theilen and Smith (2006) approach to dynamic systems theory, Magnusson’s (1999; Magnusson & Stattin, 2006) holistic person-context interaction theory, and the Ford and Lerner (1992) and the Gottlieb (1998) developmental systems formulations.

History, or temporality, is part of the ecology of human development that is integrated with the individual through developmental regulations. As such, there is always change and, as well, at least some potential for systematic change (i.e., for plasticity) across the life span (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006; Lerner, 1984). This potential for change represents a fundamental strength of human development. Of course, plasticity means that change for the better or worse can characterize any individual’s developmental trajectory. Nevertheless, a key assumption of relational developmental systems theories—and, as we will note, of the use of these theories to understand both adolescent development in general and to frame the PYD conception of developmental processes more specifically—is that the developmental system is sufficiently diverse and complex such that some means may be found (by researchers and/or practitioners) to couple individual and context in manners that enhance the probability of change for the better, of promoting more positive features of human development (J. Lerner et al., 2009; Lerner, 2002, 2004).

There are an enormous number of individual and contextual changes characterizing the adolescent period. For example, changes in the prefrontal cortex, increases in the interconnectivity among brain regions, and increases in dopamine levels provide both vulnerabilities to risk and opportunities for growth in cognitive control and self regulation (Steinberg, 2010). At the same time, most youth in Western societies are experiencing great contextual changes, such as changing schools (e.g., Eccles, 2004) and the increased relevance of peer pressure for risk taking (e.g., Gardner & Steinberg, 2005). Moreover, in adolescence, the individual has the cognitive, behavioral, and social relational skills to contribute actively and often effectively to his or her own developmental changes (Lerner, 1982; Lerner & Busch-Rossnagel, 1981; Lerner & Walls, 1999). Accordingly, adolescence is an ideal “ontogenetic laboratory” for studying the plasticity of human development and for exploring how coupling individual and contexts within the developmental system may promote positive development during this period.

THE STUDY OF ADOLESCENCE WITHIN THE RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL SYSTEM

Multiple dimensions of profound changes are prototypic of the adolescent period, involving levels of organization ranging from the physical and physiological, through the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, and to the social relational and institutional. As already noted, plasticity represents a fundamental strength of the adolescent period (Lerner, 2005, 2009), in that it reflects the potential for systematic changes that may result in more positive functioning. If adaptive developmental regulations emerge or can be fostered between the plastic, developing young person and features of his context (e.g., the structure and function of his/her family, school, peer group, and community), then the likelihood will increase that youth may thrive (that is, manifest healthy, positive developmental changes) across the adolescent decade.

Indeed, predicated on relational developmental systems theory, the links among the ideas of plasticity, adaptive developmental regulations, and positive development suggest that all young people have strengths that may be capitalized on to promote thriving (i.e., exemplary positive development; Benson et al., 2011; Lerner, 2004) across the adolescent years. For instance, one example of the emerging strengths of adolescents is their ability to contribute intentionally to adaptive developmental regulations with their context (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008). Such intentional self-regulation may involve the selection of positive goals (e.g., choosing goals that reflect important life purposes), using cognitive and behavioral skills (such as executive functioning or resource recruitment) to optimize the chances of
actualizing one’s purposes and, when goals are blocked or when initial attempts at optimization fail, possessing the capacity to compensate effectively (P. Baltes & M. Baltes, 1990; Freund & Baltes, 2002).

Simply, through the lens of relational developmental systems theory, it is possible to assert that youth represent “resources to be developed” (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, 2003b). Increasingly, this strength-based view of adolescents has been used to study PYD within the United States (e.g., J. Lerner et al., 2009) and internationally (e.g., Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). As we have noted, this research has been framed at a meta-level by the ideas of individual ←→ context relations of focus within relational developmental systems models; in addition, the research has been influenced by interest in the characteristics of PYD that emerge from this relational process, by the individual and ecological bases of the development of these characteristics, and by interest in theoretically expected outcomes of the PYD process, e.g., youth community contribution or active and engaged citizenship (e.g., Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner, & Lerner, 2010). Together, these interests by scholars in the PYD process reflect the first emphasis within the PYD field that was identified by Hamilton (1999).

APPROACHES TO PYD AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

Current theoretical conceptions of the PYD developmental process have been framed within the relational developmental systems’ metatheoretical perspective (e.g., see Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000; J. Lerner et al., 2009). Nevertheless, there are several different instantiations of this theoretical approach. We now turn to a discussion of these approaches.

William Damon and the Study of Purpose

William Damon (2008; Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Mariano & Damon, 2008) approaches the study of the PYD process through an examination of the development of purpose in youth. Damon notes that a central indicator of PYD and youth thriving is engagement in pursuits that serve the common welfare, and make meaningful contributions to communities. Damon assesses the ways in which youth go beyond their own self-centered needs and extend outward to the pursuit of goals that benefit the world.

To Damon (2008), a purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and is of intended consequence to the world beyond the self. It is an “ultimate concern” or overall goal for one’s life, helping to organize one’s life decisions and actions, and is thus manifested in one’s behavior. The purpose is internalized, or “owned” by the individual, and therefore is central to his or her identity. As such, the operational criteria of purpose are:

- The person must have all elements of the definition: something to accomplish, a beyond-the-self rationale, plans for future action, meaningfulness to self, and incorporation into one’s identity (that is, behavior that is not driven by oughts);
- The concern must function to organize the person’s decisions and activities in support of the concern;
- The person must manifest the concern with visible action; and
- The person cannot imagine himself/herself without the concern; it is necessary to do the activities related to the concern.

In their program of research at the Stanford Center on Adolescence, Damon and his colleagues (e.g., Damon et al., 2003; Mariano & Damon, 2008) have examined youth purpose through a series of studies with youth across the United States. To understand adolescents’ potential sources of purpose, they surveyed a diverse group of youth from 6th, 9th, and 12th grades and from college, and asked respondents to indicate their level of dedication to 18 categories of purpose. A “category” refers to a life area that individuals find important, and in which they may be psychologically and actively invested. The categories included: family, country, personal growth, sports, academic achievement, good health, looking good, arts, making lots of money, lifework, general leadership, romance, political or social issues, happiness, religious faith or spirituality, community service, friends, and personal values (Mariano & Damon, 2008).

Mariano and Damon (2008) indicate that contributions to community are a key indicator of positive youth development. They also present the idea that purpose is associated with increased prosocial behaviors and negatively associated with negative behaviors, and therefore is central to the study of PYD.

In extending Damon’s work, Mariano and Going (2011) emphasize the person–context relationship, in which individuals are constantly interacting with their environment and receiving resources and opportunities from a surrounding network. Mariano and Going (2011) state that purpose helps young people express and satisfy their individual
interests, strengths, and talents. They reassert that purpose in life can serve as a guide for adolescents and a way of adapting to aspects of life that adolescents may view as threatening. Two of the outcomes associated with having purpose in one’s life are coping mechanisms and psychological cohesion. Purpose helps adolescents cope by allowing them to see the positive side of whatever challenge they may be encountering. Mariano and Going (2011) found that adolescents with a more comprehensive sense of purpose focused on future improvements and the positive states that could result from challenging situations, more so than was the case among adolescents with a less comprehensive sense of purpose.

In turn, psychological cohesion is understood as a complementary set of values that adds to one’s moral character, such as humility, integrity, and vitality. Purpose helps improve the psychological aspects of an adolescent’s life by acting as the “glue” that unifies these moral characteristics. An individual with strong psychological cohesion has character traits, morals, and values that all flow together positively because of having an identified purpose in life.

In addition to suggesting that purpose is central to youth thriving, Damon and colleagues (e.g., Mariano & Damon, 2008) suggest that a youth’s purpose in life can be defined by their religion and spirituality. Pamela Ebstyne King and her colleagues (e.g., King, Carr, & Boitor, 2011) have also studied the role of religion, spirituality, and PYD in people’s lives from a relational developmental systems perspective. They assert that the constructs of religion and spirituality are complex and multidimensional, and include cognitions, feelings, behaviors, experiences, and relationships. They maintain that using relational developmental systems theory creates a perspective that allows for both the individual and the context to be included. Reflecting Damon’s conception of purpose, King et al. (2011) define spirituality as a developing sense of identity that motivates youth to care for themselves and, as well, to contribute to the greater good. They note that transcendence, fidelity, and generative actions are all key to the development of spirituality. Transcendence exists when people think beyond the self, and attribute or see significance in something bigger than themselves. For example, this focus may relate to God or to a higher being with a sense of divinity, to humanity in general, or to specific communities (such as the church). Fidelity is the adherence to transcendence, where people consistently connect to a world beyond themselves. When one has acquired both transcendence and fidelity, he or she is motivated to produce generative actions in that they promote and develop one’s own life as well as the lives in one’s community.

King and colleagues (2011) note that spirituality and religiosity are linked to PYD in several ways. First, brain development during adolescence allows for abstract thought, and adolescents begin to understand the notion of God and better understand religious beliefs. Spirituality combines one’s values and beliefs to form an individual identity and help identify a purpose in life. These developments lead to behaviors indicative of thriving. Transcendence also aids this development through providing motivation to be altruistic and more understanding of devotion, responsibility, and commitment.

In a study of urban public high school students, Furrow, King, and White, (2004) found a positive relationship between religious self-understanding, personal meaning, and prosocial personality. Differences existed in the relationship of personal meaning to prosocial personality across age and gender cohorts. Furrow and colleagues found a significant, positive association between personal meaning and prosocial concerns among boys, but no significant association among girls. This finding suggests that personal meaning may be more applicable for males than females. Overall these findings provide support for considering that, among youth, religion is a developmental resource associated with personal meaning and with concern and compassion for others.

While Damon (2008) sees purpose as an indicator of PYD, he notes that a next step in his research will require a deeper understanding of the ways that young people are purposeful. Purposeful young people may indeed be contributing to something beyond themselves, but whether that contribution is for self-serving reasons and social approval or an end in itself may be an important distinction for understanding how purpose and contribution are associated with different facets of adolescent development.

**Peter Benson and Search Institute and the Study of Developmental Assets**

The work of Peter Benson and his colleagues at Search Institute (e.g., Benson, 2008; Benson et al., 2011) has been integral in providing the vocabulary and vision about the strengths of young people and the communities in which they reside. Coining the term “developmental assets,” Benson and his colleagues describe “internal” or individual assets, which are a set of “skills, competencies, and values” of a young person. These assets are grouped into four categories: (1) commitment to learning; (2) positive values; (3) social competencies; and (4) positive identity (Benson et al., 2011). These individual assets represent the talents, energies, strengths, constructive interests, and
“sparks” that every young person possesses (Benson, 2008). Thriving occurs as a result of aligning these individual strengths with a community’s “external” or ecological assets, which are conceived as “environmental, contextual, and relational features of socializing systems” and are organized into four categories: (1) support; (2) empowerment; (3) boundaries and expectations; and (4) constructive use of time (e.g., Benson et al., 2011).

In a series of studies, Benson and his colleagues found these assets to be predictive of seven behavioral indicators of thriving, including: (1) school success; (2) leadership; (3) helping others; (4) maintenance of physical health; (5) delay of gratification; (6) valuing diversity; and (7) overcoming adversity (Leffert et al., 1998; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). For example, achievement motivation and school engagement, which are internal assets, in combination with time spent in youth programs, which is an external asset, significantly predicted school success for six different racial/ethnic groups of 6th- to 12th-grade students. In turn, higher levels of assets have been related to positive developmental outcomes such as higher school achievement, better physical health, lower levels of risk behaviors, and resilience (Reininger et al., 2003; Scales, Leffert, & Vraa, 2003).

Benson and colleagues have emphasized the practical application of research on the developmental assets by highlighting the role of communities in fostering well-being and positive development among young people. In the last two decades, the work of the Search Institute has been useful in helping communities to develop long-term goals for PYD. Today, more than 300 communities across the country have incorporated the Search Institute asset-building framework.

In sum, Benson and colleagues’ focus on research and applications is aimed at sustaining the positive strengths of youth and building upon them, rather than on eliminating risk behaviors. Current work by Benson and colleagues (e.g., Benson et al., 2011) seeks to extend the developmental assets approach to diverse youth, both in the United States and internationally.

Jacquelynne Eccles, the Study of Stage-Environment Fit, and Expectancy-Value Theory

Jacquelynne Eccles’s work focuses on elucidating how a “fit” between contextual variables (e.g., schools, families, and youth programs) and individual characteristics (e.g., motivational constructs such as expectations and values) contributes to the healthy, positive development of adolescents (e.g., Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Gutman & Eccles, 2007). Through a focus on assessing early and middle adolescents’ relationships within families, transitions to junior high or middle school, and participation in youth programs, Eccles and colleagues have forwarded a theoretically rich and empirically robust body of work indicating that social contexts must be developmentally appropriate for the youth populations they serve in order to ensure a (developmental) “stage-environment fit” that motivates adolescents and that promotes their positive development (e.g., Eccles, 2004). When youth develop in environments that respond to their changing needs, they are more likely to experience positive outcomes; youth in nonresponsive families, schools, or programs may experience difficulties and develop problems. Accordingly, when adolescents develop in settings reflecting stage-environment fit, positive and healthy changes occur. Such fit presupposes that youth and “context” act in mutually beneficial ways toward each other (e.g., Brandstädter, 1998; Lerner, 2006); that is, there are adaptive developmental regulations between youth and their contexts. Much of Eccles’s work examines the variables that motivate adolescents to act in ways to promote their positive development.

Specifically, Eccles and colleagues use the expectancy-value model of achievement-related choices (e.g., Eccles, 2004) to understand youth-context relations. This model holds that an individual’s activity choice, persistence, and performance are related to his or her expectations of success and value for the activity, which in turn are influenced by a variety of other personal and contextual factors (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Using this model, Eccles and colleagues have identified the various characteristics of schools that better support an adolescent’s expectancy for success and value for academic goals (Eccles & Roeser, 2009). For example, these school characteristics include teacher’s expectations for high student achievement and the provision of structured after-school activities (e.g., Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Eccles and colleagues have also found that several characteristics common to the United States education system, most notably the transition into junior high or middle school, often have adverse effects on young adolescents’ motivation, achievement, and positive development (e.g., Eccles & Roeser, 2009).

The work of Eccles and colleagues provides a theoretical model for and empirical evidence of the dynamic person ↔ context interactions that result in positive outcomes for young people. That is, contextual variables influence youth characteristics, which in turn affect the type of contexts with which youth are engaged. While Eccles’
primary focus has been on the school factors that influence youth motivation, we now turn to Reed Larson’s work on youth motivation within youth development programs.

Reed Larson and the Study of Motivation, Active Engagement, and Real-Life Challenges

For Larson (2006), PYD is “a process in which young people’s capacity for being motivated by challenge energizes their active engagement in development” (p. 677). For positive development to occur, the motivational system must become activated, and remain engaged in multiple domains of development, while young people deal with everyday real-life challenges. Larson characterizes a young person’s initiative as both a key component of PYD and, as well, an important focal point for youth development programs seeking to promote PYD (Larson, 2000). Defining initiative as “the capacity to direct cumulative effort over time toward achievement of a long term goal” (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005, p. 160), Larson (2000) posits that initiative is a central requirement for “components of PYD, such as creativity, leadership, altruism, and civic engagement” (p. 170).

Larson’s work looks at the match between the experiences of adolescents and the requirements of the adult world they are preparing to enter. He seeks to understand this integration by describing the diversity of developmental tasks, skills, and competencies adolescents need to develop in order to successfully transition into adulthood in different cultures. With his focus on agency and initiative, much of the recent work by Larson and colleagues focuses on how youth development programs can best develop these and related skills in participating youth (e.g., Dawes & Larson, 2011). Larson has suggested that across diverse programs, an important component for the development of initiative may be the concurrent development of personal connections with adult leaders or other participating peers.

Out-of-school-time (OST) activity is a context that Larson has studied in depth. Programs with structured activities are seen as contexts in which youth can act as producers of their own positive development (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Larson et al., 2004; Lerner, 1982); such contexts offer opportunities to develop skills and competencies necessary for negotiating the real world (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005). These skills and competencies include taking initiative, developing leadership, and learning responsibility, as well as strategic and teamwork skills (Larson, 2000; Larson & Hansen, 2005; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006; Larson et al., 2005; Larson & Walker, 2006; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). At the same time, participation in structured activities may be associated with negative experiences such as stress, inappropriate adult behavior, negative influences, social exclusion, and negative group dynamics.

In all types of programs, adults were found to play an important role in facilitating positive development (Larson & Hansen, 2005; Larson & Walker, 2006; Larson et al., 2004, 2005). Successful adult leaders use techniques such as following the lead of youth, cultivating a culture of youth input, monitoring and creating intermediate steps in task management, and stretching and pushing youth (Larson et al., 2004). Larson and Angus (2011) identify youth programs as an ideal place for adolescent skill building, especially when the content of the program relates to skills of action (e.g. planning and creating events or strategies). Such programs are also a means to further adolescent empowerment.

However, Larson notes that an issue has arisen between the professionals who work with these adolescents and their ability to empower them. For example, it is common for adult leaders to become uncertain about how much autonomy to give the adolescent, or how much of their own agency and knowledge they should use in helping the adolescent develop. Comparatively, youth report that they like their advisor giving them freedom, but also that their assistance was helpful. Thus, some balance of assistance and freedom may be optimal.

One of Larson’s many contributions to the field of youth development is the close attention he has paid to the specific aspects of youth development programs, such as developmental opportunities and actions of adults that contribute to positive development. His focus on the developmental processes that occur with youth in successful programs elucidates possible intrapersonal pathways towards positive youth development.

Margaret Beale Spencer and the PVEST Model

Margaret Beale Spencer’s Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) is a dynamic and systemic framework for studying development that takes into account social structural factors, cultural influences, and individual experiences, as well as individuals’ perceptions of these features (Spencer, 2006b). A central feature of this model is an emphasis on the ways in which youth make sense of their contexts and the role that these understandings play in their perceptions of events, people, and opportunities in their environments. The work of Spencer and her colleagues and students has especially focused on how youth respond to their environments when they...
are seen as reflecting social inequities or injustices, using PVEST as a framework for interpreting their findings.

An important theoretical consequence of this model for the study of PYD is that different youth will experience the same events and settings through different lenses, which can yield different interpretations and effects. Thus, while an after-school homework club might promote academic competence for some youth, for others the same context might evoke disturbing reminders of earlier unavailability of resources, such as access to books and teacher help. The effectiveness of this asset, then, is likely to vary according to youth perceptions of this setting.

While attention has been paid to the importance of bidirectional interactions of individual characteristics and ecological contexts, Spencer argues that the role of structural inequality must be considered as well. The framework of PYD and thriving is intended to be a general theory of human development that should be applicable to all youth. Spencer’s model provides a way to include the systematic effects of shared contexts on youth perceptions of their environments in the transactional study of PYD.

Spencer’s research with the PVEST model has focused especially on youth of color and on poor youth. In part, her scholarship is a critique of researchers’ “failure to consider their [youth of color’s] unique human development experiences in socially constructed and culturally unique contexts” (Spencer, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1991; Spencer, 2006a, p. 271). The contexts of underserved neighborhoods, impoverished communities, and families under stress that often characterize urban, and frequently African American, children, and the lifelong structural effects of these contexts, are generally ignored or characterized as random error in developmental models (Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, & Harpalani, 2001). In addition, Spencer’s work points directly to the need to study positive outcomes for all youth, defined within the cultures and contexts in which youth and their families find themselves (Spencer, 2006a). The PVEST model provides a nuanced structure in which to do this research. This contribution exists in part because the everyday experiences of race, which include both overt and subtle racism with which people of color must learn to cope, and the demands of socialization, which all youth face, are explicitly acknowledged and modeled (Lee, Spencer, & Harpalani, 2003).

The work of Spencer and her colleagues brings notions of injustice and inequality into developmental models. Structural inequity, racism, and poverty are not individual characteristics, nor are they context-specific. They are pervasive facts of American life that affect all segments of the population in various, complex ways. At the same time, the actual experience is perceived at the individual level. What one adolescent experiences as stress may not affect his or her neighbor or sibling in the same way (Spencer, 1995).

Spencer argues that to effectively promote thriving, these factors will need to be understood better and incorporated into the models and methods of PYD. Her scholarship offers a powerful frame for such research. As well, it stands in many ways as the conscience for our field, as a means to keep issues of social justice and rigorous, theory-predicated developmental science integrated and at the forefront of our scholarly agenda. Consistent with the work of Spencer, other researchers have examined how positive development may occur in contexts that are marked by high risk and adversity. One key focus has been on the study of resilience among youth.

**Ann Masten and the Study of Resilience**

Masten (2001) notes that to be considered resilient, an individual must not only be identified as experiencing adversity, but he or she must also be deemed as doing “good” or “okay” in terms of the quality of adaptation or of developmental outcomes. Accordingly, her work involves “understanding behavior problems in the full context of human development . . . focus(ing) on variations in adaptation” (Masten, 2004, p. 311). She believes that research on positive and maladaptive functioning and development are mutually informative (Masten, 2001, 2004).

Masten’s work on determining what constitutes positive adaptation focuses on competence in age-salient developmental tasks (e.g., Masten, 2001; Masten, Obradović, & Burt, 2006). Thus, resilience is a dynamic construct, as developmentally appropriate tasks vary according to the age of the individual as well as in relation to the cultural and historical context in which the individual was raised. Competence in managing the salient developmental tasks of one’s sociocultural context is a multidimensional operationalization of adaptation, as there are multiple tasks during any given developmental stage in any given place at any given time. Within this framework, maladaptive development would be operationalized as failure to meet the expectations of a given society for several domains of development or for one major domain (Masten, 2001).

According to Masten (2001), resilience occurs as the result of mutually influential individual → context relations. Therefore, young people whose lives are characterized as resilient may be identified not only by the competence they develop with respect to developmental tasks, but also by the quality of resources available to them. This conceptual orientation has led Masten to study
the cascades of individual context relationships that are linked to the presence of resilience in adolescent development, arguing that different interactions occur in developing systems and result in spreading effects across levels, among domains at the same level, and across different systems or generations. These different interactions have cumulative consequences for development (e.g., Masten & Cicchetti, 2010).

In her own work with the Project Competence group (Masten et al., 1999) and in reviews of the resilience literature (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), Masten specifies that three adaptive systems are crucial for the development of competence: parenting, self-regulation skills, and cognitive functioning. For example, in the 10-year assessment of their urban sample (Masten et al., 1999), Masten and colleagues found evidence to support the position that cognitive functioning and parenting quality are fundamental adaptational systems, as they predicted current and future adaptation in children and adolescents (academic achievement, conduct, and peer social acceptance).

The work of Masten highlights the need to study dynamic person–context relationships and the importance of plasticity for understanding the intraindividual changes and interindividual differences in intraindividual changes that mark human development. Findings from this person-centered approach have come up in contradiction to a belief of many risk-focused social scientists—that risk factors for the most part predict negative outcomes. Findings from resilience research suggest that risk factors are predictive of negative outcomes for only about 20% to 49% of a given high-risk population (Rutter, 1987, 2000; Werner & Smith, 2001). In contrast, the supports and opportunities that buffer the effects of adversity and enable development to proceed appear to predict positive outcomes in 50% to 80% of individuals in a high-risk population. From resilience research such as Masten’s, scholars and practitioners are provided information about supports and opportunities that might serve as protective factors not only for youth facing adversity, but for all young people.

Young people experience several transitions in which the supports and opportunities identified in Masten’s research become especially relevant. In the next section, we review Stephen and Mary Agnes Hamilton’s work on the assets that support youth during a transition indicative of youth competence—the school-to-work transition.

**Stephen Hamilton and Mary Agnes Hamilton and Positive Adolescent-to-Adult Transitions**

The scholarship of Hamilton and Hamilton (e.g., Hamilton, 1994; M. Hamilton & Hamilton, 2005; S. Hamilton & Hamilton, 1999, 2006, 2009) elucidates the developmental processes that encompass the transition from adolescence to adulthood, with a particular emphasis on the school-to-work transition and the role of adults, programs, and institutions in supporting this transition. The transition to adulthood is defined by changes in social roles, as adolescents shift from being dependent upon adults to being capable of caring for self and others. This shift is structured by the many contexts in which a youth is embedded—family, school, work, and society.

The Hamiltons’ scholarship provides theory and research that helps frame our understanding of the issues faced by youth trying to connect school and work. In addition, the Hamiltons offer ideas for policies and programs useful for enhancing the school-to-work connection for all youth and, in particular, for those adolescents who seek full-time employment immediately after completion of high school. For instance, studying adolescents and young adults from seven nations—United States, Germany, Japan, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden—Hamilton (1994) noted that “Adolescents who believe their current efforts will bring them closer to a desirable future are far more likely to work hard in school and avoid self-destructive behavior than those who are either unable to think about the future or who believe their prospects are beyond their control” (pp. 267–268).

To attain the link they desire between their adolescent school context and their young adult work context, adolescents must consider two key facets of the worlds of education and work/career: transparency and permeability. Transparency describes the extent to which young people can “see through” the intricacies of the stated and the unstated rules of the educational system and the labor market and, using this understanding, plan a course of action to move from where they are in the present (e.g., a senior in high school) to a goal they have for the future (e.g., employment as an electrical engineer, as an accountant, or as a beautician). Permeability involves the amount of effort needed to move from, say, a plan involving becoming an electrical engineer to a plan involving becoming an orthodontist or to a plan involving becoming a sales clerk if one has decided that one is no longer interested in becoming a beautician.

The Hamiltons’ work highlights how subtle features of the contexts within which youth develop contribute to their positive development in several important ways. For example, for youth in poverty, the school-to-work transition is the best opportunity to rise above their current socioeconomic status (S. Hamilton & Hamilton, 2009). However, for this transcendence to occur, youth must reside in societies that allow social mobility and live during a
time when this mobility is possible. The success of this transition is also dependent on individual characteristics, including educational and employment experiences. A poor youth born in a relatively mobile society such as the United States has varied chances of a successful transition to work, depending on the era in which he or she was born, his or her race or ethnicity, and his or her ability to meet the requirements of a desired position. In short, the school-to-work transition is defined by normative and non-normative changes in individual–context relationships that are subject to individual, social, and historical influences.

We turn now to a model of PYD that incorporates these multilevel concepts into its framing of positive youth development: the Five Cs model of Lerner, Lerner, and colleagues.

RICHARD M. LERNER, JACQUELINE V. LERNER, AND COLLEAGUES AND THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL ←→ CONTEXT RELATIONAL PROCESSES AND PYD

The model of the PYD process used by Lerner, Lerner, and their colleagues (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005; R. Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011, Lerner et al., in press) explicitly draws on the individual ←→ context relational conception to develop a model of the PYD process. This model has been elaborated in the context of the longitudinal study of PYD conducted by R. Lerner, Lerner, and colleagues, the 4-H Study of PYD (e.g., Bowers et al., 2010; Lerner et al., 2005). This research seeks to identify the individual and ecological relations that may promote thriving and, as well, that may have a preventive effect in regard to risk/problem behaviors. Within the 4-H Study, thriving is seen as the growth of attributes that mark a flourishing, healthy young person, e.g., the characteristics termed the Five Cs of PYD—competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner et al., 2005; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, 2003b).

A key hypothesis tested in this approach to the developmental process of PYD is that, if:

(a) the strengths of youth (e.g., a young person’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement with the school context, having the “virtue” of hope for the future, or possession of intentional self-regulation skills such as Selection [S], Optimization [O], and Compensation [C]); can (b) be aligned with the resources for positive growth found in families, schools, and communities—for instance, the capacities of adults to provide for young people a nurturing, positive milieu in which their strengths may be enhanced and positively directed (e.g., Benson et al., 2011; DuBois & Rhodes, 2006; Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002; Lewin-Bizan, Bowers, & Lerner, 2010; Rhodes & Lowe, 2009); then (c) young people’s healthy development may be optimized (Lerner, 2004). In addition, given that positively developing youth should be involved in adaptive developmental regulations, then a thriving young person should act to contribute to the context that is benefiting him or her; there should be contributions to self, family, community, and civil society (Jeličić, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2007; Lerner et al., 2005).

In other words, if positive development rests on mutually beneficial relations between the adolescent and his/her ecology, then thriving youth should be positively engaged with and act to enhance their world. As well, they should be less prone to engage in risk/problem behaviors. Figure 15.1 presents an illustration of the R. Lerner and Lerner conception of the PYD developmental process.

As indicated in the figure, the developmental process envisioned by Lerner and Lerner (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005) to be involved in PYD involves adaptive developmental regulations between the strengths of youth and the developmental assets present in their ecologies. These mutually beneficial individual ←→ context relations are depicted as being associated with PYD (and the Five Cs associated with this construct) and, in turn, with the enhanced probability of youth contributions to their ecology and with lowered probabilities of risk/program behaviors. The outcomes of these adaptive developmental regulations feed back to the individual and his or her context and thus create a nonrecursive basis for further adaptive developmental regulations. The figure illustrates as well that these adaptive developmental regulations and their positive and problematic sequelae exist within the broader ecology of human development. This ecology includes cultural and, as well, historical (temporal) variation, and thus introduces change at all levels of organization within the developmental system (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Elder, 1998). Such changes are manifested by intraindividual change, by interindividual differences in intraindividual change, and by normative and non-normative contextual variation (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1977).

Empirical Support for the Five Cs Model of PYD

To test the ideas presented in Figure 15.1, researchers at the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (IARYD) at Tufts University launched the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development in the Fall of 2002. The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development is a longitudinal
investigation supported by a grant from the National 4-H Council and the Altria Corporation. Data were collected annually for 5th through 12th grades. The 4-H Study sought to study youth in their actual environments, rather than conducting randomized controlled trials. In these environments, youth and their parents, rather than research investigators, make decisions about how they spend their time.

We provide here only a brief description of the methodology of the study; full details of the methodology have been presented in numerous empirical publications (e.g., Bowers et al., 2010; Jeličić et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2005; Phelps et al., 2007, 2009; Theokas & Lerner, 2006). The 4-H Study uses a form of longitudinal sequential design. Fifth graders, gathered during the 2002–2003 school year (which was Wave 1 of the study), were the initial cohort within this design. To maintain at least initial levels of power for within-time analyses and to permit assessment of the affects of retesting, subsequent waves of the study involved the addition of a new cohort (of youth of the current grade level of the initial cohort); this new cohort was then followed longitudinally. Overall, across eight waves of the study, approximately 7,000 youth and 3,500 of their parents from 42 states were surveyed. At all eight waves, the sample varied in race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family structure, rural-urban location, geographic region, and program participation experiences.

Data were collected through the use of a student questionnaire (SQ), a parent questionnaire (PQ), and—to assess facets of the settings within which youth develop—from school district administrators and from Web-based or census tract data, for example, about community and school resources and school climate. These data collection procedures enable the identification of the resources, or developmental assets, that exist in these settings of youth. In addition, through obtaining information about the young person’s strengths (e.g., intentional self regulation, school engagement, and hopeful future expectations) the study assessed the individual strengths of adolescents.

Patterns of participation in OST activities are also assessed in this study. These activities include PYD programs (such as 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, Scouts,
YMCA, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters), sports, arts and crafts, interest clubs, religious clubs, performing arts organizations, or service organizations. Information about civic engagement/civic contribution; future aspirations and expectations; relationships with parents, friends, and other adults; and values were also measured. In addition, parents were asked about the nature and composition of their household, their parenting style, and their education, employment, and neighborhood.

**Key Discoveries to Date**

Both the initial findings of the 4-H study and the more recent findings have brought empirical data to bear on several key ideas within the Lerner and Lerner PYD perspective. We discuss several discoveries about the key premises of the Lerner and Lerner PYD model, including the structure of PYD, its antecedents (youth strengths and ecological assets), and its functional significance for youth positive and problematic outcomes.

**The Structure of PYD**

Support for the structural model of PYD illustrated in Figure 15.1 has been provided by the 4-H Study dataset from the beginning of the adolescent period through, to date, 11th grade (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005; Phelps et al., 2009; Bowers et al. 2010). For instance, Phelps and colleagues (2009) assessed the structure and development of PYD from 5th through 7th grades of the 4-H Study and provided evidence of a latent construct of PYD that generalized across the early years of adolescent development and that could be operationalized by lower-order latent constructs representing the Five Cs. Bowers and colleagues (2010) extended these findings by demonstrating that the structure of PYD in middle adolescence (8th through 10th grades) was comparable to the structure of this construct present across the early years of adolescence. Bowers and colleagues found that while the overall structure of PYD was maintained across 8th through 10th grades, the scales relevant to measuring the Five Cs were slightly different for two of the Cs during middle adolescence than for early adolescence. That is, reflective of developmental change, athletic competence was no longer a relevant indicator of Competence during middle adolescence. In turn, physical appearance significantly loaded on the latent construct of Confidence.

**The Strengths of Youth**

From the relational developmental systems PYD perspective, all young people have strengths that may be capitalized on to promote thriving across the adolescent years. One example of the emerging strengths of adolescents is their ability to contribute intentionally to the adaptive developmental regulations with their context, for instance, as indexed through the use of selection, optimization, and compensation (SOC) behaviors (Freund & Baltes, 2002; Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007, 2008). Other instances of strengths are specific self regulations in key contexts of adolescents, for example, school engagement (Li, 2011), and youth beliefs and emotional structures pertinent to their futures (Schmid, Phelps, Kiely, et al., 2011). For instance, having a hopeful future orientation may energize the activation of the self-regulatory skills of youth, even in the face of challenges to their opportunities to contribute to the adaptive developmental regulations requisite for positive development.

**Intentional Self Regulation**

Using the selection (S), optimization (O), and compensation (C) (or SOC) measure developed by P. Baltes, M. Baltes, and colleagues (e.g., Baltes, 1997; Freund & Baltes, 2002) to index intentional self regulation (ISR), Gestsdóttir, Lerner and their colleagues have found that SOC, conceptualized as reflecting the individual’s “contribution” to adaptive individual context relationships, covaries positively with positive youth development (PYD) and negatively with problem behaviors (e.g., Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007; Gestsdóttir, Bowers, von Eye, Napolitano, & Lerner, 2010; Gestsdóttir, Lewin-Bizan, von Eye, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009; Zimmerman, Phelps, & Lerner, 2007, 2008). Lerner and colleagues have also identified the structure of SOC over the adolescent period. They found that, in early adolescence (5th, 6th, and 7th grades), SOC was best represented as a global structure rather than three differentiated processes (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007) but, by 8th grade, the tripartite, elective selection, optimization, and compensation structure of SOC was identified (Gestsdóttir et al., 2009) and by 10th grade, Gestsdóttir and colleagues (2010) confirmed the presence of a four-component structure of intentional self-regulation: Elective Selection (ES), Optimization (O), Compensation (C), and Loss-Based Selection (LBS). In each study, SOC scores correlated positively with indicators of PYD and negatively with substance use, delinquency, and depressive symptoms.

Bowers, Gestsdóttir, Geldhof et al. (2011) examined the development of intentional self regulation across seven years of adolescence (5th through 11th grades) to ascertain whether distinctive patterns of ISR development existed, whether these trajectories differed in relation to
several 5th-grade parenting characteristics, and whether ISR trajectories were linked to positive and negative developmental outcomes at 11th grade. Across the developmental period spanning 5th through 11th grades, four distinct trajectories of global SOC development could be identified—Steady Decline, Elevated, Pronounced Decline, and Late Onset. The majority of youth in the sample experienced a steady decline in global SOC. Lower levels of parental warmth, monitoring, and school involvement at Grade 5 predicted Late-Onset ISR development, while Pronounced-Decline adolescents reported lower levels of PYD and Contribution in 11th grade.

These findings highlight the importance of recognizing the principles of multipotentiality, equifinality, and multifinality (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996; von Bertalanffy, 1968) when conducting developmental research. That is, initially disparate ISR groups arrived at similar developmental outcomes through different pathways whereas groups who reported similar global SOC levels at the onset of adolescence were significantly different in 11th grade.

**Hopeful Future**

Emotions, such as hope for one’s future, along with the cognitive and behavioral skills youth need to activate SOC skills to achieve future goals, may also play important roles in the development of positive and problematic characteristics manifested across adolescence. Using data from youth participants from the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades of the 4-H Study, Schmid, Phelps, Kiely, and colleagues (2011) assessed the role of a hopeful future in predicting growth trajectories of positive and negative developmental outcomes, including PYD, Contribution, risk behaviors, and depressive symptoms. The SOC measure was also included as a covariate to predict developmental outcomes. Controlling for sex and SES, higher levels of both hopeful future and SOC significantly predicted membership in the most favorable trajectories. Hopeful future was a stronger predictor than SOC for each of the outcomes assessed. In a subsequent study exploring the developmental associations between hopeful future expectations and SOC, Schmid and colleagues (Schmid, Phelps, & Lerner, 2011) found that although both constructs were strong predictors of PYD in middle adolescence, the results indicated that earlier hopeful expectations for the future may be influential for later intentional self-regulation abilities.

**School Engagement**

School engagement is a person context relational construct that depicts the way in which the individual cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally interacts with the school setting (Li, Lerner, & Lerner, 2010) and, as such, school engagement may mediate the associations between ecological and personal assets and academic competence. Using structural equation modeling procedures, relations between school engagement and academic competence were assessed through the use of 5th- and 6th-grade data from the 4-H Study (Li et al., 2010). Factor analyses provided evidence for two school engagement components, Behavioral and Emotional. These two factors mediated the relationship between assets and academic competence in different ways. Emotional engagement was actually indirectly linked to academic competence via behavioral engagement. Behavioral and emotional engagement also had different individual and contextual antecedents. Behavioral engagement was predicted by the individual assets of ISR and educational expectations, while emotional engagement was predicted by the ecological assets of parental involvement, maternal warmth, peer support, and school climate.

In subsequent studies Li and colleagues (Li & Lerner, 2011; Li, Zhang et al., 2011) have assessed the development of the two facets of school engagement and their relationship to both positive and problematic youth outcomes. Using a semi-parametric mixture model, four trajectories for behavioral school engagement and four trajectories of emotional engagement were identified across 5th to 8th grades.

Li and Lerner (2011) were also able to identify several instances of sex, race/ethnicity, and family SES differences with regard to membership in both behavioral and emotional engagement trajectory groups. In general, boys, youth of color, and youth from less advantaged families tended to be in less favorable trajectory groups for both behavioral and emotional engagement. Findings suggested that associations between behavioral engagement and nonacademic outcomes exist as youth who experienced more positive pathways of behavioral or emotional engagements tended to have better grades, were less depressed, and were less likely to be involved in delinquency and drug abuse than youth who followed less favorable trajectories.

Li and her colleagues also estimated discrete-time survival analyses to assess the effect of behavioral and emotional school engagement on the subsequent initiation of drug use and delinquency (Li, Zhang et al., 2011). Results indicated that, controlling for demographic variables, higher degrees of behavioral and emotional school engagement predicted a significantly lower risk of substance use and involvement in delinquency.

Finally, the contextual predictors of behavioral and emotional school engagement have recently been reported...
Ecological Assets and PYD

The relations among observed ecological assets in the families, schools, and neighborhoods of youth with positive and negative developmental outcomes were assessed among 5th-grade youth from the 4-H Study (Theokas & Lerner, 2006). Ecological asset indicators were categorized into four categories: (1) human; (2) physical or institutional; (3) collective activity; and (4) accessibility, and were measured equivalently across the three contexts. Different dimensions of the family, school, and neighborhood settings had the most comprehensive impact on the different developmental outcomes, specifically collective activity in the family, accessibility in school, and human resources in the neighborhood. However, in all settings, assets associated with individuals were the most potent predictors of PYD. Family assets were most important in the lives of youth, as one of the strongest predictors of PYD was eating dinner together as a family.

Subsequent analyses of the youth from Theokas and Lerner’s work (2006) indicated that dimensions of the neighborhood interact with adolescent extracurricular activity involvement to predict PYD, depressive symptoms, and risk behaviors (Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009). The direction of these relationships differed for boys and girls. Girls who lived in lower asset neighborhoods exhibited higher levels of PYD and lower levels of depressive symptoms and risk behaviors when they engaged in extracurricular activities. At high levels of activity involvement, girls in high asset neighborhoods exhibited increased levels of risk behaviors, particularly if they lived in neighborhoods with abundant physical resources. The opposite relationships were seen in boys. Moderate to high levels of activity involvement predicted lower levels of PYD and higher levels of risk behaviors for boys living in lower asset neighborhoods. For boys living in high asset neighborhoods, activity involvement was generally beneficial. Increased activity involvement was associated with increased levels of PYD and decreased levels of risk behaviors. The findings from this study pointed to the need to consider the influence that multiple contextual factors can have on development.

Recent analyses by Bowers, von Eye, and colleagues (2011), also following up on the Theokas and Lerner (2006) work, assessed the relationships between these ecological assets and trajectories of positive and problematic development. Assets at the family, school, and neighborhood levels differentiated goal-optimization trajectories, while factors at the school level differentiated delinquency trajectories. However, an ecological asset was not found that consistently differentiated both goal-optimization trajectories and delinquency trajectories. The results indicated that collective activity in the family best predicted membership for the five goal-optimization trajectories that were identified, whereas school-based assets (physical resources and accessibility) differentiated the four delinquency trajectories that were identified.

The 4-H Study data have been used also to examine specifically the ecological assets of parenting and youth programs in relation to the youth strength of intentional self regulation. For example, using data from 5th through 8th grades from the 4-H Study, Lewin-Bizan, Bowers, & Lerner (2010) found a developmental cascade wherein positive parenting (as indexed by warmth and monitoring) was a major contextual asset predicting subsequent intentional self regulation; intentional self regulation predicted subsequent scores for PYD; and, in turn, PYD positively predicted later youth Contribution scores.

Using person-centered configural frequency analysis (von Eye, 2002), Napolitano, Bowers, Gestsdóttir, Depping, and colleagues (2011) examined patterns of parenting (warmth, monitoring, school involvement) and the development of goal selection processes across 9th through 11th grades, conceptualized and measured by the Selection subscale of the SOC measure. The researchers also assessed the relation of these patterns to the positive development of youth. Across analyses of maternal warmth, parental monitoring, and parental school involvement, Napolitano and colleagues found that the most common pathway to 11th-grade thriving involved a youth having stable, consistently above-median Selection scores and above-median levels of the parenting variables for at least two times of
measurement. However, the findings also indicated that a higher than expected number of youth with consistently low levels of Selection had above-median PYD at 11th grade, regardless of their perceptions of maternal warmth, parental monitoring, or parental school involvement.

As noted, several studies have also used the 4-H Study data set to examine possible interactions between self-regulatory processes and OST activity participation. For example, Urban, Lewin-Bizan, and Lerner (2010) found that both the strengths of youth and the resources of their contexts are involved in thriving. Urban and colleagues (2010) employed data from 5th through 7th grade to explore whether youth intentional self-regulation abilities moderated the effect of participation in OST activities on PYD among adolescents living in neighborhoods with relatively low levels of ecological assets. Overall, Urban and colleagues (2010) found that youth in these settings who had the greatest capacity to self-regulate (i.e., youth with the highest SOC scores) benefited the most from involvement in OST activities, in terms of PYD, depressive symptoms, and risk behaviors. These relations were particularly strong for girls.

Mueller et al. (2011) used data from 8th, 9th, and 10th grades of the 4-H Study in order to examine the relationship between adolescents’ SOC abilities and their participation in youth development (YD) programs across 8th and 9th grades in predicting 10th-grade PYD and Contribution. Results indicated that while self-regulation skills alone predicted PYD, self-regulation and YD program participation both predicted Contribution. In addition, 8th grade YD participation positively predicted 9th-grade SOC, which, in turn, predicted 10th-grade PYD and Contribution.

**Trajectories of Positive and Problem Behavior**

Initial formulations of the PYD perspective suggested that if PYD is promoted, then risk and problem behaviors would be in turn diminished (e.g., Benson, Mannes, Pittman, & Ferber, 2004; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001). Findings from the 4-H Study have shown a more complex pattern of positive and negative developmental trajectories; these pathways are not simply inversely related (Lewin-Bizan, Lynch, et al., 2010; Phelps et al., 2007).

Phelps and colleagues (2007) assessed the patterns of change associated with indicators of PYD and of risks/problem behaviors through use of data from the first three waves of data (5th, 6th, and 7th grades) from the 4-H Study. They identified several different trajectories of positive and problematic/risk behaviors. Only about one-sixth of all youth in the sample manifested a pattern of change marked by the coupling of increases in PYD and decreases in risk/problem behaviors. Other youth remained stable over time, showed increases in PYD and risk, and declined in PYD.

In turn, Lewin-Bizan, Lynch, et al. (2010), using the 4-H Study data across 5th through 10th grade, found that youth who were high in PYD (i.e., the group of youth with increasing-to-stable-high PYD) were also more likely to be in a group of youth having risk behaviors that increased (and later decreased) than in a group having the lowest risk behaviors. Thus, negative trajectories are not simply the “other side of the coin” of positive trajectories.

Schwartz et al. (2010) examined the association of PYD with the likelihood of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, hard drug, and sex initiation for youth in 5th through 10th grade of the 4-H Study. Survival analysis models indicated that PYD was significantly and negatively associated with the initiation hazards for tobacco use, marijuana use, and sex for girls only, and with hard drug use for both genders. PYD was also positively associated with the odds of condom use across genders. Schwartz and colleagues also found that PYD was positively related to the timing of alcohol use initiation for boys, but not for girls. Perhaps surprisingly, for a one standard deviation increase in PYD, the odds of boys initiating alcohol use during the study would be expected to increase by 24%. Thus, consistent with the idea that relationships between positive and negative behaviors is not straightforward, the findings of Schwartz et al. (2010) point to the need for future research assessing the bases of these variations. Overall, the multiplicity of patterns of conjoint trajectories for PYD and risks/problem behaviors constitutes a challenge for both developmental theory and applications aimed at enhancing resilience and positive development among adolescents.

**Conclusions**

The results of the 4-H Study of PYD provide important insights into what constitutes PYD and what individual and contextual factors might relate to adolescent thriving. We believe that the relational developmental systems approach taken by 4-H Study researchers has been useful in understanding, first, the plasticity of human development and, second, the importance of dynamic relations between adolescents and their real-world ecological settings.

As we turn now to a review of PYD as a philosophy to understanding, or conceptualizing, youth programs, it is important to note that, while there is some substantial variation in the focus of different conceptions of the PYD process, all models we have described highlight the adaptive individual ↔ context relations that constitute
 Positive Youth Development: Processes, Philosophies, and Programs  379

PYD as a Philosophy or Approach to Youth Programming

The second component of Hamilton’s (1999) definition of PYD is that it is a philosophy or approach to youth programming. There are numerous excellent examples of this second facet of PYD, the most prominent and influential one being the Eccles and Gootman (2002) National Academy of Sciences report on community programs to promote youth development. The report discusses the design, implementation, and evaluation of community programs for youth and conceptualizes PYD in regard to the skills, knowledge, and other personal and social assets required to successfully transition from healthy adolescence into competent adulthood.

Eccles and Gootman (2002) based their report on the work of scholars who contributed to the National Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. These scholars defined four domains of individual assets that represent health and well-being in adolescence: physical development; intellectual development; psychological and emotional development; and social development. They noted that positive development does not require possession of all assets. Having more assets, however, is better than having fewer, and it is beneficial to have assets in all four domains. Eccles and Gootman (2002) indicated that that these assets do not exist in a vacuum and do not in themselves ensure the well-being of adolescents. Youth need access to contexts that facilitate their development through exposure to positive experiences, settings, and people, and to contexts that provide opportunities to develop and refine real-life skills. It is important for every community to have an array of programs for youth that, taken together, offer all features of positive developmental settings.

Some of the features that characterize such positive developmental settings include physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, and positive social norms. These contexts provide opportunities to enjoy supportive relationships, to belong, to build skills, and to feel empowered by experiencing efficacy and a sense of mattering. Moreover, these settings need to be synergistic with efforts and perspectives of the adolescents’ families, as well as with the communities in which both the programs and the adolescents reside. While acknowledging the list as provisional, Eccles and Gootman (2002) suggested that youth-serving professionals take these factors into consideration when planning, designing, and evaluating programs for the youth with whom they work.

In addition to Eccles and Gootman’s framework (2002), there are several other “philosophies” of youth programs (e.g., Blum, 1998, 2003; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, 2003b). For instance, in 2003, Roth and Brooks-Gunn investigated community-based programs to understand what exactly is meant by the term “youth development program.” They identified the three critical characteristics that programs should have. Based on the existing literature, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a, 2003b) concluded that: (a) specific program activities; (b) atmosphere; and (c) goals are the three defining aspects of youth development programs that differentiate them from other programs for adolescents. The goals of youth development programs go beyond prevention to include promotion of positive development. They are characterized by an atmosphere of hope, caring, safety, cultural appropriateness, and respect of adolescents’ abilities to make choices and bear responsibility. Program activities provide opportunities for active involvement and meeting new challenges.

Similarly, Blum (2003) identified four elements critical to successful youth interventions: people, contributions, activities, and place. Successful interventions are those that build strong adult–youth relationships (People), include active involvement of youth in giving back to family, school, and community (Contribution), offer productive and recreational opportunities for youth (Activities), and provide a safe environment free from drugs and violence with adult supervision (Place).

Many other philosophies/approaches to youth programs exist (e.g., see Dryfoos, 1990; Dukakis, London, McLaughlin, & Williamson, 2009; Heck & Subramaniam, 2009). For instance, the Positive Youth Development Evaluation Project (e.g., Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1999, 2004) reviewed the literature on youth development programs to generate an operational definition of positive youth development and identify characteristics that mark effective youth development programs. This review, in general, affirmed Eccles and Gootman’s (2002) framework, as it defined positive youth development programs as those that promote or foster at least five of fifteen outcomes in youth:

1. Bonding
2. Resilience
3. Social competence
4. Emotional competence
5. Cognitive competence
Adolescence

6. Behavioral competence
7. Moral competence
8. Self-determination
9. Spirituality
10. Self-efficacy
11. Clear and positive identity
12. Belief in the future
13. Recognition for positive behavior
14. Opportunities for prosocial involvement
15. Prosocial norms

Nineteen of the 25 programs that were reviewed significantly increased positive youth behaviors, and all but one of the programs significantly decreased problem behaviors. Effective youth development programs also had a structured curriculum and measured reductions in problem behaviors, increases in positive behavior, or, ideally, both types of outcomes. These effective programs were delivered over a period of at least nine months and were implemented with quality, consistency, and fidelity to the standards established by the program’s model (Catalano, Berglund, et al., 2004).

Building on the work of both Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a, 2003b) and Blum (2003), as well as others (e.g., Rhodes, 2002), Lerner (2004) argued that there are three fundamental characteristics of effective PYD programs. These “Big Three” characteristics are:

1. Positive and sustained adult–youth relations (relations between a young person and an adult who is competent, caring, and continually available for at least a year, such as a mentor, coach, or teacher)
2. Life-skill building activities (e.g., enhancing skills pertinent to the selection, optimization, and compensation skills we discussed earlier)
3. Opportunities for youth participation in and leadership of valued family, school, and community activities

Lerner (2004) argued as well that these features of youth programs needed to be simultaneously and integratively present for PYD to be effectively promoted.

In turn, Heck and Subramaniam (2009) described five other youth development program philosophies, or development frameworks, which they defined as a conceptualization that “helps give direction and purpose to a program” (p. 2). The five frameworks that they discuss are:

1. Targeting Life Skills
2. Developmental Assets (as conceptualized by Search Institute; e.g., Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Semsa, 2006; Benson et al., 2011)
3. The Four Essential Elements of Youth Development
4. The Community Action Framework for Youth Development
5. The Five Cs

In their review, Heck and Subramaniam (2009) compared the strengths and limitations of the five models in terms of their effectiveness, which is evaluated by the criteria of validity (scientific evidence), utility (extent of use and availability of instruments), and universality (applicability to various populations).

The Targeting Life Skills model details the life skills encapsulated by 4-H’s Heart, Hands, Head, and Health (Hendricks, 1996); this model is meant to serve as a plan for youth programming. Each of the four components is composed of two general categories of skills, with the two categories composed of more specific life skills. For example, Hands is divided into working and giving; giving is further divided into community service, leadership, responsible citizenship, and contributions to group effort; working is further divided into marketable skills, teamwork, and self motivation. The model helps to identify specific skills that a youth-based program should focus on, rather than being a theoretical model of development (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009).

As we have noted earlier in this chapter, the Developmental Assets model as conceptualized by the Search Institute (e.g., Benson et al., 2011) identifies resources available to young people that promote positive development. Benson and colleagues have generated a list of 40 developmental assets, both internal and external to young people, that have been linked to positive youth outcomes. As indicated as well in the approach forwarded by Eccles and Gootman (2002), higher levels of assets have been related to positive developmental outcomes, such as higher school achievement, better physical health, lower levels of risk behaviors, and resilience (e.g., Benson et al., 2011). Heck and Subramanian (2009) reported that research (and evaluation) about the application of the Developmental Assets model to youth programs is sparse.

The Four Essential Elements of Youth Development are identified as belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence, and were originally proposed as the “Circle of Courage” (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990). These four elements were further subdivided into eight elements that were identified as critical to developing positive youth outcomes in youth development programming (Peterson et al., 2001). Belonging includes having relationships with caring adults and having an inclusive and safe environment; mastery includes opportunities for
mastery and engagement in learning; generosity consists of the opportunity to value and practice service for others; and independence includes opportunities to see oneself as an active participant in the future and the opportunity for self-determination.

The Community Action Framework for Youth (Gam- bone & Connell, 2004; Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002) includes five hierarchically organized strategies for use by both practitioners and scientists. These five strategies are:

1. Building community capacity and conditions for change
2. Implementing community strategies to enhance supports and opportunities for youth
3. Increasing supports and opportunities for youth
4. Improving youth development outcomes
5. Improving long-term outcomes in adulthood

To implement these strategies, programs must meet five key requirements: adequate nutrition, health and shelter; multiple supportive relationships; challenging and engaging activities and experiences; meaningful opportunities for involvement; and physical and emotional safety. The Community Action Framework for Youth is intended to create communities in which all young people can optimize their potential. The Framework is meant to be a systematic approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and resources for youth. In this regard, the Framework enumerates supports and opportunities that overlap with the elements of effective youth programs presented in other approaches.

In turn, as noted earlier in the discussion of the Lerner, Lerner, and colleagues’ relational developmental systems model of the PYD process (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005), the Five Cs model of youth development conceptualizes PYD as composed of Five Cs—Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character and Caring. The Cs are a means to operationalize the developmental characteristics that a youth needs to become a successful and contributing member of society. These Five Cs were linked to the positive outcomes of youth development programs reported by Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a, 2003b). In addition, these Cs are prominent terms used by practitioners, adolescents involved in youth development programs, and the parents of these adolescents in describing the characteristics of a “thriving youth” (King et al., 2005).

Heck and Subramaniam (2009) indicate that each of the five approaches they reviewed has varying levels of empirical support. However, none of the frameworks have been linked to research that provides evidence of universal applicability, although from a relational, developmental systems perspective, such universality is not even possible, given that the world is seen as variegated and changing (Lerner, 2002; Overton, 2010). As evidenced by our earlier review of the 4-H Study results, Heck and Subramaniam (2009) indicated that the Five Cs model of PYD is the most empirically supported framework to date.

However, as we turn to the third facet of PYD research—youth programs—it is important to note that while the Five Cs model may be an empirically useful means to study the PYD process, it is not clear from the conceptualization of the Five Cs model how to translate it into a specific youth development program. Work on such translation is beginning in regard to coaching youth sports programs (e.g., Haskins, 2010) and to mentoring programs for youth (Napolitano, Bowers, Gestsdóttir, & Chase, 2011).

PYD AS INSTANCES OF YOUTH PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

In the United States, there are literally thousands of instances of community-based programs that seek to promote PYD (e.g., Dryfoos, 1990; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, 2003b) or its theoretically related outcomes, for example, active and engaged citizenship (Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Lin, 2011). As well, there are numerous national organizations that seek to provide such programs throughout the United States, including 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, and Girls, Inc. (e.g., Zaff et al., 2011). Discussing these programs or organizations in detail is obviously beyond the scope of this chapter. Our purpose here is to illustrate the third instance of Hamilton’s (1999) tripartite definition of PYD and point to the current nature of the connections between this facet of PYD and the other two facets we have discussed.

There are many instances of programs that are effective in promoting PYD, operationalized, for instance, in regard to the links between program characteristics and the development or enhancement of one or more of the Five Cs (e.g., see Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, 2003b). Accordingly, we will use several exemplary PYD programs as sample cases of the sorts of programs to which Hamilton (1999) pointed. Accordingly, we focus on the scholarship of Catalano, Hawkins, and colleagues (e.g., Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004; Hawkins, Brown, et al., 2008; Hawkins, Catalano, Arthur, & Egan, 2008), Kurtines and colleagues (Kurtines et al., 2008a, 2008b),
and Flay and colleagues (Flay, 2002; Flay & Allred, 2003), as examples of such exemplary PYD programs.

Richard Catalano, J. David Hawkins, and the Social Development Research Group

Richard Catalano, J. David Hawkins, and colleagues in the Social Development Research Group (SDRG) at the University of Washington have conducted work that has reflected the integration of the prevention science and PYD approaches (Catalano, Haggerty et al., 2004; Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002). The interventions developed, implemented, and tested by the SDRG are framed within the prevention science model; therefore, they necessarily have a primary focus on “preventing” negative developmental outcomes rather than promoting positive ones (Catalano et al., 1999). However, their work has included key components of the PYD model, such as the building of youth connections to family, school, and community and, as well, indices of positive adjustment, functioning, and well-being. These features of their work reflect the growing recognition that preventing disease or behavioral problems does not constitute the provision of health or the actualization of positive development (Damon, 2004; Lerner, 2005; Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). Two longitudinal intervention programs the SDRG has overseen are the Community Youth Development Study and the Raising Healthy Children (RHC) projects.

The Community Youth Development Study began in 2003 and consists of 12 pairs of matched communities across seven states (e.g., Fagan, Hanson, Hawkins, & Arthur, 2009; Hawkins, Brown et al., 2008; Hawkins, Catalano et al., 2008). In each pair, one community receives the Communities That Care (CTC) prevention system, which seeks to promote and sustain positive youth development, and the other community serves as a control. CTC serves as a system for planning and managing community-based prevention activities. Among 5th- through 8th-grade adolescents, results indicate that the CTC prevention system reduced tobacco and alcohol use and prevented delinquent behavior within four years of implementing the CTC program.

There are five stages in the CTC prevention system (as outlined on the SDRG Web site):

1. **Get Started**—Assessing community readiness to undertake collaborative prevention efforts
2. **Get Organized**—Getting a commitment to the CTC process from community leaders and forming a diverse and representative prevention coalition
3. **Develop a Profile**—Using epidemiologic data to assess prevention needs and evaluating gaps in current services related to those needs
4. **Create a Plan**—Choosing tested and effective prevention policies, practices, and programs based on assessment data
5. **Implement and Evaluate**—Implementing the new policies, programs, and practices with fidelity (in a manner congruent with the program’s theory, content, and methods of delivery) and evaluating progress over time


Raising Healthy Children (RHC) is an 8-year study of 1,000 students, their parents, and their teachers, which seeks to investigate risk and protective factors for positive youth development (e.g., Catalano, Haggerty et al., 2004; K. King, Fleming, Monahan, & Catalano, 2011). The project provides research-based parenting workshops in which parents learn ways to encourage positive behavior and family bonding, as well as academic success. In addition, the project includes home visits in which additional services that aid in the development of the student are offered. Staff development for teachers seeks to contribute to the development of the child as well. Teacher training seeks to help teachers identify ways to keep students interested and involved in learning.

Results from the RHC study indicated that childhood bullying is significantly associated with violence, heavy drinking and marijuana use at age 21 (Kim, Catalano, Haggerty, & Abbott, 2011). The researchers also found that greater self-control problems and attentional problems in 6th grade, and increases in these problems over time, were associated with higher levels of substance use in 11th grade (K. King et al., 2011). Other findings suggested that risk factors in early adolescence resulted in outcomes relating to depressive symptoms, risky sexual behavior, and cigarette smoking (Mazza, Fleming, Abbott, Haggerty, & Catalano, 2010; White, Fleming, Catalano, & Bailey, 2009; Kim, Fleming, & Catalano, 2009).

The work of Catalano, Hawkins, and colleagues in the SDRG is reflective of the “Big Three” characteristics of effective youth programs as discussed by Lerner (2004). Both the CTC and RHF programs emphasize the role that strong, healthy connections to prosocial families, schools, and peers have on youth development. This impact occurs through the provision of opportunities to actively engage these contexts, inculcation of the skills to engage contexts successfully, and recognition of youth contributions. The use of such integrative approaches to promote PYD is also illustrated in the next exemplary program we discuss.
William Kurtines and the Miami Youth Development Project

The Miami Youth Development Project (YDP) is a university–community collaborative outreach research program that draws on what William Kurtines and colleagues term developmental intervention science (Kurtines et al., 2008a, 2008b). Developmental intervention science is an integration of the developmental science, intervention science, prevention science, outreach research, and positive youth development literatures. Developmental intervention science seeks to describe, explain, and optimize intrapersonal change and interindividual differences in intrapersonal change across the life span (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1977) through the development of community-supported interventions. Kurtines and colleagues see this integrative approach as having

…the potential to bring together (a) a more empowering model of knowledge development for research involvement in the community, one that includes meeting both community and youth needs as well as knowledge development needs; (b) a nuanced and contextualized notion of youth and their development; and (c) methodologies that richly reflect rather than reduce the experiences of young people whose development we seek to promote.

—(Kurtines et al., 2008a, p. 258)

The Miami YDP began in response to the needs of at-risk young people in the Miami community, especially those from immigrant groups from Central and South America and the Caribbean. As a community-supported program, the Miami YDP aims to realize long-term community-valued developmental goals for its youth by generating knowledge in “real world” settings (Kurtines et al., 2008b).

Among the programs developed as part of this university–community partnership is the Changing Lives Program (CLP, Eichas et al., 2010; Kurtines et al., 2008b). The CLP targets youth with multiple problems in alternative high schools by creating contexts in which youth can take responsibility for their lives and their communities. The immediate focus in implementing CLP is on addressing identified, presenting problems through counseling services (e.g., addressing depression, anger management, substance use). The long-term focus is on promoting positive development. With the specific aim of promoting positive identity development, CLP services work to build skills and strengths in youth that will help them to change themselves and the contexts in which they are embedded. Thus, youth work to directly build positive characteristics that will lead to a reduction in problematic outcomes. This individual strength–based approach complements prevention models that seek to affect the contextual level, such as parents, peers, and school.

Drawing on outcomes-mediation evaluation models in the prevention science literature (Silverman, Kurtines, Jaccard, & Pina, 2009), Eichas and colleagues assessed whether the CLP program, which was specifically designed to promote PYD, also had an effect on untargeted problem outcomes. In a sample of 178 African American and Hispanic adolescents, the results of SEM analyses indicated that participation in CLP was directly related to gains in positive identity development. The evaluation of the CLP indicated that the intervention resulted in significant increases in the outcome of interest, that is, participant’s feelings of personal expressiveness. Analyses also indicated CLP participation led to positive changes in identity exploration and identity commitment, with the effect on personal expressiveness partially mediated by identity exploration, as measured by seeking out and utilizing self-relevant information. The CLP intervention also had a differential impact on changes in identity resolution for African American versus Hispanic youth. As hypothesized, participation in CLP was related to positive changes in identity resolution among Hispanic youth relative to the comparison group; however, contrary to expectations, African-American youth in CLP reported a decrease in identity resolution relative to the comparison group.

In regard to the relationship between CLP participation and problematic outcomes, results indicated that gender moderated the effect of the CLP intervention on internalizing problem behaviors. For females, participation in CLP was related to a reduction in internalizing behaviors, while males reported no greater change in internalizing problem behaviors than did males in the comparison group. The findings also identified several possible pathways through which the intervention may have had an effect on both internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. The CLP intervention seemed to lead to increases in personal expressiveness (partially mediated by identity exploration), which in turn led to decreases in internalizing problems. Changes in internalizing problems then led to changes in externalizing problems.

The work of researchers on the Miami YDP has provided important findings regarding the potential for integrative interventions to both promote positive outcomes and decrease or prevent problematic outcomes. As indicated in research based on the 4-H Study of PYD (e.g., Lewin-Bizan, Lynch, et al., 2010; Phelps et al., 2007) the
relationship between PYD and problematic outcomes is not simply an inverse one. A more complex pattern exists. Dynamic models of human behavior and development are needed to understand first, the plasticity of human development, and second, the importance of individual context relations as the bases of variation in the course of human development (Baltes et al., 2006; Lerner, 2005; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). The third program we discuss also illustrates the links that may exist between positive and problem behaviors as outcomes of youth programs.

Brian Flay and Carol G. Allred and the Positive Action Program

Brian Flay, Carol G. Allred, and colleagues (e.g., Flay, 2002; Flay & Allred, 2003) have presented a comprehensive youth program, one that focuses on promoting healthy, positive development of children and youth in many domains, including academics, problem behaviors, and family relationships. Flay (2002) argued that PYD requires comprehensive health promotion programs. He explains that “to prevent problem behaviors and promote positive behaviors [we need] comprehensive, coherent, and integrated approaches” to youth programs (p. 407).

Accordingly, Flay and Allred (2003) illustrate such a program by describing the long-term effects of the “Positive Action” program. Features of this school-based program include interventions with the individual child or adolescent, the school, and the family. At all levels, the interventions within the program focus on the same broad concept (feeling good about oneself when taking positive actions). The specific content includes six units:

1. Self-concept
2. Positive actions for body and mind
3. Social/emotional positive actions for managing yourself responsibly
4. Social/emotional positive actions for getting along with others
5. Social/emotional positive actions for being honest with yourself and others
6. Social/emotional positive actions for improving continually

A 2006 review by the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) noted that the Positive Action program is indeed an integrated and comprehensive program. The review pointed to evidence that the program is effective in improving academic achievement and school attendance and, in turn, in diminishing problem behaviors, such as substance use, violence, suspensions, disruptive behaviors, dropping out, and sexual behavior.

Evaluations of the effectiveness of comprehensive PYD programs like this are limited (cf. Catalano et al., 1999). Indeed, most youth development programs in the United States are not evaluated (e.g., see Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). However, the evaluation data pertinent to the Positive Action program, such as that provided by Beets et al. (2009), indicated that students who participated in the program were less likely to engage in substance use, violence, and sexual activity than students who did not participate in the intervention. These findings were derived from both student self-report and teachers’ reports. This evaluation, however, had limitations in terms of sample; it included only young adolescents (5th-grade students) in a specific geographical and cultural setting (Hawaii).

Nevertheless, despite such limitations of a particular evaluation research study, the Positive Action program has demonstrated effectiveness and is an excellent example of the third facet of the definition of PYD discussed by Hamilton (1999). Moreover, in including in its design a comprehensive, individual and contextual approach to intervention, the Positive Action program reflects key ideas found within instances of the other two facets of Hamilton’s (1999) tripartite definition of PYD.

Conclusions

The work of the researchers who focus on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth development programs highlights the importance of the dynamic relations between the person and context in the study of positive youth development. Supporting the use of relational developmental systems theories in understanding the plasticity of human development and the importance of relations between individuals and their real-world ecological settings as the bases of variation in the course of human development (Baltes et al., 2006; Lerner, 2005; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007), there are consistencies between what actions occur within actual, exemplary PYD programs and the two other facets of the Hamilton (1999) tripartite conception of PYD.

However, these connections are often not drawn explicitly by practitioners enacting PYD programs. Indeed, across the work associated with these three facets of Hamilton’s (1999) definition, these domains of the PYD field exist as Venn diagrams whose degrees of overlap remain uncertain. We believe this lack of specification,
and the incomplete integration of the domains of basic and applied scholarship pertinent to PYD that it reflects, constitutes a challenge to advancing knowledge of how to understand and promote thriving among diverse youth. There are several problems involved in increasing the integration among the three domains of scholarship pertinent to PYD. The final section of this chapter addresses potential future direction of the PYD field by discussing the problems in integrating these facets of PYD.

**PROBLEMS IN INTEGRATING THE THREE FACETS OF PYD SCHOLARSHIP**

The lack of integration between the processes, philosophies, and programs of PYD scholarship represents one of several important obstacles to creating a fully reciprocal relation between practice and theory-predicated research in the service of the promotion of PYD. For example, it is not always clear what particular model of developmental process is explicitly used in the “philosophical” approaches to youth programming pertinent to PYD or in the particular instances of youth programs designed to foster PYD. In addition, it is ironically the case that when such a connection seems evident (e.g., as appears to be the case with both the Developmental Assets framework and the Five Cs model; Heck & Subramaniam, 2009), it may nevertheless be unclear how these theories of process provide a specific approach (i.e., a particular logic model) for youth programs.

As we have noted, work on this translation is only in its nascent period (Haskins, 2010; Napolitano, Bowers, Gestsdóttir & Chase, 2011). Despite some correspondence between elements of the theoretical models and some features of the philosophy/approach to youth programming, more clarity about the connections between theories and philosophies, as well as between philosophies and particular instances of programs, are needed.

The lack of integration within and across each domain of PYD scholarship provides uncertainties in regard to understanding how to optimize PYD. In regard to the theoretical models of the PYD process, there is a lack of integration of both the structural and measurement models framing empirical tests of the models. For instance, the measurement of ecological developmental assets differs between the research of Lerner and Lerner and their colleagues (e.g., see Theokas & Lerner, 2006; Urban et al., 2010) and the research of Benson and colleagues at Search Institute (e.g., Benson et al., 2011). Similarly, variation exists in regard to the conceptualization and measurement of the motivational, purposive, or goal-oriented behaviors of interest to Damon (2008); Eccles (e.g., Eccles & Roeser, 2009; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002); Larson (2000); and Gestsdóttir and Lerner (2007, 2008). Even more abstractly, there is little information about whether, across theoretical models, there exist similar views about the actions that are integrated within individual context relations of interest in all theories.

Given such variation, there is no certainty that similar empirical referents exist in regard to information about the PYD process. Such uncertainty makes it problematic to achieve any consensus about what variables, from what levels of organization within the developmental system, must be integrated in what specific ways, at what points in adolescence, to optimize what specific outcomes. Clearly, in the face of this uncertainty, what is needed is cross-laboratory integration of measurement models, perhaps through the use of a multitrait-multimethod matrix method (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). However, the practical challenge of gaining the funds for such field-integration research itself a major problem constraining the advancement of knowledge about PYD.

Similar problems can be raised in regard to integrating the different philosophies of or approaches to PYD programming. What are the fundamental defining characteristics of an effective PYD program? Do scholars use different terms for the same latent construct? For instance, when Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a, 2003b) think of program characteristics they believe to instantiate PYD-promoting activities, atmosphere, and goals, are they pointing to the same actions as those envisioned by Blum (2003) when he discusses people, contributions, activities, and place, or by Lerner (2004) when he discusses positive and sustained adult–youth relations, life skill–building activities, and opportunities for participation in and leadership of valued activities? The answer is not certain. Accordingly, it may be that there should be a conceptual meta-analysis, perhaps undertaken in the context of a working group of scholars and practitioners involved in a thorough review of the theoretical and empirical bases from which their philosophies/approaches were derived. Again, however, issues of funding make such an undertaking problematic.

Moreover, a similar lack of integration exists in regard to the numerous instances of PYD programs. Are actions labeled in the same way actually implemented identically? In different instantiations of the “same” program, is there high fidelity of implementation? Here, answers are particularly difficult to attain because, again, most youth programs in the United States are not evaluated and, as well, key elements of any effective program—most critically,
a theory of change and a logic model— are absent from most programs (e.g., see Roth et al., 1998). Such errors of omission preclude scientifically rigorous evaluation and make empirical comparisons across different programs or among different instantiations of the same program highly problematic if not impossible.

THE INTEGRATION OF PREVENTIVE AND PROMOTIVE APPROACHES TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Adolescence can be viewed as a time of increasing opportunities or of escalating risks, depending on the theoretical perspective that is taken. While the PYD approach arose in reaction to the preponderance of deficit-driven models that marked the study of adolescence, recent proposals have suggested the need for an integrative model that bridges “deficit-based” prevention science and the PYD perspective (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Kurtines et al., 2008a; Schwartz, Pantin, Coatsworth, & Szapocznik, 2007; Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). The prevention science approach to adolescent development posits that youth often engage in problematic behaviors, such as substance use and delinquency, and that this engagement is due to compromised developmental trajectories (Schwartz et al., 2007). The focus of prevention science involves the individual and environmental factors that are thought to contribute to these compromised developmental trajectories. From this perspective, adolescence is often viewed as a period of risk taking, conflict, and difficulties.

Preventing youth problem behaviors is not the same as actively promoting PYD (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Lerner, 2000). While the outcomes of interest may differ for the PYD and prevention science perspectives, the two approaches overlap in several ways. Most importantly, they share a common goal of making adolescent health and wellness possible (e.g., Catalano, Berglund, et al., 2004; Schwartz et al., 2007). In addition, as systemic approaches to development, they align through their emphases on the assumption of plasticity, on the contributions of the individual to the context (and thus to his or her own development), and on the important roles of the family, school, and neighborhood contexts in youth development.

In focusing on preventing or reducing harmful or risky behaviors, prevention-based programs often target the same positive processes highlighted in PYD approaches, such as positive relationships within the family (e.g., Dishion, Andrews, Kavanagh, & Soberman, 1997), school (e.g., Lonczak, Abbott, Hawkins, Kosterman, & Catalano, 2002), and community (e.g., Hawkins, Brown et al., 2008; Hawkins, Catalano et al., 2008). In fact, instantiations of prevention and promotion programs often look very much alike in practice (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). As we have noted, in the PYD perspective positive qualities of these contextual variables are termed ecological developmental assets and are characteristics or processes that increase the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes such as competence, confidence, or contribution to one’s community (Benson et al., 2006; Lerner, 2004). In prevention science, these contextual variables are termed protective factors and are characteristics or processes that decrease the likelihood of negative developmental outcomes, such as delinquency, drug use, or unsafe sex (Schwartz et al., 2007).

Several reviews of effective programs (Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1988) aimed at preventing risk and problems behaviors in youth have also identified key aspects of programs that are consonant with the ideas associated with the relational developmental systems theories that mark the PYD perspective. Indeed, successful prevention programs and interventions integrate features of the individual youth embedded in his or her specific context. In such reviews, effective interventions are marked by intensive and individualized attention involving a diversity of people and developmentally appropriate activities based on an individual’s specific motivations, interests, aspirations, and needs. In addition, effective services are noted to be responsive, evolving, and user friendly, with a predictable environment for youth that promotes active participation and provides opportunities to learn new skills. Moreover, successful programs promote relationships among multiple supports in context, as they engage the individual’s family, peer group, workplace, and school in an integrated and comprehensive case management approach led by staff trained in the substance of the program, youth development, and the community culture. It is notable that these characteristics are also evident in the three exemplary PYD programs that were described earlier. Indeed, each of these programs is defined by their comprehensive, integrative approach to optimizing adolescent development.

The integrative model of adolescent development also holds that, given a systemic view of development, both positive and negative indicators of development can coexist within a single individual; these indicators, and the trajectories of these indicators, must therefore be related in some way (Schwartz et al., 2007; Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Accordingly, Schwartz and colleagues’ integrative model (2007) posits that it is important to assess the extent to which the same, similar, or complementary
mechanisms may be responsible for preventing problem behavior and promoting PYD. It may be that the same set of individual and/or contextual factors is associated with both outcomes (e.g., Scales et al., 2000) albeit that the relationships between individual and/or contextual factors and youth outcomes may be more complex than currently understood (e.g., Theokas & Lerner, 2006). However, little research has taken this integrative approach (Schwartz et al., 2007).

In future research about the promotion of PYD, we believe it would be useful if scholars adopted a common language and system of measurement for individual and contextual assets. There is a need to differentiate theoretically individual assets from indicators of PYD, since some constructs (e.g., executive functions related to ISR) may be seen as both outcomes and predictors. In addition, the characteristics of contexts other than youth development programs and of the adults who promote PYD in youth, such as peer groups and neighborhoods, should also be studied.

Furthermore, it will be useful to broaden the scope of contexts within which PYD is investigated. Currently, the role of families, schools, and community-based programs in promoting PYD receives substantial attention in the literature. There are other important contexts, such workplaces or faith institutions, where young people spend portions of their time (King et al., 2011; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). The assets and developmental opportunities available in these contexts need to be considered more by researchers for further elaboration of the ecological influences on PYD. On the level of practice, professionals working with families and schools, as well as employers who hire youth, would benefit from being educated about possible applications of the PYD perspective in these settings.

The idea that the development of positive behaviors will lead to the reduction of negative ones should also continue to be part of the research agenda, and as the 4-H Study results reveal, youth who are developing positively are also engaging in some level of risk behaviors. This relation means that risk behaviors need to be studied along with positive ones. The multiple trajectories of development seen in the 4-H Study support the idea that efforts should be aimed at understanding the factors that contribute to these individual differences.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past two decades, there has been a surge of research focused on the positive view of human development. In the adolescent literature, this focus has been aimed primarily at replacing the deficit view of youth as “problems to be managed” with the view that youth are “resources to be developed” (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, 2003b) and current evidence suggests that an integrative preventive-promotive focus may be the best course to pursue in increasing the likelihood that youth will thrive. To appropriately pursue such an integrative approach, a multipart, integrative question may be most useful to address: What interventions, with what components, of what duration, with what youth, at what age or developmental levels, in what communities, at what historical time, will result in what positive individual psychological, social, cognitive, and physical outcomes?

It has been a little more than 10 years since Hamilton initially formulated the three facets of PYD. Perhaps it is too much to expect that such a young area of scholarship would have the level of integration to which we are pointing. Nevertheless, we believe that as all members of the PYD scholarly community—both researchers and practitioners—come together in the service of making such integration a high-priority agenda item, it will be crucial for funders of PYD scholarship and application to take actions to support and extend such integrated work. If such support is forthcoming, we are hopeful that in the next 10 years we will see enhanced integration and have more knowledge to answer the complex multipart questions pertinent to promoting PYD. We are optimistic that a more mature field of PYD is possible, given the theoretical and methodological tools of contemporary developmental science.

REFERENCES


388 Adolescence


Positive Youth Development: Processes, Philosophies, and Programs


392 Adolescence


