Positive Youth Development: Theory and Practice

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Effective Youth Justice Intervention

Dual Focus:

- Risk Factors
- Protective Factors

Maximum Use of:

- Family Resources
- Community Partners

Designed to:

- Generate Evidence of Impact
- Facilitate Successful Replication
Effective Youth Justice Intervention

- Most youth justice policy and practice focuses on RISK FACTORS
- How do we improve our impact on PROTECTIVE FACTORS?
What’s Your Theory?

Cause → Effect
What’s Your Theory?

Risk
- Community disorder
- Cognitive defects
- Poverty
- Family violence
- Greed
- Unemployment
- Substance abuse
- Lack of empathy
- Poor decision-making
- Poor nutrition
- Hopelessness

Crime
- Property
- Violence
- Drug
- Family
- Status

Protective
- Family support
- School success
- Secure housing
- Stable employment
- Health
- Positive friends
- Ethical framework
- Self-efficacy
- Adult guidance
- Community respect
- Physical safety
- Future aspirations

How Do We Focus Intervention?
Positive Youth Development

- Strengths and assets
- Attachment, engagement, and socialization
- Usefulness and belonging
- Broad system of community-based supports

Allow all youth to experience opportunities and activities that youth in wealthy communities take for granted:

- Supportive relationships
- Rewards for work
- Skill development
- Success in learning

- Physical activity and sports
- Music and the arts
- Civic engagement
- Community/political involvement
Positive Youth Development

- Centuries old — basically common sense

- Traces are found in the work of Jane Addams etc. (empowerment, belonging, arts, civic engagement)

- 1970s: researchers started to advance particular models for justice-involved youth
  

- 1990s: A wide range of models influential in education, prevention and community-based services
Positive Youth Development

Evidence-based — NOT YET
Interventions that have been proven by rigorous evaluations to be effective in meeting their stated goals at high levels of statistical confidence.

Science-based
Interventions that address specific factors shown by social science research to be associated with the extent and severity of anti-social behavior among youth.

Long-term Goal
Focusing on Protective Factors

There are good reasons to believe that using positive youth development to focus on protective factors will help to reduce youth crime.
Research on Comprehensive Models

Supports the potential of a youth development approach to juvenile justice interventions

Hawkins and Weis
*Journal of Primary Prevention*

1985
Youth with more assets are less likely to report that they have carried a weapon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth with particular asset</th>
<th>Rate of weapon carrying compared to other youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive peer role model</td>
<td>55% as likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive non-parental adult role model</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in community activities</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report future aspirations</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to exercise responsible choices</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report good family communication</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 14% of sample reported some weapon carrying

Aspy et al. (2004), Journal of Counseling and Development
Survey of Youth Assets (Univ. of OK)

Youth with more assets are less likely to report that they have previously used drugs/alcohol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth with particular asset</th>
<th>Rate of drug/alcohol use compared to other youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive peer role model</td>
<td>33% as likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive non-parental adult role model</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in community activities</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in groups/sports</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Effect: All 9 Assets</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Oman et al. (2004). *American Journal of Public Health*
Percentage of 6th- to 12th-Grade Youth Reporting Selected High-Risk Behaviors, by Level of Developmental Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Risk Behaviors</th>
<th>0–10 Assets</th>
<th>11–20 Assets</th>
<th>21–30 Assets</th>
<th>31–40 Assets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem alcohol use</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Problems</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data based on aggregate Search Institute sample of 148,189 students across the United States surveyed in 2003.
Other Research Findings

Sense of “social belonging” or “social membership”

- Academic achievement
- Lower substance abuse
- Lower delinquency

- Barber and Olsen (1997), *Journal of Adolescent Research*
- Battistich and Horn (1997), *American Journal of Public Health*
- Eccles et al. (1997), *Journal of Adolescent Research*
Other Research Findings

Participation in school-based and community activities

A range of positive educational outcomes

- Barber, Eccles and Stone (2001), *Journal of Adolescent Research*
- Larson (2000), *American Psychologist*
- Morrissey and Werner-Wilson (2005), *Adolescence*
- Roth et al. (1998), *Journal of Research on Adolescence*
Other Research Findings

Participation in community service → Sense of social responsibility and civic engagement

- Youniss and Yates (1997), University of Chicago Press
Other Research Findings

Participation in organized activities of various kinds

- Educational aspirations
- Leadership qualities
- Ability to overcome adversity

- Scales, Benson, Leffert and Blyth (2000), Applied Developmental Science
Youth with stronger and more varied social assets are less likely to be involved with crime, violence and drugs ... but

How do we deliver social assets ??
Protective Factors Matter

First, We Must Acknowledge That Risk-Based Interventions Are Not Enough

Two Primary Examples:

- Mental Health Services
- Substance Abuse Services
More Than Mental Health Treatment

- Even a perfect mental health treatment system would not eliminate juvenile crime and recidivism

- The overlap between crime and mental health is misunderstood (and often misused)
Prevalence of Mental Health Problems

- All U.S. Adolescents: 21%
- Juvenile Assessment Center Population (diversion): 29%
- Probation Intake Population: 46%
- Secure Detention Population: 69%

What Does This Mean?
Cause or Correlation?

- The deeper we look into the juvenile justice process, the more mental health problems we see...

- Is this because mental health issues cause crime?

- Or is it because the justice process holds on longer to offenders with mental health problems – i.e., is less likely to divert them and more likely to charge, adjudicate, etc?
Prevalence of Mental Health Problems

Social and Economic Disadvantages

Justice System Contact

Mental Health Diagnoses

Offenders with Mental Health Problems

?
Are Rates of Mental Disorders Among Young Offenders Partly a Reflection of Their Social-Economic Status?

Amazingly, there are no good studies on adolescents...

... but we do know some things from studies of adults.
“Major Depressive Episode” in Past Year (Adults)

Working Full-Time: 6%
Unemployed: 14%

National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA (2006)
“Any Mood Disorder” in Adults Under 40

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (III), reported in Jonas et al. (2006)
“Any Mood Disorder” in Adults Under 40

- High Income: 5.7%
- Moderate Income: 8.6%
- Low Income: 12.5%

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (III), reported in Jonas et al. (2006)
“Dysthymia” in Adults Under 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Than High School</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (III), reported in Jonas et al. (2006)
“Dysthymia” in Adults Under 40

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (III), reported in Jonas et al. (2006)
Key Question

- Do youth become involved in persistent criminal behavior because of mental health problems?

or,

- Are mental health problems more common among youth that tend to be more deeply involved in the justice system?

Very Different Implications for Service Delivery and Crime Reduction Policy
Substance Abuse

Just like mental health problems...

Drug problems are more common the deeper one looks into the juvenile justice process, from arrest, to referral, adjudication.
If we combine prevalence data with national statistics about the volume of juvenile justice cases, we see something else interesting...
Youth at a Juvenile Assessment Center

What proportion have a substance use disorder?
- McReynolds et al. (2008)

Rate of substance use disorders among all U.S. 12-17 year-olds.
- SAMHSA (2006)

8%

11%

100%
Youth at a Juvenile Assessment Center

About half of all arrested youth are referred to juvenile court authorities.
- Juvenile Court Statistics, OJJDP

Youth Referred to Juvenile Probation

Of these, what proportion have a substance use disorder?
- Wasserman et al. (2005)
About 20 percent of all court referred youth are held in secure detention at some point.  
- Juvenile Court Statistics, OJJDP

Of these, what proportion have a substance use disorder?  
- Teplin et al. (2002)
When they first enter the juvenile system, the prevalence of substance abuse among young offenders is similar to other teens.

Substance-abusing offenders, however, may be more likely to be retained through to the more restrictive stages of justice processing.

The preponderance of drug-abusing youth in the deep end of the justice system could be partly a function of how case decisions are made if drug-abusing youth are treated more coercively.

Drug-using youth would be a larger subgroup by the end of the process; not because drugs cause crime but because drugs prompt more aggressive action by justice authorities.
## Substance Use Disorders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Among Youth Referred to a Juvenile Assessment Center</th>
<th>Among Youth Referred to Juvenile Probation Intake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abuse Disorders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other drug</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Other drug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependence Disorders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other drug</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Other drug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Disorder</strong></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td><strong>No Disorder</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: McReynolds et al. (2008)  
Source: Wasserman et al. (2005)
Substance Use Disorders

- Approximately 10% to 25% of young offenders have substance use issues that could be called “problematic” – either abuse or dependence.

- Most of these substance use issues involve alcohol and marijuana (80% to 90%).

- Few youth (5%?) have addiction or dependence problems involving serious, illegal drugs.
Why the Confusion?

Why do we hear so much about the mental health and substance abuse needs of young offenders?

- MH and SA problems were overlooked and under-diagnosed for years
- The science related to these issues has improved
- Interest group politics and public relations
Why the Confusion?

A very recent example of how misinformation is spread by mental health advocates...
Why the Confusion?

The study being described tracked re-arrests among youth diverted from court processing to MH treatment.

The write up is misleading in several ways.
Why the Confusion?

The headline implies that the study compared recidivism.

Re-Arrest Rate Lower for Illinois Juveniles Receiving Mental Health Treatment

Re-Arrest Rate Lower for Illinois Juveniles Receiving Mental Health Treatment and Lower than before? Lower than non-treated youths?
Why the Confusion?

The opening sentence then suggests that this study is somehow supportive of the finding that most youth in the system have mental health disorders...

This figure is from the 2002 Teplin study of detained youth - not youth in the “system”
Why the Confusion?

The Problem:

The two groups are not comparable.

Comparing youth in an MH diversion program to detained youth is like comparing truants to detained youth.

It’s not meaningful.
Why the Confusion?

Readers of this newsletter, however, would conclude that mental health treatment is far superior to detention at reducing recidivism. Maybe this is even true, but the study being described here did not show that. The write-up misleads the reader to advance an advocacy goal.
Distracted by Advocacy

Youth justice policy has become distracted by an over-emphasis on mental health and drug abuse issues...

- both are important
- but, they are not sufficient as the principal focus of policy or practice in youth justice
New Model of Intervention

We need a strong, evidence-based approach that is:

- Suitable for youth not primarily affected by mental health or substance abuse issues
- Designed to support behavior change and not simply deterrence
- Focused on protective factors, not just risk
JJ Systems Turning to PYD

Washington, DC — DYRS
Massachusetts — DYS
New York — OCFS

Roxbury, MA — “Youth Advocacy Program”
Iowa – Statewide Collaboration
Eugene, OR — County-wide planning

Where Do Practitioners Go for Guidance?
Some Models Might be **Too General**

**The 5Cs Model of Positive Youth Development**

- **Competence**: Enhancing participants' social, academic, cognitive, and vocational competencies.
- **Confidence**: Improving adolescents' self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, identity, and belief in the future.
- **Connections**: Building and strengthening adolescents' relationships with other people and institutions, such as school.
- **Character**: Increasing self-control, decreasing engagement in health-compromising (problem) behaviors, developing respect for cultural or societal rules and standards, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and spirituality.
- **Caring and Compassion**: Improving youths' empathy and identification with others.

Source: Adapted from Lerner, Fisher, and Weinberg (2000).
Some Models Might be Too Specific
Some Models Might be **Too Specific**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Assets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>Family support</em>—Family life provides high levels of love and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Positive family communication</em>—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Other adult relationships</em>—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Caring neighborhood</em>—Young person experiences caring neighbors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>Caring school climate</em>—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>Parent involvement in schooling</em>—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Empowerment |
| 7. *Community values youth*—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. |
| 8. *Youth as resources*—Young people are given useful roles in the community. |
| 9. *Service to others*—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. |
| 10. *Safety*—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood. |

| Boundaries & Expectations |
| 11. *Family boundaries*—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person’s whereabouts. |
| 12. *School Boundaries*—School provides clear rules and consequences. |
| 13. *Neighborhood boundaries*—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior. |
| 14. *Adult role models*—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. |
| 15. *Positive peer influence*—Young person’s best friends model responsible behavior. |
| 16. *High expectations*—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. |

| Constructive Use of Time |
| 17. *Creative activities*—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. |
| 18. *Youth programs*—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. |
| 19. *Religious community*—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. |
| 20. *Time at home*—Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week. |
Some Models Might be **Too Specific**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment to Learning</th>
<th>Positive Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. <strong>Achievement Motivation</strong> — Young person is motivated to do well in school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. <strong>School Engagement</strong> — Young person is actively engaged in learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. <strong>Homework</strong> — Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. <strong>Bonding to school</strong> — Young person cares about her or his school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. <strong>Reading for Pleasure</strong> — Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. <strong>Caring</strong> — Young person places high value on helping other people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. <strong>Equality and social justice</strong> — Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. <strong>Integrity</strong> — Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. <strong>Honesty</strong> — Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. <strong>Responsibility</strong> — Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. <strong>Restraint</strong> — Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32. <strong>Planning and decision making</strong> — Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. <strong>Interpersonal Competence</strong> — Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. <strong>Cultural Competence</strong> — Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. <strong>Resistance skills</strong> — Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. <strong>Peaceful conflict resolution</strong> — Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37. <strong>Personal power</strong> — Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. <strong>Self-esteem</strong> — Young person reports having a high self-esteem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. <strong>Sense of purpose</strong> — Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. <strong>Positive view of personal future</strong> — Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some Models Might be Too Specific
Focusing Youth Justice on PYD

How do we transform youth justice systems to focus on practical ways of attaching youth to assets and facilitating positive youth development?
## Very Different Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Traditional Justice</strong></th>
<th><strong>Positive Youth Justice</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target</strong></td>
<td>Youth deficits</td>
<td>Youth strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>Deter and provide treatment</td>
<td>Connect and engage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactics</strong></td>
<td>▪ Sanctions</td>
<td>▪ Re-establish youth bonds with community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Supervision</td>
<td>▪ Connect youth and family with pro-social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Services</td>
<td>▪ Build on youth assets and interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Source: www.ppv.org
## Our Model: Positive Youth Justice

### ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAINS</th>
<th>Learning/Doing</th>
<th>Attaching/Belonging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
<td>• Activities</td>
<td>• Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>• Activities</td>
<td>• Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>• Activities</td>
<td>• Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>• Activities</td>
<td>• Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td>• Activities</td>
<td>• Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>• Activities</td>
<td>• Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
<td>• Outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth Development Approach May be an Evidence-Based Model Some Day

Requires an accumulation of findings from numerous, high-quality studies.

Depends on sustained investment by service providers, researchers, and funding sources.
Contact Information

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P/PV is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that tackles critical challenges facing low-income communities. We do this by seeking out and designing innovative programs, rigorously testing them and promoting the solutions proven to work.
References


References


